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THE GUARANTEES OF PEACE.

It is good that those who follow the development of politics from day to day, whether at home or abroad, should occasionally pause in order to estimate in what direction the general trend of affairs is leading. The study of narrow controversies,—and most of the controversies of every day are nothing if not narrow,—must help to blind us to the significance of large political movements and aspirations. The controversies are narrow, however, not so much in the sense that they ignore the vital issues of politics, as that they treat them sectionally, and the danger, therefore, is that from such a treatment there grows a state of mind which, in a moment of crisis, or the possibility of crisis, loses all sense of proportion; in varying degrees it tends to overestimate or else to underestimate the gravity of situations as soon as they begin to menace equilibrium. A simpler way of putting the matter would perhaps be to say that political speculation becomes flurried as soon as it begins to be hustled by events. The ordinary political controversies, in England much more than in Germany, quite rightly avoid the speculative element; they are retrospective rather than constructive, and they follow the preference of most men for theory cautiously, qualifying fact rather than theory, rebounding at a tangent from some significant piece of information. But occasionally it is good, we repeat, that one should abandon this attitude in order to look at the larger horizon which bounds the political disensions of Parliaments, libraries, and dining-tables. Further, we must satisfy ourselves that the coherence of the part is also the coherence of the whole.

Politics is a profession, it is true. If an estimate could be attempted of the motives which impel the majority of men to take a share in the government of their country we have no doubt that personal ambition would be put down as the predominating aim. But, having once conceded this point there is no further need for cynicism or disparagement. The personal motive cannot be a sufficient motive for those who wish to influence as well as to adorn. Such politicians are bound to find a system or idea or principle—call it which you will—towards which their efforts are consistently directed. In home politics this is a simple or a complex matter according to the personality of individuals; it is also affected by the fact that the number of men who consider themselves competent to influence home politics is greater than the number who wish to influence foreign affairs. But in foreign affairs it is more difficult to hit on method and consistency, largely because foreign policy is something that is made for nations quite as much as something which nations make for themselves. The elements with which one deals are more unstable than the elements which predominate in home affairs, and one even pays for injudicious friendship as dearly as for superfluous enmity.

These general considerations assist in warding off an undue sense of disappointment when the time comes for taking stock of the achievements of the last few months. After having tried and found wanting the principle of the balance of power as an ideal of policy as well as a plan of expediency, we have adopted as the guiding motive of diplomacy the maintenance of peace and the progress of civilization. The past year has shown in various ways that these aspirations manage to exist comfortably on paper but are not strengthened in the rough-and-tumble of actual diplomacy. We opened the year in a spirit of hope rather than of assurance. The Hague Conference, the continuance of the troubles in Russia, the Moroccan embroglio, the racial questions on the Pacific, the industrial unrest all over the world, the difficulties in India—these various problems demonstrated in many ways that we were still far from a condition of affairs which could be interpreted as making for the peace of nations or the sympathy of races and classes towards one another. There have also been events, since the beginning of the year, whose influence is certainly not in the direction of greater good-will. In Persia civilization has either received a set-back, or else it is being advanced along avenues of which we can only approve by a stretch of philosophic foresight. In Morocco



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STOP PRESS NEWS.

SEVERE FIGHTING IN EAST AFRICA.

Rome, March 11. The *Agenzia Stefani* reports that the Italian Government is in receipt of a telegram, forwarded by the steamship "Cabrera" from Zanzibar, to the effect that the Suliman tribe supported by some of the Mad Mullah's followers had attacked another tribe in the vicinity of Djelib on February 29, killing 30 members and driving off their cattle. In consequence of this foray the Italian garrison at Merca and Djelib attacked the assailants on March 3, killing 400 of the Suliman tribesmen and 60 of the Mullah's men. The Italian casualties were one man killed and two Askaris wounded.

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the French have at last adopted a change of policy which, whatever its merits, shows clearly that the work of the past has been a disappointment. The Concert of Europe has been disturbed in the Near East by the ambitions of Austria-Hungary. The Anglo-Russian Agreement, at the best a bargain between rivals, has been coldly received by those Powers whose interests lie outside the sphere of the contracting parties, so that it is in a sense less a contribution to peace than an impetus to dissatisfaction. Finally, the relations between England and Germany, which were beginning to show some improvement, have been somewhat agitated.

In these events we see clearly the differentiation between principle, on the one hand, and political motive, on the other. Although it is perhaps true that in home politics the personal motive is to the political motive what in diplomacy the national motive is to the international principle, there is this difference—in home politics the two may coincide; in foreign politics they coincide only by the application of a venerable fiction. Nations, while we maintain the national system, must be self-seeking in order to be healthy, and the peace of the world may be as good an excuse as any other for pressing towards an advantage which one nation particularly desires. It is fair, therefore, to adopt the fiction but to judge of events from that standpoint of actual opportunity and actual aims; otherwise, even real progress must seem like a conspiracy to defraud us of legitimate expectations. The best we can say of the present year, when every allowance has been made for human shortcomings, is that there has been a fairly equal distribution of disappointments. We are awaiting the application in Macedonia and Persia of the results of British policy; and if anything ensues from this there will be some cause for satisfaction. In other quarters there are possibilities in the opposite direction. But whether we go backward or forward, the true element of progress must be, from the nature of things, a secondary consideration with those who condition it.

GENERAL NEWS.

NEWS FROM ENGLAND.

THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.

The discussion over the Navy Estimates was continued on Tuesday, when Mr. Balfour asked whether Germany, in the autumn of 1911, would not have 13 battleships of the "Dreadnought" class and England only 12. In asking the question he assumed: first, that the dates now fixed for the laying down of the ships in Germany and England would be adhered to; secondly, that the naval programme of Germany would be maintained as hitherto; and thirdly, that, as the German Minister of Marine had declared to be the case, the rapidity with which ships could be built was practically equal in the two countries.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Asquith, replied that no difference of opinion existed on the two sides of the House with reference to two points, viz. that England must maintain her unassailable supremacy, and that the two-Power standard was a good and practicable one for that purpose. Mr. Balfour's question was confined to ships of the "Dreadnought" and "Invincible" class, and had not touched the question of the two-Power standard, in dealing with which the ships of other classes must be taken into account. Mr. Balfour's assumption that Germany would possess 13 ships of the "Dreadnought" class in November 1911 was based on two assumptions: first, that the German programme would be carried out to the letter; and secondly, that the rapidity with which ships can be built in Germany would ensure the completion of every single ship within 30 months of her keel being laid. It was his, Mr. Asquith's, belief with regard to the second assumption that grave doubts were justified as to whether the present rapidity of construction could be maintained. He could answer for it that, if the probability should become apparent that the German naval programme will be carried out as it stands on paper, the Government will hold it to be their duty to take care that provision is made for a sufficient number of ships, and for laying them down in sufficient time, to prevent the numerical superiority of Germany becoming a fact.

FRENCH PRESIDENT TO VISIT ENGLAND.

Reuter's Bureau learns that President Fallières will pay a visit to England in May. The arrangements for the visit have not yet been definitely decided, yet there is ground for the belief that President Fallières' journey will be in the nature of a State visit, returning the one paid by King Edward to President Loubet in 1903.

A despatch from Paris of yesterday says that, on the occasion of M. Fallières' visit to England in May next he will be accompanied by M. Pichon, Minister for Foreign Affairs.

(Continued on page 2.)

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