CHAPTER V

THE ENTENTE CORDIALE

FEBRUARY 1902 - APRIL 1904

We have seen that in the course of the last month of 1901 and in the first few months of 1902 the possibility of an eventual understanding between Great Britain and Germany had practically ceased to exist. When on December 19th, 1901, the fateful interview between Lord Lansdowne and Metternich took place, during which the British Foreign Secretary told the German Ambassador that England was not willing to join the Triple Alliance, there was already an atmosphere of growing tension between the two countries. Chamberlain's speech at Edinburgh on October 25th, 1901, in which reference was made to the behaviour of the German Army in the Franco-Prussian war, had greatly roused German public opinion, whilst the German newspapers lost no opportunity of fanning the fire. Moreover, Von Bülow's attitude in the Reichstag on January 8th, 1902, was not exactly calculated to pour oil on troubled waters ! These happenings have already been described (see Chapter IV), but they should be kept in mind when seeking the origins of the Anglo-French Entente.

Less than a month after Von Bülow's Reichstag speech, the German Foreign Minister was informed that Great Britain had now concluded a defensive alliance with Japan, whereby she had immensely fortified her position in the Far East. The papers containing this information may still have been on his desk when a letter from Eckardstein arrived, which must have made it quite clear to the author of German foreign policy that his plans for an Anglo-German settlement were doomed to failure.

Baron von Eckardstein reported that on February 8th he had been present, as the representative of the German Embassy in London, at a banquet at Marlborough House, the residence of King Edward VII. Everything had gone off very well, but after dinner had he noticed that Chamberlain and the French Ambassador, Paul Cambon, had withdrawn into the billiard room together. It had, of course, been impossible for him to overhear their conversation, but he had most definitely heard the words "Morocco" and "Egypt" being mentioned. Later on, Eckardstein himself had talked to the Colonial Secretary and Chamberlain had told him quite frankly that he would no longer put up with the German attitude towards his attempts to create an atmosphere of understanding between Great Britain and Germany, that he had had "enough of such treatment and there [could] be no more question of an association between Great Britain and Germany." [1])

This unpleasant incident might, in itself, have been enough to give the

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[1]) Eckardstein p. 229; Lee II p. 144, 217.

German officials at the Wilhelmstrasse some reason for speculation about the future. However, to crown it all, the King himself said to Eckardstein later that evening, after a reference to the Anglo-Japanese Alliance: "Unfortunately, I can't face the future with the same confidence as regards Anglo-German relations. You know, of course, what has happened of late. If the Kaiser now writes me long letters assuring me of his friendship for England, I cannot, I am sorry to say, give much weight to what he says. The renewed abuse of England in the German press and the unfriendly and sarcastic remarks of Count Bülow in the Reichstag have aroused so much resentment among my Ministers and in public opinion that for a long time at least there can be no more any question of Great Britain and Germany working together in any conceivable matter. We are being urged more strongly than ever by France to come to an Agreement with her in all colonial disputes and it will probably be best in the end to make such a settlement, because England only wants peace and quiet and to live on a friendly footing with all other countries. As you very well know, both I and the majority of my Ministers would very gladly have gone with Germany in all colonial and other questions, but it can't be done. In any arrangements that we may make with other countries, in future it would, of course, be our principle to avoid any menace against Germany. We only want, as I say, peace and quiet for ourselves and for the world." [1])

We can imagine that Von Eckardstein did not very much enjoy his cigar and whisky during this conversation, but he would probably have been even more upset, had he known what Chamberlain told his son Austin that same evening: "Je crois que nous pouvons négocier avec la France. J'ai parlé du Maroc avec Cambon. Ses yeux ont brillé, je n'imaginais pas l'importance que les Français attachent à cette question. Nous pourrions peut-être liquider l'hypothèque égyptienne en échange du Maroc." [2])

On many occasions the Colonial Secretary had told the German diplomats that Great Britain would turn to either France or Russia if she could not come to terms with Germany, but this had always been discarded by them as being "humbug". On three occasions during the last four years, Chamberlain had made definite and energetic efforts to brush aside all difficulties and conclude an Anglo-German alliance, but time and again he had been disappointed. He had now, at long last, lost all hope of being able to make a deal with the Germans, and had turned to France to see what might be achieved there.

However, in the beginning of 1902 prospects there were not very hopeful either. The humiliation of Fashoda had not been forgotten and the press-campaigns in the French newspapers during the South African war had been as bad, or possibly worse than in the German ones.

Nevertheless, more favourable forces had also been at work and, amongst these, the French Foreign Minister, Delcassé, was the most important.

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[1]) Eckardstein p. 230; Lee p. 144. [2]) Maurois p. 186; G. P. XVII no. 5186.

On succeeding Hanotaux on June 28th, 1898, he was reported to have said: "I do not wish to leave this desk without having restored the good understanding with England," [1]) and he had started off by sending Paul Cambon, the very best man he could find, as Ambassador to London. This had been a very successful move, about which the Belgian Minister reported: "La nomination de M. Cambon à la place du Baron de Courcel a produit ici une excellente impression. Le nouvel Ambassadeur a toujours fait preuve de sentiments 'aussi favorables à la Grande Bretagne qu'on peut en attendre d'un diplomate français', à ce que m'a dit le Premier Ministre." [2])

Cambon had booked some initial successes, but when he had proposed negotiations and arrangements on a wider scale, including a settlement of the problems of Madagascar, Siam and Newfoundland, the offer had been declined by Lord Salisbury, who smiled and told him: "I have the greatest confidence in M. Delcassé, and also in your present Government, but in a few months they will probably be overturned and their successors will make a point of doing exactly the contrary of what they have done. No, we must wait a bit." [3])

But, when Lord Salisbury was no longer at the Foreign Office, Lord Lansdowne showed more willingness to discuss matters.

About three weeks after the Marlborough House dinner Cambon, in a talk with Lord Lansdowne, repeated his earlier suggestion about the subjects which might form a basis for discussion. He enumerated them once again in a personal letter and discovered a few days later that his plan had been so favourably received that both the King and the Prince of Wales wanted to set to work at once. [4])

As it turned out, another 16 months had to elapse before the actual negotiations started. The interested parties, however, did not spend this period in idleness. Lansdowne and Cambon had many a preparatory conversation, which was "useful in clearing the ground and.... certainly.... led to the conclusion that the points at issue between the two Governments were few in number and by no means incapable of adjustment." [5])

On the other side of the Channel, the movement led by Sir Thomas Barclay, President of the British Chamber of Commerce in Paris, in favour of a Treaty of Arbitration between England and France, did much to arouse public interest in better relations between the two countries.

In this particular field a lot of work had to be done especially in France where public opinion was strongly anti-British. The President of the Municipal Council of Paris told Sir Thomas Barclay in referring to a proposed visit by the Lord Mayor to Paris in 1900: "At least, one can say for the Germans they are 'des ennemis francs'. They don't conceal that they want to swallow us as soon as they dare. With them we know where we are. But with the English nobody knows where he is. They are not even unconsciously hypocritical and

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[1]) Lémonon p. 136. [2]) Corr. Pol. le 29 Sept. 1898. [3]) Lee II p. 217. [4]) Lee II p. 218. [5]) Br. Doc. II no. 357.

perfidious. They deliberately lead you on with promises and sweet words and after they have shoved you over the precipice, turn their eyes to Heaven, thank God they are a moral people and pray for your soul. Ah, mon cher, ce n'est pas de vous que je dis cela, ni du Lord Mayor de Londres. C'est de votre exécrable politique que je parle. Votre Lord Mayor sera à ma droite; si même le maire de St. Petersburg était là, il ne serait qu'à ma gauche, car le Lord Mayor de Londres est pour nous la plus grande gloire de la vie municipale du monde." [1])

This outburst might have been excused as being an expression of French temperament. But the official British representatives were rather suspicious about the intensions of the French as is shown in a memorandum by Sir Tomas Sanderson, passed on by the Prime Minister to the Duke of Devonshire who was Chairman of the Defence Committee.

> "Colonel Douglas Dawson [Eng. Mill. Att. in Paris] spoke to me at some length before going back to Paris, on the critical condition of our relations with France, which was likely to ensue after the close of the Exhibition, next year.
> He said, he found that Sir E. Monson entirely agreed in his view on the subject. The present French Government, which was exceptionally friendly to England, was not likely to outlast the Exhibition, its successors would probably be far less so, they would have to deal with serious labour troubles from the number of workmen who would be left unemployed. At the close of the Exhibition, the idea of a war with England would be popular with the Army and with many influential classes, and in his opinion the question whether peace could be preserved, would depend upon our being so well prepared as to make an attack on us extremely hazardous.
> He said he had had some conversations with the military authorities, and the points to which he felt that attention should be particularly directed, were the following:
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> 1) Stores –
> These would be greatly depleted during the next three months for the war in South Africa, and every effort should be made to replenish them and bring them up to the full quota requisite for complete preparedness by the autumn.
> (Note: In some departments it will take more than 9 months to replace the stores used up in South Africa. A.J.B.)
> 2) Cavalry and Artillery –
> It was considered by foreign critics that we were unduly weak in these arms, and it appeared to him that in artillery especially we ought to be strong.
> 3) Guns –
> He doubted whether we were sufficiently provided with those of the best pattern. He mentioned especially two points – guns of long range, firing high explosive shells to accompany a field force – and quick-firing field guns. He said that the French and Germans believed that

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1) Barclay p. 140, 141.

ordinary field-artillery would be at a frightful disadvantage in face of their new quick-firing guns. But it was difficult to convert our Artillery officers to this view and the expense of a change was great. (I understand that the principal question is whether any pattern of quick-firing field gun can be found, which does not require to be re-laid before every shot).
(Note: Lord Wolseley said that neither the French nor Germans have accomplished this. A.J.B.)
Colonel Dawson said that we had nine months before us to make our preparations and that in his opinion it would depend on our condition at the end of the period, whether we should be fairly secure of keeping at peace with France.

13th December 1899 T.H.S." [1])

Taking into account this, on the whole, rather hostile atmosphere, one realised that Sir Thomas Barclay's invitation on behalf of the British Chamber of Commerce in Paris, to the Association of Chambers of Commerce of the United Kingdom to hold their autumn meeting for 1900 in Paris, was a very bold move indeed. Nevertheless the invitation was accepted after careful consideration and on the advice of the Prime Minister and of the British Ambassador in Paris. The meeting, which was held at the same time as the Paris Exhibition, turned out to be a great success. [2])

A second step towards popularising the idea of a Treaty of Arbitration was taken in March, 1901, when Sir Thomas spoke at the annual meeting of the „Société Française pour l'Arbitrage", and managed to get the report of his speech under blazing headlines on the first page of the "Figaro". [3])

Newspapers all over France reprinted the text and the Paris correspondent of the "Times" took up the idea with enthusiasm.

"Even those who look upon such an idea [Arbitration Treaty] as a forlorn hope, rather than as of probable or even possible realisation, should heartily welcome any attempt of this sort. These ideas, if constantly repeated with sincerity gradually end by penetrating people's minds and securing adherence.... Mr. Barclay said: 'The proposal that I wish to put before you is that of an arbitration treaty between England and France'.... war sometimes breaks out for the slightest of causes when public feeling is agitated and in Democratic countries Governments are often urged on by forces which do not look far ahead. Now the advantage of an arbitration treaty is exactly that it furnishes the means to allow the public spirit to calm down or, in familiar parlance it allows the Governments to gain time.... It would only be perfectly natural that the two great and time-honoured nations, which stand at the head of civilisation should lead the way which leads on to the extinction of all war, that foolish and barbarous method which, as a rule, is only the result of the incapacity of statesmen, who allow it to break out." [4])

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[1]) Devonshire Papers 1899 no. 2807. [2]) Br. Doc. II no. 319; Barclay p. 178-185
[3]) Barclay p. 197, 198. [4]) Times March 30th 1901.

This speech and the unspoken approval it won from many people on both sides of the Channel, was but the beginning of a wide-spread agitation in favour of an Arbitration Treaty, and by the beginning of 1903 the support given to the idea was overwhelming. Twenty-seven British Chambers of Commerce and the Association of British Chambers of Commerce of the United Kingdom passed resolutions in favour of the Treaty, whilst thirty-five trade unions in Great Britain and Ireland, representing two million workers, followed their example. In France, forty-one Chambers of Commerce, eighteen municipal councils and nineteen peace societies passed similar resolutions.

Meanwhile, in London and Paris, the diplomats had also been busy. Throughout 1902 and the first few months of 1903, their attention had mainly been focussed on the Morocco problem, and therefore nothing very specific was done about the larger issues at stake, in spite of the encouraging conversation between the King and Cambon in February 1902.

By the Treaty concluded between France and Italy in December 1900, France had obtained "a free hand" in Morocco, but she was fully aware that she could not make use of her freedom without British and Spanish consent. However, Delcassé knew that Spain, still suffering from her crushing defeat in the war against the United States, was willing to come to terms.

The key to any possibilities of French action in Morocco was therefore to be found in Whitehall. Cambon had already discussed the Morocco problem on other occasions with the British Foreign Secretary, but on July 23rd, 1902, Lord Lansdowne reported:

> "His [Cambon's] own idea was that it might be desirable that our two Governments should have a frank discussion of the situation [in Morocco]. The attitude of the tribes had become extremely threatening of late. It was not enough that we should declare our desire to maintain the status quo. We must both be prepared for eventualities. He [Cambon] apprehended that what we really cared about was Tangier, which we could not afford to allow any other Power to possess. We might easily come to some arrangement with France under which it should be neutralised.
> His Excellency [Cambon] went on to say that all he had said to me represented his own opinions only, but that he proposed to ask M. Delcassé's permission to mention these subjects to me officially at some future time. I replied that he would find me perfectly ready to discuss them with him in the frankest possible manner." [1])

Whithin three weeks the French Ambassador had ascertained what his Chief wanted done, and on August 6th, the conversation with Lord Lansdowne was continued:

> "M. Cambon told me that since our last meeting he had had an interview with M. Delcassé, whose ideas he was now authorised to explain to me [Lansdowne]. They were as follows:

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1) Br. Doc. II no. 321.

The French Government were 'partisans du status quo partout', and conceived that in this respect they did not differ from us. They had a colonial dominion amply sufficient not only for their present wants, but for their wants for generations to come. They had passed out of the period of expansion and had no wish to add to their responsibilities by further acquisitions. The colonial policy of France was therefore essentially conservative, and in the pursuit of such a policy M. Delcassé believed that it would be possible for them to move in accordance with us ('marcher d'accord avec vous')... . All that France therefore desired was to ensure the security of what she already possessed... . Returning to Morocco His Excellency repeated what he had said to me on a previous occasion as to the alleged aspirations of some of the Englishmen who were in the employment of the Sultan. He had no doubt that designs were attributed to them which they did not really harbour, but there was a considerable risk that too energetic officers might, by the advice which they gave to the Sultan, encourage him to adopt a policy, which might drive him into conflict with France, and thereby precipitate action on the part of the French Government. Their [French] desire was, however, that the question of Morocco should not pass into the acute stage... .

As to Morocco, I told His Excellency [Cambon] that I regarded with the greatest apprehension the idea of provoking an international controversy with regard to the future of that country; as he must be aware France and England were by no means the only Powers concerned in Morocco. Italy, Spain and Germany had all of them at one time or another manifested an interest in its affairs. Any attempt to deal prematurely with the 'liquidation' of Morocco would, in my opinion be sure to lead to serious complications... .

I noticed that His Excellency did not take up my observations as to the interest of Italy in Morocco, although I had spoken of it rather pointedly. Before leaving the subject of Morocco, I told M. Cambon that I felt sure that the French Government did not give us sufficient credit for the absolute sincerity of our dealings with the Sultan. We had created no difficulties for the French Government in their dealings with the tribes, nor did I believe for an instant that Kaïd Maclean or any other officials in the employ of the Moorish Government, indulged in intrigues against the French... .

In conclusion I said that it was obviously impossible for me to make an official reply to so important a communication without consulting my colleagues; but I promised His Excellency that I would at once repeat to them the substance of our conversation. I added, however, that we were on the eve of the holidays, and I feared that I might not be able to say anything more to him on the subject for some weeks to come." [1])

It is quite clear that the French had some very definite ideas about a possible 'liquidation' of Morocco, and Cambon made another attempt to discuss the matter on October 15th when he

"repeated what he had said to me [Lansdowne] in August as to the respective interests of France and England in Morocco, dwelling upon the argu-

[1]) Br. Doc. II no. 322.

ment that we [Britain] had no political concern with the interior of the country, that our concern was mainly with Tangier, and that the greater part of the seaboard was inhospitable and useless. I [Lansdowne] refused to admit that this was a correct description, and again I said that we were not prepared to discuss a possible 'liquidation' of Morocco and that so far as I could understand the terms upon which it was suggested that such a liquidation might take place, they appeared to me to be of a kind which we should have difficulty in accepting." [1])

Because of this British refusal, the French gave up their idea of "liquidating" Morocco, [2]) and on December 31st Cambon assured Lord Lansdowne that the French Government strongly desired that there should be no disturbance of the status quo in Morocco, even if the events now in progress [insurrection against the Sultan] should lead to the overthrow of the present Sultan." [3])

During the months that followed, the Moroccan affair was no longer a special point of discussion between England and France, but it was brought up again during the summer when the negotiations regarding the Anglo-French Treaty were reopened, on account of a new atmosphere of cordiality and friendship created by King Edward's visit to Paris and President Loubet's visit to London.

Neither the official records nor the available private papers make it clear with whom the idea for the King's visit to Paris originated. [4]) From the evidence available, however, we can safely single out the King himself as the man who put the idea to the British Government and persuaded them that no harm could come of it. [5])

In a letter dated March 25th, 1903, Cambon himself told Delcassé: "Lord Lansdowne vient de me dire que le Roi tenait beaucoup à rencontrer M. le Président de la République. Il croyait pouvoir le joindre dans le Méditerranée, mais ayant appris que les dates et l'organisation du voyage de M. Loubet en Algérie ne permettaient pas une rencontre, le Roi a changé ses plans et s'est décidé à passer par Paris...." [6])

Whatever may have been the misgivings about this plan in Government circles in London, it is certain that on the whole the French Government was much more in favour of it.

On the morning that the first rumours of the proposed visit appeared in the French papers, Sir Thomas Barclay called on M. Loubet, who told him: "I know the danger, but I shall send for the leaders personnally and point out to them that the King of England is not a Sovereign to whose charge the iniquities of any particular Government can be laid; that the King has always been a friend of France and that above all, France has a duty of hospitality to perform as well as an interest to promote, the interest of peace between two peoples who in spite of occasional égarements on both sides, represent all that

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[1]) Br. Doc. II no. 325. [2]) Br. Doc. II no. 334. [3]) Br. Doc. II no. 330. [4]) Lee II p. 222–228; Hardinge p. 85–88; Barclay p. 218, 219; Spender p. 213, 214; Maurois p. 188, 189. [5]) Lee II p. 223; Maurois p. 188. [6]) Maurois p. 188.

is great and noble in the history of mankind. I shall recommend the enthusiasts to be moderate in their cheers and the disaffected to hold their tongue." [1])

The British Ambassador in Paris reported that the President of the French Republic had told him that "a visit from the King would, in the present temper of France, do an amount of good which was probably not realised in England. He [Loubet] hoped, indeed, that H.M. Government were already aware of the extent to which cordiality to England had increased in France, but probably the public at large were not to the same extent informed as to the growth of that sentiment in Paris and throughout the country. His Majesty, while Prince of Wales, had acquired an exceptional popularity in France and his many old friends would be overjoyed to see him again; but this statement was not confined to his old friends and was general amongst all classes." [2])

The following extracts from two articles in the French newspaper "La Patrie" show, however, that anti-British sentiments were still very much alive in some quarters:

La Patrie, 15th April, 1903.

"Ainsi, c'est réglé; le roi d'Angleterre vient à Paris et l'on s'apprête à lui rendre des honneurs exceptionnels.... Il n'y a pas à le cacher plus longtemps, tout cela dissimule une opération diplomatique qu'on n'ose pas avouer; l'alliance anglaise! On va commettre une infamie.

....Comment, après cette humiliation Fachoda; après cet affront: l'ultimatum remis à M. Delcassé; après la menace de guerre. Après le commencement de la mobilisation, nous irions saluer le roi de ces Anglais qui nous ont abreuvés d'injures et d'outrages. Comment, après les atrocités du Transvaal, après les hontes de l'Afrique du Sud irions-nous nous incliner devant le massacreur des femmes et des enfants boërs. C'est impossible! Le sentiment français est hostile à cette horde de voleurs qui ne vit que de conquêtes et de rapines, qui opprime et dépouille les peuples des quatre parties du monde. On connaît la haine de la nation pour ce roi indigne, pour ce prince sans coeur et sans pudeur."

La Patrie, 16th April, 1903.

"....L'Angleterre a rentré ses griffes, elle fait patte de velours. Elle va jouer avec notre Gouvernement comme le chat joue avec la souris. Elle nous envoie le premier ministre de M. Chamberlain.... S. M. Edouard VII. Ce gracieux souverain est l'interprète très fidèle, l'exécuteur très empressé des pensées que lui inspire le conquérant des mines d'or africaines. Le coup de râteau est complet au Transvaal. Rien ne va plus. Un dernier coup, Messieurs aux dépens de la France.

....Aujourd'hui nous nous contenons de pousser le cri d'alarme: Beware of pick-pockets! Gare à nos poches, gare à nos colonies! Gare à nos alliances! Gare à notre honneur!"

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[1]) Barclay p. 219. [2]) Newton p. 275; Lee II p. 226.

Meanwhile the King, on March 30th, had sailed from Portsmouth in his yacht "Victoria and Albert". He arrived at Gibraltar on April 8th, where his escort was supplemented by four battle-ships from the Channel-squadron under the command of Rear-Admiral Curzon-Howe. [1]) As M. Loubet, who was visiting Algeria, was due to arrive at Algiers on April 11th, the King suggested that the battle-ships should be sent to Algiers to give an official salute to the President of the French Republic. M. Loubet was delighted by this altogether unexpected compliment and despatched a most friendly telegram to the King, thanking him for his courtesy and expressing the hope of meeting him shortly in Paris.

The Royal yacht left Gibraltar on April 13th, and after visiting Malta, dropped anchor in the Bay of Naples on April 27th, from where the King proceeded by train to Rome. For three days His Majesty stayed with the King of Italy and was received in audience by the Pope. On April 30th he left Rome by train for Paris.

Up till then the tour had been most successful and the Prime Minister Mr. A. J. Balfour, who on Lord Salisbury's resignation in July 1902, had succeeded him in the Premiership, quite correctly summed up the Government's feeling when he wrote:

"Mr. Balfour cannot conclude this letter without respectfully congratulating Your Majesty on the success of Your Majesty's tour. He is confident that it will prove of the utmost benefit to our international relations." [2])

The most important part of the Royal tour, though, was still to come, as the visit to Paris turned out to be the decisive fact and a turning-point in Anglo-French relations.

The King arrived on May 3rd, 1903, at the Bois de Boulogne station, where he was met by the President of the French Republic and all the great dignitaries of State. After the official welcome, M. Loubet and the King, in the same carriage, drove in state to the British Embassy in the Faubourg St. Honoré. But the crowds lining the streets were by no means enthusiastic and cries of "Vivent les Boers" and "Vive Marchand" were frequently heard.

The King determined, however, not to hear these outcries, kept his "bonne humeur" and saluted in all directions, and when one of his fellow-countryman said, "The French don't like us", he answered realistically, "Why should they". [3])

During the afternoon he received a deputation from the British Chamber of Commerce and in reply to their address of welcome, he said:

> "It is hardly necessary for me to say with what sincere pleasure I find myself once more in Paris.... The days of conflict between the two countries are, I trust, happily over, and I hope that future historians, in

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1) Lee II p. 228; Hardinge p. 87. 2) Royal Archives R 23/no. 61. 3) Maurois p. 190; Lee II p. 236.

alluding to Anglo-French relations in the present century, may be able only to record a friendly rivalry in the field of commercial and industrial developments.. A Divine Providence has designed that France should be our near neighbour and, I hope, always a dear friend.. There are no two countries in the world whose mutual prosperity is more dependent on each other. There may have been misunderstandings and causes of dissension in the past, but all such differences are, I believe, happily removed and forgotten and I trust that the friendship and the admiration which we all feel for the French nation and their glorious traditions, may in the near future develop into a sentiment of the warmest affection and attachment between the peoples of the two countries. The achievement of this aim is my constant desire and, Gentlemen, I count upon your institution and each of its members separately who reside in this beautiful city and enjoy the hospitality of the French Republic to aid and assist me in the attainment of this object." [1])

That evening the King visited the Théâtre Français to see a new play by the Comédie Française, but the public, mostly French deputies, gave him a rather cold reception. Imperturbable, he took a stroll in the corridor during the interval and, there and then, he took his chance to create a more friendly atmosphere. Amongst the crowd he had noticed the French actress Mlle Jeanne Granier and he sent one of his attendants to go and find her. When she was presented to him a few minutes later, he stretched out his hand and said: "Mademoiselle, je me rappelle vous avoir applaudie à Londres. Vous y représentiez toute la grâce et tout l'esprit de la France." [2])

This very happy remark, which was overheard by many, as had been the King's intention, quickly passed through the audience and when he left the théatre he was loudly cheered. On the next evening he went to the Opéra, where he was given warm reception. On the last day of his visit, when he was entertained at a State Banquet at the Elysée, he moved everybody present by his warm and eloquent speech, when proposing a toast to the President of the Republic. After speaking of the very pleasant recollections he had from earlier visits to Paris, he dwelt at some length on the great benefits of a better understanding between the two countries and finished by saying: "I am glad of this occasion which will strengthen the bonds of friendship and contribute to the friendship of our two countries in their common interest. Our great desire is that we may march together on the path of civilisation and peace." [3])

When the King left Paris on May 4th to return to England, enormous crowds had assembled in the streets and "le Tsar de toutes les Angleterres" was sent off amidst loud and prolonged cheering.

The visit had been most successful and this was to a large extent due to the King's personal charm and tact.

The importance of the occasion and its political background was lost on none of the interested parties and even such neutral observers as the Belgian

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[1]) Lee II p. 237, 238. [2]) Maurois p. 191; Lee II p. 238. [3]) Lee II p. 239.

and Dutch Ministers noted that this had obviously only been a beginning. The Dutch Minister in Paris [1]) reported to his Government on May 3rd:

> "Le séjour à Paris de Sa Majesté le Roi de Grande Bretagne et d'Irlande s'est passé de la façon la plus satisfaisante. Le Roi.... a paru très content de l'accueil qui lui a été fait par le Gouvernement et la population parisienne.
> La Chambre de Commerce Britannique à Paris a été le premier corps constitué qui a souhaité la bienvenue au Roi. Dans la réponse de Sa Majesté au discours du Président on a remarqué avec une grande satisfaction cette phrase très significative: 'Je ne connais pas deux pays dans le monde dont la prospérité mutuelle dépende plus l'une de l'autre. Il a pu y avoir des malentendus et des causes de dissensions dans le passé, mais tout cela est, je le sais, heureusement fini et oublié.'
> ....Le voyage du Roi qui a été décidé sur sa propre initiative, ne semble pas viser un but politique immédiat. Désirant conserver les bons rapports avec ce pays et effacer le souvenir des froissements survenus pendant la guerre Sud-Africaine, le Roi a profité de son voyage en Italie pour traverser Paris officiellement ce qui lui permettra aussi d'y faire dans la suite des séjours incognito, comme il l'a fait du temps où il n'était que Prince de Galles.
> Ce petit côté très humain de la situation ne doit pas rester hors de considération. Voilà certainement le premier résultat du voyage Royal, qui saute aux yeux, mais il a, sans aucun doute pour un avenir plus éloigné, une portée beaucoup plus grande, au sujet de laquelle je me réserve d'entretenir prochainement Votre Excellence." [2])

And one of the members of the Belgian Embassy Staff wrote the following appraisal:

> "The welcome accorded to the King of England by the people of Paris, a trifle reserved at the beginning of King Edward's stay, became subsequently much more sympathetic.... His Majesty spoke of "rapprochement" and it is indeed a rapprochement that has been effected between France and G.B. Every class of the population is glad to see the friendship of France sought by a great neighbouring nation, without this improvement in international relations leading to a weakening of the alliance with Russia. That at any rate is how the question is regarded in Paris and St. Petersburg. Prince Urusoff [Russian Ambassador] seems to be very well satisfied with the Anglo-French rapprochement; he is much impressed and does not hide his satisfaction. It is not quite the same with regard to Germany; a certain reserve is noticeable from that quarter in the comment on the royal visit. This reserve may be explained by the rivalry between the two working for the same end, namely, to regain the sympathy of an old enemy. The impression produced in France by King Edward's visit could not be better. Everybody remarked on the Sovereign's efforts to obliterate any misunderstandings which might exist between the two countries. His Majesty has been completely successful. Not a word, not an action which was not appropriate to the circumstances and the persons.

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[1]) A. M. D. Baron Sweerts de Landas Wyborgh. Archives of the Dutch Foreign Office.

[2]) Political News from Paris;

It is said here, that King Edward has won the hearts of all the French. Seldom has such a complete change of attitude been seen as that which has taken place in this country during the last fortnight towards England and her Sovereign. . . ." [1])

The Germans, however, were less far-seeing and although Chamberlain had told Eckardstein even before the King arrived in Paris, "Here in England the King's visit to Paris is very popular and if Paris gives him a good reception then everything will go well between us in the Future", [2]) the German Ambassador in London could not see how an Anglo-French political understanding could possibly come about:

"Die Geschichte der letzten Jahrzehnte hat erwiesen, dass England zu Bündnissen auf dem europäischen Kontinent nicht geneigt ist. Er schliesst politische Bündnisse mit dem Emir von Afghanistan, mit Japan, dem Scheich von Kueit, dem Sultan von Maskat, mit asiatischen und afrikanischen Potentaten ab, aber auf dem europäischen Kontinent behält es freie Hand.

. . . . . .

Die Vereinsamung Englands und viele gemeinsame Interessen, die es mit uns hatte, zog seine Staatsmänner Jahre lang mächtig zu uns hin. Aber die Abneigung, in kontinentale Händel verwickelt zu werden, siegte über alle anderen Erwägungen, und die mannigfachen Versuche zu einer deutsch-englischen Annäherung kamen nie über ihre Anfangsstadien hinaus.

. . . . . .

Die französisch-englische Annäherung ist ein Produkt der gemeinsamen Abneigung gegen Deutschland. Bei englisch-deutschen Differenzen hat die französische Politik sich stets auf die englische Seite gestellt, weil sie in Deutschland den gefährlicheren Gegner erblickt, den sie immer noch hofft niederwerfen zu können. Ohne die deutsch-englisch Entfremdung würde eine englandfreundliche Stimmung in Frankreich nicht möglich geworden sein, und Herr Delcassé hätte bis zur Erfüllung seiner Wünsche noch lange warten müssen. Ohne die Abneigung gegen Deutschland hätte die englische Presse nicht seit Monaten an einer Aussöhnung mit Frankreich arbeiten, noch Herr Cambon versöhnliche Reden halten können. Der Besuch König Eduards in Paris ist sein eigenstes Werk und, wie ich bestimmt weiss, aus seiner eigenen Initiative hervorgegangen. Ich bin nun weit entfernt anzunehmen, dass König Eduard hiermit einen Schlag gegen Deutschland hat führen wollen. Aber da die Stimmung nun einmal auf beiden Seiten des Kanals günstig war, so war es von seinem und seiner Regierung Standpunkt aus ganz vernünftig, das Ihrige dazu beizutragen und die frühere Spannung zu beseitigen.
Dabei ist es nun aber auch geblieben.
Ich bin aber überzeugt, dass die englische Regierung durch die vor sich gehende Aussöhnung mit Frankreich, die ihr so bequem in den Schoss fällt, keine Gegensätze zu Deutschland zu schaffen wünscht. Sie hat das befriedigende Gefühl einen Gegner weniger zu besitzen, ohne dass es ihr ein Opfer gekostet hätte. Damit wächst ihr Ansehen zu Hause und

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[1]) Lee II p. 241. [2]) G. P. XVII no. 5369.

auch in gewisser Beziehung ihr Prestige auswärts. Die Aussöhnung mit einem Gegner bedeutet aber nicht notwendig die Feindschaft mit einem Dritten. Ich weiss vielmehr, dass die englische Regierung den Draht mit Berlin nicht zu zerreissen, sondern aufrechtzuerhalten wünscht. Es wäre ja auch sonderbar, wenn es anders wäre. Die auf der wankelmütigen öffentlichen Meinung Frankreichs beruhende Aussöhnung hat noch keinen Bestand, und politische Abmachungen liegen nicht vor." [1])

Immediately after the initial success of the British Sovereign's visit to Paris, plans were made for a return visit by the French President to England, and within two months from the day on which King Edward left France, M. Loubet accompanied by M. Delcassé, arrived in London.

The programme had been very carefully arranged and Cambon, who had reserved one morning for his chief and Lord Lansdowne to have a heart-to-heart talk, wrote to Delcassé: "Vous aurez deux bonnes heures pour causer en tête à tête; je pense que cela vous suffira.... Le soir, à l'ambassade, je voudrais que vous fussiez à table entre Lord Lansdowne et M. Chamberlain, car Chamberlain c'est à l'heure actuelle, le Gouvernement de l'Angleterre et je sais que, dégouté des Allemands, il désire se tourner de notre côté. En ces circonstances, qui ne se retrouveront peut-être jamais, il faut sacrifier le protocole à la politique." [2])

As to the British Government, precautions were taken that no misunderstandings could arise about one of the more formal aspects of the official visit, as Balfour warned the King's Private Secretary, Lord Knollys:

> "I want to dictate a letter to you on a somewhat delicate subject.
> I gathered from something that fell from Lord Lansdowne that the King's view as to any honours which M. Loubet might desire to distribute in this country was that such favours should only be granted to the gentlemen whom the King has desired to be in attendance on the President. If I may say so, this seems absolutely right. Rumours however, got abroad that the President, with a not unnatural generosity desires to spread his decorations over a wider circle. I cannot help thinking that on *public grounds* it is very undesirable that officials; say of the Foreign Office, should have such offers made to them, and I am quite sure that both on public and private grounds every member of H.M. Government would feel compelled to decline them. In these circumstances it would be most unfortunate if they were offered; and I only write to you now in order to prevent even the remotest possibility of such a catastrophe.
> If there is no danger of it occurring, please burn this letter. If, on the other hand, there be even the slightest danger, please let me know; because I think in that event I ought to communicate with the King." [3])

M. Loubet and his staff arrived at Victoria Station on Monday, July 6th, 1903 and after the first formalities were over he drove through the streets of London, sharing a carriage with the King.

The enthusiasm of the population was overwhelming and the French delega-

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[1]) G. P. XVII no. 5376. [2]) Maurois p. 193. [3]) Royal Archives R 23/no. 73.

tion was deeply touched, which made them overlook the banners on which he words "Long live the President" were translated into "Vive le long Président." [1])

In the evening a state dinner was given at Buckingham Palace and the King, proposing M. Loubet's health, recalled the great reception given him by the cheering crowds when he said "I hope that the welcome you received to-day has convinced you of the true friendship, indeed I will say the affection which my country feels for France." [2])

After dinner, when the ball was about to start "....le Roi demande si le Président voudrait bien ouvrir le bal avec la Reine, Sa Majesté et la Duchesse de Connaught faisant le vis-à-vis? M. Loubet, très effrayé, demanda si son Ambassadeur ne pouvait le remplacer. M. Cambon dansa. Pendant ce quadrille, M. Combarieu, Secrétaire Général de la Présidence, parlait par gestes avec Lord Roberts, qui ne savait pas un mot de français, et le Président félicitait Lord Roseberry sur son 'Cromwell' qu'il n'avait pas lu. C'était l'Entente Cordiale." [3])

The next morning, however, "after the ball was over", M. Delcassé paid a visit to Lord Lansdowne at the Foreign Office and the two statesmen had a long and serious conversation about the relations between the two countries in Europe and other parts of the world, in Newfoundland, Morocco, Egypt, Siam, Nigeria, the New Hebrides, etc. Once again the Frenchman emphasized the importance of the Morocco problem and the Foreign Secretary reported: "Throughout our conversation M. Delcassé spoke apparently with the utmost sincerity, and he did not attempt to disguise from me the immense importance which the French Government attached to obtaining from us a recognition of the predominance which they desired to obtain in Morocco. The impression, which he evidently desired to leave upon my mind was that, in order to secure our acquiescence, they would, in regard to Morocco itself, accept the conditions upon which we should probably desire to insist, whilst on other points they would go very far indeed to comply with our requirements." [4])

In this conversation the foundation was laid for the convention which was envisaged, and although negotiations during the following months were not without their difficulties, agreement in the end was a foregone conclusion. Public opinion in the two countries had been well satisfied with the two official visits and "Le Temps" declared on the 11th July, 1903:

> "Le 'rapprochement' franco-anglais est un fait accompli. La France et la Grande Bretagne peuvent sans restriction se traiter l'une l'autre en 'nations amies'.
> ....C'est de l'Angleterre, et spécialement du roi d'Angleterre, qu'est venue l'initiative du rapprochement.... Le roi d'Angleterre, il l'a prouvé, est un roi pacifique et il estime que les accords internationaux, particuliers

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[1]) Maurois p. 195. [2]) Lee II p. 244. [3]) Maurois p. 195. [4]) Br. Doc. II no. 357.

ou généraux, sont encore à notre époque, la meilleure garantie de paix. Certes il ne consentirait pas plus qu'aucun de ses compatriotes à renoncer théoriquement au 'splendide isolement' dont s'enorgueillit le Royaume-Uni. Mais dans l'Europe moderne partagée entre deux systèmes d'alliances qui sont des centres d'attraction, il ne lui déplairait pas de gagner à son pays des amitiés particulières. . . ."

The Dutch Minister in Paris, however, pointed out in his weekly report that the reasons for the "rapprochement" were not to be found in the great political issues at stake, but in the sentiments almost universal now in responible circles in both countries, that nothing could be gained by clinging to the traditional antagonism between them.

"Le chaleureux accueil fait au Président de la République tant par la cour d'Angleterre que dans la cité de Londres, a grandement flatté l'amour propre national en France. Les commentaires et les conjectures sur la portée politique de ce voyage n'ont pas manqué de se donner libre carrière. D'aucuns croient que l'entente cordiale entre les deux pays amènera un rapprochement entre l'Angleterre et la Russie, l'alliée de la France, d'autres estiment que l'Angleterre en se rapprochant de la France cherche à sortir de son isolement et à se garder contre la concurrence hostile de l'Allemagne en l'isolant à son tour.
Il ne semble pas nécessaire de chercher si loin des combinaisons diplomatiques; des deux côtés on a senti le besoin de vivre en bonne intelligence pour le plus grand bien des deux pays, d'oublier l'antagonisme historique, qui était exploité encore il y a peu de mois, par des polémiques gratuites et de chercher au contraire des terraines de conciliation pour des questions qui restent en suspens. . . .
La connexité que M. Etienne (Vice-Président de la Chambre des Députés) établit (dans un article publié dans le "National Review", le lendemain du voyage de M. Loubet) entre les questions d'Egypte et du Maroc semble indiquer qu'il propose l'abandon par la France de ses prétentions sur le Nil pour le protectorat sur le Maroc. Il reste à savoir si l'entente nouvelle sera assez cordiale pour que cette question ne devienne pas le tison de discorde." [1])

At an earlier stage of this narrative, attention was drawn to the campaign in favour of an Arbitration Treaty being concluded between France and England. It is necessary to return to this aspect of the coming agreement between the two countries, as the successful conclusion of this Treaty was the first official step on the path which was to lead to the more general Entente.

In May, 1903, Delcassé had asked M. Cambon to inquire into the British Government's opinion on the subject, and the Ambassador had reported:

"Guiding myself by the information Your Excellency was good enough to give me verbally, I have asked Lord Lansdowne to tell me how he feels towards the campaign for arbitration among the British Chambers of Commerce. The opportunity of an interview of this sort was offered

[1]) Political News from Paris; Archives of the Dutch Foreign Office, July 18th 1903.

by a question put on this subject to Mr. Balfour on the 11th, and his answer, though he confined himself to generalities which made it difficult to infer any adhesion to the scheme of a permanent Treaty of Arbitration, did not discourage the hopes of the supporters of the scheme.
Lord Lansdowne stated that a Government could not be asked absolutely to tie its hands, and that, according to their nature or importance, some questions must be kept outside the scope of arbitration; that, on the other hand, the movement in favour of a permanent Treaty was so general that the Government could not do otherwise than earnestly take it into consideration.
I told him Your Excellency shared this view and had already drawn up a formula and repeated the words you had yourself used at our last conversation.
'We could submit', you said, 'to arbitration, divergencies referring to the juridical interpretation of conventions existing between the two countries'.
Lord Lansdowne seemed impressed by this formula which he thought might serve as a satisfactory basis for an understanding." [1])

Matters were brought to a head by the visit to London of Baron d'Estournelles and a large group of French members of Parliament in July and August 1903 with the object of strengthening the relations between the various groups in France and England who were in favour of the Arbitration Treaty. M. Cambon pressed Lord Lansdowne for a more positive answer, and the question was brought before the Cabinet on July 21st.

"Mr. Balfour with his humble duty to Your Majesty begs respectfully to say that Cabinet today was almost wholly occupied with Foreign Affairs. The first question discussed was the answer to be given to the French Government about the proposed treaty of arbitration between the two countries. M. d'Estournelles and a considerable group of French members of Parliament interested in Arbitration are now over here: and M. Delcassé is anxious to know our views in order that he may be in a position to deal with the subject when it comes up in the French Chamber. The Cabinet were unanimously of opinion that the French proposals offered a satisfactory basis for discussion: and that even if the proposed treaty did not go very far, it was at all events a step in the right direction." [2])

It took another ten weeks before the two Governments had agreed on the text, but on October 14th the Treaty of Arbitration between Great Britain and France was signed at the Foreign Office by Lord Lansdowne and Cambon. [3])

The Treaty stipulated that disputes arising from legal problems or concerning the interpretation or appreciation of existing Conventions would be submitted to the International Court of Arbitration, with the exception of disputes affecting the vital interests, the honour or the independence of the two countries concerned. [4])

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[1]) Barclay p. 232. [2]) Royal Archives R 23/no. 75. [3]) Br. Doc. II no. 371.
[4]) Lee II p. 247; Barclay p. 235; Kennedy p. 120.

Both in England and France the Treaty had a warm reception in all circles, and was greated as a sign of growing "rapprochement". Cambon sent his congratulations to Sir Thomas Barclay, with whom the idea for the Treaty had originated.

> "....Sans être un aussi grand événement que vous voulez bien le dire, la signature de ce traité d'arbitrage est un acte d'une certaine gravité. La convention a un caractère pratique, utilisable dès maintenant. Elle est de nature à couper court à une quantité de difficultés journalières et à des incidents dont on ne peut jamais calculer les suites. Elle est en outre une manifestation des bons rapports entre les deux pays et à ce titre seulement elle a des avantages.
> Vous êtes l'un des ouvriers de la première heure dans cette oeuvre de rapprochement et c'est à vous surtout qu'il faut adresser ses félicitations." [1])

The Dutch Minister in Paris and Jhr. dr. J. Loudon, the Dutch Minister in London, voicing the feelings in the countries to which they were accredited, reported:

> "The recent signing of the Arbitration Treaty Cambon-Lansdowne has proved once again that more importance must be attached to the Entente at present existing between England and France than one was at first inclined to believe.
> Especially on the part of France there seems to be a great desire to arrive, if possible, at a final settlement of the many questions, which until now have stood in the way of a rapprochement between the two countries." [2])

And:

> "The Press of all parties greets the Anglo-French Arbitration Treaty with approval, not because of the intrinsic value of the agreement, but because it unmistakably confirms the rapprochement between the two countries, which has gradually become an Entente Cordiale, in so far as it is possible to rely on the inconstancy of the sovereign French nation.
> The Republic and its Ambassador have all the credit of this convention, which also casts light upon the gradual effect of the Peace Conference, but it must not be forgotten that the rapprochement is for the greater part due to the tactful initiative of H.M. King Edward.
> Not without cause the 'Westminster Gazette' observes, in spite of all its praise, that notwithstanding this, even 'juridical disputes' often contain an element of 'honour', 'independence' and 'vital interests', which is more or less inflammable according to the state of mind of the parties concerned.
> Only the conservative – but anti-ministerial 'Morning Post' – accuses the Government of limiting England's freedom of action, among other things in regard to the Newfoundland question." [3])

The French President, though he knew that there were other difficulties still

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1) Barclay p. 235. 2) Political News from Paris, Oct. 19th 1903; Archives of the Dutch Foreign Office (Translated). 3) Political News from London, Oct. 16th 1903; Archives of the Dutch Foreign Office (Translated).

to overcome, was delighted but did not lose the opportunity to "observe very earnestly that he trusted that this Agreement would be followed by another of greater importance and more extensive and varied scope. He [Loubet] could assure me [Monson] that he and M. Delcassé had this deeply at heart and that, though the questions to be solved are difficult, and even intricate, he could not but believe that a settlement would be found practicable." [1])

The British Government, convinced that the Treaty was but a small step, though in the right direction, inserted the following passage in the King's speech on the occasion of the opening of Parliament on February 2nd, 1904.

> "My relations with foreign Powers continue to be of a satisfactory character.
> My Government has concluded with that of the French Republic an Agreement, which will, I trust, do much to promote the recourse to arbitration in cases of international dispute. Apart from its intrinsic value the Agreement affords a happy illustration of the friendly feelings prevailing between the two countries, of which striking proofs were given during my visit to France, and that of the President of the French Republic to Great Britain, and of which further evidence has been furnished by a recent exchange of international courtesies." [2])

The negotiations on the more general Agreement had meanwhile been pursued and Lord Lansdowne, shortly after his conversation with M. Delcassé in London, had made sure that his policy was approved by his colleagues.

> "Mr. Balfour with his humble duty to your Majesty begs respectfully to say that the question of a general negotiation with the French Government for the purpose of settling the outstanding points in controversy between the two countries came up for discussion. Morocco, Egypt, Newfoundland [sic] fisheries, Siam, New Hebrides, W. Africa, – these are the places where causes of friction at present exist, which it would be most desirable to remove. The task must be difficult, but with a little good will on both sides should not prove impossible.
> The Cabinet were unanimous in their wish to proceed with the negotiations.
> A special point that has to be kept in view is the Spanish position in Morocco. The Spaniards, with many fine qualities, are proud, suspicious and inefficient. It will not be easy to work with them; it would be most undesirable to throw them over.
> Germany also, when she hears that Morocco is the subject of negotiations, will doubtless do her best to make things difficult for us all...." [3])

The Foreign Secretary had several conversations with Cambon, and having asked the advice of the Earl of Cromer on the Egyptian aspects of the matter, he forwarded the British proposals for a solution in Morocco, Egypt, Newfoundland, Siam, New Hebrides, Nigeria, Zanzibar and Madagascar to the French Ambassador on October 1st. [4])

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[1]) Br. Doc. II no. 372. [2]) Times February 3rd 1904. [3]) Royal Archives R 23/no. 78.
[4]) Br. Doc. II no. 369.

M. Delcassé replied in an equally long and detailed letter on October 26th, which Lord Lansdowne answered on November 19th, making some counter-proposals. [1])

Some other details were arranged in a conversation between Lord Lansdowne and Cambon on December 9th [2]) and two days later the Foreign Secretary submitted to his colleagues the work that had been done.

> "Mr. Balfour with his humble duty to Your Majesty begs respectfully to say that Cabinet was this afternoon chiefly engaged on Foreign Affairs. Lord Lansdowne explained at length the stage now reached in the Anglo-French negotiations. There seems no insuperable or even serious difficulty in connection with Egypt: – and though Morocco still presents certain points of difference, it ought not to be hard to find a way through them. Newfoundland, and the compensation to be given to the French in respect of their cession of their rights on the 'Treaty Shore', (as it is called) presents the most embarrassing of the outstanding problems – and this among other matters was to be discussed, after Cabinet, between Lord Lansdowne and M. Cambon." [3])

The Cabinet thought the general trend of the discussions to be acceptable and left them to Lord Lansdowne for further consideration during the Christmas recess.

> "Mr. Balfour with his humble duty to Your Majesty begs respectfully to say that at Cabinet to-day [14th December, 1903] Lord Lansdowne reported the progress up to date of the French negotiations. On the whole they seem satisfactory, and during the Christmas recess he was empowered to go on with them on the general lines already laid down, referring any point of doubt to the Prime Minister, and – in an extreme case to a specially summoned Cabinet. . . ." [4])

It was an unpleasant surprise, therefore, when the Cabinet met again on January 24th to find that the negotiations had come more or less to a deadlock. [5])

> ". . . .The afternoon [of yesterday's Cabinet] was mainly occupied by an anxious and lengthy discussion on the French negotiations. These appear to have reached something like a deadlock. The French insist on 'territorial compensation' for their Newfoundland rights. This is in itself not perhaps unreasonable. But unfortunately no territorial compensation which we are in a position to offer seems to them sufficient. They ask for the Gambia. Now it appears that Mr. Gladstone in the height of his power in 1869, and Mr. Disraeli in the height of his power in 1875, both desired to give the Gambia in exchange for other rights and privileges. Both had to give way to the feeling which the proposal excited. It seems hardly

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[1]) Br. Doc. II no. 373–377. [2]) Br. Doc. II no. 378. [3]) Royal Archives R 24/no. 45.
[4]) Royal Archives R 24/no. 46. [5]) Br. Doc. II no. 381–388.

likely that (even if we thought it right to try), we should succeed, where Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Disraeli failed.
Similar difficulties arise in the case of Nigeria- and all we can at present do is to offer the French additional trading facilities in Western Africa and some relatively unimportant territorial concession in Sokoto and the neighbourhood of Lake Chad.
It remains to be seen what they will say to such a proposal. If they decline it, and make no counter proposals, it seems hard to see what the next step is to be. We must earnestly hope that these promising negotiations will not wholly break down. It would be lamentable, especially from the Egyptian point of view. . . ." [1])

Three days later, however, M. Cambon "made a proposal with regard to 'territorial compensation' which Lord Lansdowne regards as more hopeful than any which he has yet received. . . ." [2]) and on February 26th the Prime Minister was able to report that a solution had been found.

"The most important topic raised [at yesterday's Cabinet] related to the French negotiations. Lord Lansdowne gave a very clear account of their present position. He regarded it as out of the question that the French would come to any acceptable arrangement with regard to New Hebrides, but expressed his belief that Egypt, Newfoundland, Morocco could all be settled if we were prepared to give up the Isles de Los, on the W. Coast of Africa, oppositie the French possession of Senegambia. These islands are, in the opinion of the Admiralty, of no use to us: but on the other hand the French are naturally desirous of obtaining them, as they lie close to their own shore. The Cabinet, having regard to the desirability of coming to some arrangement with France, a desirability by no means diminished by the present posture of European Affairs, authorized Lord Lansdowne to close if possible on these lines with M. Delcassé.
Mr. Balfour has no doubt that this decision is right: – but he is by no means sure that it will be popular. . . ." [3])

The King himself was very much in favour of the proposed solution of giving up the 'Isles de Los' and he instructed his private secretary: "Please write Balfour a line that I am delighted that we intend giving 'Les Isles de Los' to France – It is in the first place right that we should do so, and secondly *more* than *ever* now we must have no 'bone of contention' between us and the French Government. I wish Lansdowne could let Spencer [Leader Liberal Party, House of Lords] know privately of it." [4])

A favourable report reached the King a few days later when his Prime Minister wrote:

"Mr. Balfour with his humble duty to Your Majesty begs respectfully to say that Lord Lansdowne held out hopes to the Cabinet that the differences between himself and M. Cambon on the French negotiations were now

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[1]) Royal Archives R 24/no. 53 – Mr. Balfour to the King. [2]) Lord Lansdowne to the King, Royal Archives W 44/no. 23b. [3]) Royal Archives R 24/no. 66. [4]) Royal Archives R 24/no. 69.

reduced to so narrow a point that he had every hope of the treaty being brought to a satisfactory conclusion. The Spaniards are suspicious, but as their interests are carefully safeguarded, it is to be hoped that they will fall into line." [1])

But still more trouble lay ahead. For M. Delcassé was thrown into a panic, because French interests on the Newfoundland shore were insisting on a more advantageous settlement. Lord Lansdowne showed himself very indignant about this attempt to force his hand and even threatened to break off negotiations, but luckily the storm blew over. [2])

There were some other last-minute difficulties about the French declaration of their recognition of the permanency of the British occupation in Egypt, [3]) but on April 7th Lord Lansdowne was able to wire to the King, who was staying in Copenhagen:

"Humble duty. I beg to inform Your Majesty that my discussions with the French Ambassador have proceeded satisfactorily and that I hope to reach a final agreement to-morrow. As Parliament is not sitting, it will, I venture to think, be better that no announcement should yet be made." [4])

Next day he was able to send off a further telegram announcing final agreement:

"Humble duty. Lord Lansdowne begs to inform Your Majesty that he has signed agreements with the French Ambassador. The question of publication will be considered by Your Majesty's Ministers next week." [5])

Lord Lansdowne must have felt a very justifiable pride when he received his Sovereign's answer:

"I sincerely congratulate you on having brought these difficult negotiations to a successful termination. Hope House of Lords may meet at the same time as the House of Commons so that you may at once be able to make a statement with regard to arrangement arrived at." [6])

The Convention was in fact signed on April 8th by Lord Lansdowne and Paul Cambon. Summaries of the terms and conditions were published in London and Paris on the following day, whilst the official text of the Treaty, together with an explanatory letter from Lord Lansdowne, was made public in London on April 12th. [7])

The Opposition raised the matter in Parliament and the Home Secretary reported to the King:

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[1]) Royal Archives R 24/no. 68. [2]) Br. Doc. II no. 406–410. [3]) Br. Doc. II no. 410–415. [4]) Royal Archives W 44/no. 53. [5]) Royal Archives W 44/no. 55. [6]) Royal Archives W 44/no. 54. [7]) Br. Doc. II no. 416.

"Mr. Akers Douglas with his humble duty to Your Majesty begs leave to submit an account of the proceedings of the House of Commons this day. The Prime Minister in answer to a series of questions relating to the Anglo-French agreement, said there were portions of the treaty relating to the cession of territory which would require the sanction of Parliament, and some which would require the voting of money by Parliament; in any case he thought the subject was one which ought to be discussed in the House and he would provide a fitting opportunity. . . ." [1])

Meanwhile the King had sent another letter of congratulation to his Foreign Secretary, who, deeply grateful for this token of royal appreciation, replied:

"Lord Lansdowne presents his humble duty to the King and he has the honour to thank Your Majesty for your gracious letter of the 13th, in which you intimate your approval of the recently concluded agreement, and of the part which he has taken in the negotiation. Your Majesty's kind words are greatly valued by Lord Lansdowne, and will never be forgotten by him.

The agreement has been very well received, and the discordant notes have been neither numerous nor strong. But it is obvious that in a transaction covering so much ground, there must be points which lend themselves to attack or critisism.

Up to the very last moment the French Government shewed themselves a little difficult. The bait question in particular was most troublesome, probably because at the last moment M. Delcassé found himself hard pressed by the Fishing interests at St. Malo and Fécamp, which had hoped for a better bargain.

It was in some ways unlucky that the signature took place when Parliament was not sitting. In these circumstances an explanation, such as Your Majesty had suggested, was impossible, and Lord Lansdowne therefore fell back upon an explanatory despatch – which, in view of the premature revelation of the agreements in Paris, and the consequent necessity of at once presenting them to the British Parliament, had to be rather hurriedly written. . . .

Sir E. Goschen has in compliance with Your Majesty's instructions sent Lord Lansdowne a copy of M. Crozier's note: a very charmingly worded one which it is a pleasure to read. . . .

As Lord Lansdowne gathers that Your Majesty may be pleased to give him an audience on an early day, he will not further trouble you, but will conclude by renewing the expression of his sincere gratitude to Your Majesty for your generous appreciation of the work to which he has under Your Majesty's directions been a humble contributor." [2])

The note written by M. Crozier, French Ambassador in Copenhagen, to his British colleague, Sir E. Goschen, to which Lord Lansdowne referred, was a letter dated April 11th and written with all the sentiment, formality and eloquence which probably only the French possess.

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[1]) Royal Archives R 32/no. 98. [2]) Royal Archives W 44/no. 85.

"Legation de France, Copenhague

"Mon cher Collègue et Ami,

Je n'ai jamais tant regretté d'être malade; j'aurais si vivement désiré aller vous voir et me réjouir avec vous de la conclusion des accords entre nos deux pays. Jamais arrangements plus honorables pour l'un et pour l'autre n'ont été signés et si bons que sont les avantages que nous en retirerons il en sortira encore du profit pour le reste du monde.
Je sais quelle part personnelle le Roi a prise à cet événement aussi bienfaisant que glorieux pour ceux qui en ont eu l'initiative, et je n'ai qu'un regret, celui d'avoir été privé par ma maladie de la chance d'avoir l'honneur de présenter à Sa Majesté le respectueux hommage de mon admiration. Je ne doute pas que votre satisfaction ne soit égale à la mienne et que vous ne vous réjouissiez comme moi de tous les avantages d'un événement dont une plus grande assurance de la paix n'est pas le moindre." [1])

As the consent of Parliament still had to be obtained, a Bill for the ratification of the Anglo-French Convention was introduced. The second Reading in the Commons took place on June 1st, 1904.

The main speeches for the Government and the Opposition were made by Earl Percy, the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and Sir Edward Grey, both of whom drew attention to the fact that the importance of the Agreement was not to be found in the actual wording of the text, but in the sentiments and feelings that made its conclusion possible.

Earl Percy was particularly anxious to point out that the Agreement was not an ordinary one:

"The desire of both parties to these negotiations throughout the whole of our discussion has been to see not how little we could concede to one another, but how far we could meet one another's views....
This agreement marks a great step forward in the direction in which all of us are agreed in desiring that this country should advance....
In our opinion the advantages we gain under the convention itself are ample to warrant any sacrifice we ask the House to make; but the real quid pro quo for these sacrifices is not to be found within the four corners of the convention, nor even in the general adjustments of interests between the two countries. If that were so there would be nothing to distinguish the Agreement from agreements entered into from time to time by various countries for the settlement of some frontier dispute or matters of that kind. What constitutes the distinctive feature of this agreement to my mind is that the parties pledge themselves, not merely to abstain from poaching on one another's preserves, but to do all in their power to further one another's interests. [Cheers].
We promise to give one another, as friends, advantages which are ordinarily given only to allies.... [2])

And Sir Edward Grey, was not only quite willing to recognise this new

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[1]) Royal Archives W 44/no. 65. [2]) Times June 2nd 1904.

departure, but even advocated other arrangements on the same lines, when he said:

> "But the real point of view from which we ought to look at the Agreement is the point of view of general policy....
> That is the spirit in which the House will desire that the Agreement as a whole should be regarded (Hear, Hear); and if they study the Agreement closely they will see how much more important the Agreement is in the spirit in this case than in the letter, especially with regard to the future....
> The fact is that this Agreement means really a change of policy which is common not only to ourselves but to some other nations as well.
> Other things in Europe have happened in the last few years that were not possible some time ago. Europe was some time ago divided into two, not hostile, but certainly not friendly camps – the Triple Alliance and the Dual Alliance. There has been a tendency to obliteration of the hard-and-fast lines between those two camps. Italy has made her own arrangements with France directly. Austria has made her own arrangements with Russia directly.... It would not have been possible to establish this Agreement between ourselves and France some years ago, because the atmosphere was not so favourable....
> I welcome the Agreement and I hope, as the noble Lord [Percy] has said, the Government will lose no opportunity of making it a working model for other cases where it is possible to do so. I welcome this Agreement because I believe not only will it be a working model for other cases, but because it has in it great possibilities for keeping us in contact with France, with a growth of friendly relations to the advantage of both countries, and the many points of contact in various parts of the world will not, as in the past, be occasion for dispute and debate, but will be so many opportunities for the interchange of international courtesies." [1])

These proceedings enabled the Leader of the House to send the following report to the King, who had done so much to make them possible:

> "Mr. Akers-Douglas with his humble duty to Your Majesty begs leave to submit an account of the proceedings of the House of Commons this day.
> ....Lord Percy in a lucid and able speech moved the 2nd Reading of the Anglo-French Convention Bill. He shortly remined the House of the principal provisions of the Agreement – the text of which had some weeks ago been laid. It had been said that the gains of France had been greater than those of this country. This was not his view. He was not at all anxious to attempt to prove that we had driven a hard bargain and he should be sorry if France thought we had done so. The object of both sides had been to see how far they could meet each other. The agreement marked a great step forward on the path we should travel; and he hoped it would be a model for the adjustment of differences with other countries.
> Sir Edward Grey thoroughly approved of our action – he thought the spirit of the agreement was more important than the letter of it. Such an arrangement would not have been possible a few years ago. Mr. Gibson

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[1]) Times June 2nd 1904.

> Bowles criticised the Bill in its details, but refrained from opposing it. Sir Charles Dilke on the whole approved the Bill: but took exception to the portion relating to Siam.
> Mr. Balfour wound up the debate in a short speech and the 2nd Reading was passed without division. . . ." [1])

Thus, with only a few voices raised in dissent, Great Britain recorded her willingness to enter upon a new period of co-operation. Her leading newspaper, the "Times", commented eloquently upon this new spirit in British foreign affairs, and the following quotation seems a fitting note on which to end this chapter.

> "For this Convention is more than a diplomatic settlement between two Governments. It is an Agreement between two great peoples, marking on both sides a sincere desire to terminate irrational antagonism, and to pursue in amity and a spirit of reciprocal helpfulness the great mission in which both are called upon to play a prominent part." [2])

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[1]) Royal Archives R 33/no. 20. [2]) Times June 2nd 1904.