

INTRODUCTORY

to deny that King Edward aspired to and attained our encirclement is mere playing with words. The fact of the matter was that the communications between the two Cabinets were confined essentially to the dispatch of such formal business as was required by the mutual relations of two States not at war with one another. Further, that Germany found itself opposed by a combine of England, Russia and France in all controversial questions of World policy. Finally, that this combine not only raised every obstacle to the realisation of German ambitions, but also laboured systematically and successfully to seduce Italy from the Triple Alliance. You may call that "encirclement," "balance of power," or what you will ; but the object aimed at and eventually attained was no other than the welding of a serried and supreme combination of States for obstructing Germany, by diplomatic means at least, in the free development of its growing powers. This is the view taken of this policy not only among chauvinist critics but also in strictly pacifist circles, both in England, in Germany, and among neutral observers. Seeing that during this war the Entente has taken Belgium to its arms as its protégé, and enthusiastically welcomed it to its ranks as a fellow champion for right and justice, it can scarcely ignore the opinion of Belgian diplomats to the above effect. Their verdict exposes the various stages of encirclement in the light of the most damning evidence, and is even more convincing perhaps

RESULTS OF ENCIRCLEMENT

than the numerous English witnesses who proclaimed at every opportunity the unfriendly and even hostile tendencies of the Entente Cordiale in respect of Germany.

We may learn much in this connection from the significance attached to the position of England in the new alignment of the Great Powers by the most respected English statesmen without distinction of party. Sir Edward Grey had declared as early as 1905, when the Liberal Party were about to take over the Government, that a Liberal Cabinet would maintain the foreign policy of the former Government. He added that he aspired to better relations with Russia, and that it was desirable not to oppose an improvement in the relations with Germany, but on the condition that such improvement would not prejudice English friendship with France. There you have it—an understanding with Germany, but only in so far as French friendship permits, and later Russian friendship becomes also a condition—that is the guiding principle of English policy from the end of the period of “splendid isolation” right up to the war. And this principle was a serious matter for Germany. England was well aware that the eyes of France were steadfastly fixed upon Alsace-Lorraine, and could hear the deep notes of the *revanche motif* sounding ever through the harmonies of Russo-French fraternisation. England knew well the conditions in respect of improvement of armaments and develop-