

Foreword to Volume IV.

THE decision to publish a selection from the British Documents dealing with the origins of the War was taken by Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, in the summer of 1924. It was confirmed and announced by Mr. (now Sir) Austen Chamberlain in a letter of the 28th November, 1924 (published in "The Times" on the 3rd December), addressed to Dr. R. W. Seton-Watson. Some extracts from this letter were published by the Editors in the Foreword to Volume XI. and it need only be said here that the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs referred to "impartiality and accuracy" as being the necessary qualifications for any work which the Editors were to publish.

Volume IV is concerned almost exclusively with the events leading up to the Anglo-Russian Entente. The first chapter deals with the many delicate questions arising out of the Russo-Japanese War. It includes an account of the critical situation created by the Baltic Fleet incident and the Straits question, and gives a full description, from the British point of view, of President Roosevelt's mediation and of the Peace of Portsmouth. The next chapter gives the details of the renewal of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, which took place immediately before the conclusion of peace with Russia. The subject of the third chapter is a general study of Anglo-Russian relations from the end of 1903 onwards till the signing of the Convention on August 31, 1907, while the next three chapters deal in more detail with the three separate subjects of Thibet, Persia, and Afghanistan. The volume ends with a chapter on the reception of the news of the Anglo-Russian Convention in Persia and by the Great Powers. The period covered is, therefore, that during which the deep-seated enmity between Great Britain and Russia was allayed, and succeeded by a friendly working arrangement. The study of this diplomatic revolution from the English side is thus, for the first time, rendered possible.

•One important feature in the volume is the indication of the attitude of King Edward towards the Anglo-Russian *rapprochement* in his interview with M. Isvolski during 1904 (pp. 188-9). Another lies in the views expressed by the Emperor Nicholas II on the Dogger Bank incident (pp. 25-8), and in the negotiations on the Straits question and the subsequent full discussion in Sir Charles Hardinge's Memorandum of November 16, 1906 (pp. 58-60). This may profitably be compared with the negotiations of Sir Edward Grey with M. Isvolski in 1908, to which reference may be found in Volume V, pp. 429-456. M. (Count) Witte's views both on the Russo-Japanese War and on subsequent relations with Great Britain are also of much interest (pp. 77-8, 92-4).

The private correspondence of Sir Cecil Spring-Rice with Sir Edward Grey, together with that of Sir Arthur Nicolson (Lord Carnock), gives the inner history of the Anglo-Russian negotiations, and special interest attaches to the latter's general survey of Russia in the Annual Report of 1906 (pp. 255-65). One of the points of real interest disclosed in it (p. 256) is that Great Britain was ignorant of the terms of the Franco-Russian Alliance at the beginning of 1907.

The negotiations relating to Thibet reveal little not already published, but there is a curious diplomatic incident relating to the proposed Mongolian frontier formula which is now for the first time made public (pp. 284-6).

The chapter on Persia contains two important papers, the "Curzon despatch" from India of September 21, 1899, previously printed only in part, and of which the most important passage is now given in full (pp. 356-63), and a despatch from

Lord George Hamilton of July 6, 1900, stating the policy of the Home Government pp. 363-5). There is also a valuable Foreign Office Memorandum on Persia of October 31, 1905 (pp. 365-74). Another of October 14, 1903 (Chapter XXVII, pp. 512-22) deals with Afghanistan.

The whole diplomatic transactions are therefore related in considerable detail, and evidence is supplied from the British representatives at St. Petersburg and Tehran, and in India, as well as from the Foreign Office direct.

Probably the most important parts of the last chapter are the three letters in which His Majesty King Edward (pp. 595-6), Sir Edward Grey (pp. 616-7) and Sir C. Hardinge (p. 580) state in their private correspondence their respective conceptions of the meaning and purpose of the agreement just after it was signed. There is also a valuable Foreign Office Memorandum on the same subject compiled at the beginning of the year 1908 (pp. 612-6).

The Editors have made use of the Annual Reports (which began in 1906), of various Foreign Office Memoranda, and also of the private correspondence both of Sir Edward (Lord) Grey and Sir Arthur Nicolson (Lord Carnock). The material is therefore more abundant than in the years between 1898 and 1904. Though slightly less between 1905 and 1907 than for the period from 1908 onwards it appears to be quite adequate, and there do not seem to have been any conversations of importance with Russian diplomats about which written evidence does not exist.

In accordance with the practice of the Foreign Office already observed in the case of Volumes I, II, III, V and XI of the series, the documents in the present volume containing information supplied or opinions expressed by certain Foreign Governments have been communicated to them for their agreement. The response in this volume has been generally satisfactory.

The Editors have inserted asterisks to indicate gaps or omissions in documents. As a rule these gaps are due to the unimportance of the matter omitted, in which case an indication of subject is usually given. In a number of instances they are due to a desire to consult the susceptibilities of the persons or the Governments concerned, and, in this volume, also to meet the views of two British Government departments. The Editors have, however, omitted nothing which they consider essential to the understanding of the history of the period. They think it well here to state, as they did in the preface to Volume III, p. viii, that they would feel compelled to resign if any attempt were made to insist on the omission of any document which is in their view vital or essential. In addition to despatches and telegrams, there are memoranda and minutes which are properly official documents. No objection has been raised by His Majesty's Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to the publication in this volume of any documents of the above kind, nor to the publication of certain similar papers or of private letters, which are not properly official documents, but which are preserved in the Foreign Office.

The India Office and Government of India have given consent to the publication of certain parts of the Curzon despatch of September 21, 1899 (pp. 356-63) which the Editors considered vital to their purpose.

His Majesty the King has graciously consented to the publication of Minutes and other papers by King Edward. The Editors have also to acknowledge assistance given to them in several ways by the late Lord Carnock. Lord Newton, who is writing the biography of Lord Lansdowne, has kindly assisted the Editors in several ways, notably in supplying the text of some private letters which are alluded to on p. 172. His

forthcoming work will contain a number of private letters dealing with the subjects mentioned in this volume. In conclusion, the Editors desire to acknowledge the friendly assistance and advice of various officials at the Foreign Office, among whom they would like to mention the Librarian, Mr. Stephen Gaselee, C.B.E., Mr. J. W. Headlam-Morley, C.B.E., late Historical Adviser, and Mr. J. W. Field. They wish also to thank Sir Robert Holland and others at the India Office for their assistance, Major-General Charles at the War Office, the officials of the Record Office in London, Mr. Wright, who is in charge of the Diplomatic and Embassy Archives at Cambridge, and Miss Priscilla BoysSmith, B.A., who assisted in the preparation of the volume for press.

G. P. GOOCH.

HAROLD TEMPERLEY.

N.B.—The Oriental names and words in this volume are frequently spelled in more than one way by different, or even by the same, writers. But in accordance with previous practice (*v. Gooch & Temperley*, Volume I, p. x) it has been thought better to leave the text unaltered.