

The newest Triple Alliance in Europe—the third, at least, this year—has a commendable purpose. There is little room for doubt that gross abuses and oppressions have been practised in Armenia. Probably many of the Armenians are disaffected toward their Government, perhaps turbulent and seditious. It would be strange if such were not the case, considering the manner in which they have been treated for centuries. Probably, too, many Armenian sympathizers in England and elsewhere have been hysterical and extravagant in their denunciations of the Porte and their demands for intervention. But when all due allowance has been made for these things, the conviction remains unshaken in most impartial minds that the native Christians of Asia Minor are scandalously misgoverned, pillaged, outraged and massacred. In this view of the case, it is well for England, France and Russia to unite in action for their relief.

Just what is to be done, however, or what can be done, is by no means clear. The first step, of course, will be a diplomatic joint note to the Porte, demanding fulfilment of the terms of the Treaty of Berlin. That Instrument, made in 1878, bound the Porte to institute satisfactory reforms in Asia Minor, and charged England with seeing that it was done. But in that particular the treaty has been ignored. The reforms have not been made, and England has had too many other fish to fry to call the Porte to account for the neglect. Now, however, England will demand the fulfilment of the treaty, and will be backed in the demand by France and Russia.

But what then? The Porte will temporize, if possible. But if a direct answer must be given it will be either yes or no. No matter which, it will mean no. Turkish promises are worth no more now than they were in 1878, or than when the notorious Moussa Bey pretended to be good and bought a Bible. No matter how sincerely desirous the amiable and enlightened Sultan himself may be to effect reforms and to rule righteously, he is powerless before the truculent fanaticism of the Ulema and of the Kurdish chiefs. Practically, therefore, the answer to the Triple Alliance will be a negative one. The Porte either will not or cannot do better than it is doing for the Armenians.

What then? So august a Triple Alliance cannot be slighted in that way. But how can it proceed from words to actions? It is scarcely conceivable that three Powers, so distrustful and jealous of each other, could work together harmoniously. Nor would the other two consent to let any one of them go in alone and perform the task. Memories of Egypt are too vivid and abiding. Russia is the only one of the three that owns territory adjacent to Armenia and could send a force thither without practical occupation of the whole Turkish Empire. But even with a Radical Ministry at St. Stephen's no English statesman would care to propose giving Russia a free hand in Asia Minor. The first movement of a Russian regiment across the Turkish frontier would rouse the old Jingo spirit too strongly for any Ministry to withstand. If, then, concerted action be impracticable, and solitary action out of the question, what is this new Triple Alliance to do? Its purpose is, as we have said, most excellent. But it is difficult to see how that purpose can be effected without the gravest peril to the general peace of Europe.