

HANDBOOKS PREPARED UNDER THE DIRECTION OF THE  
HISTORICAL SECTION OF THE FOREIGN OFFICE.—No. 66

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FRANCE AND THE  
LEVANT

LONDON:

PUBLISHED BY H.M. STATIONERY OFFICE

1920



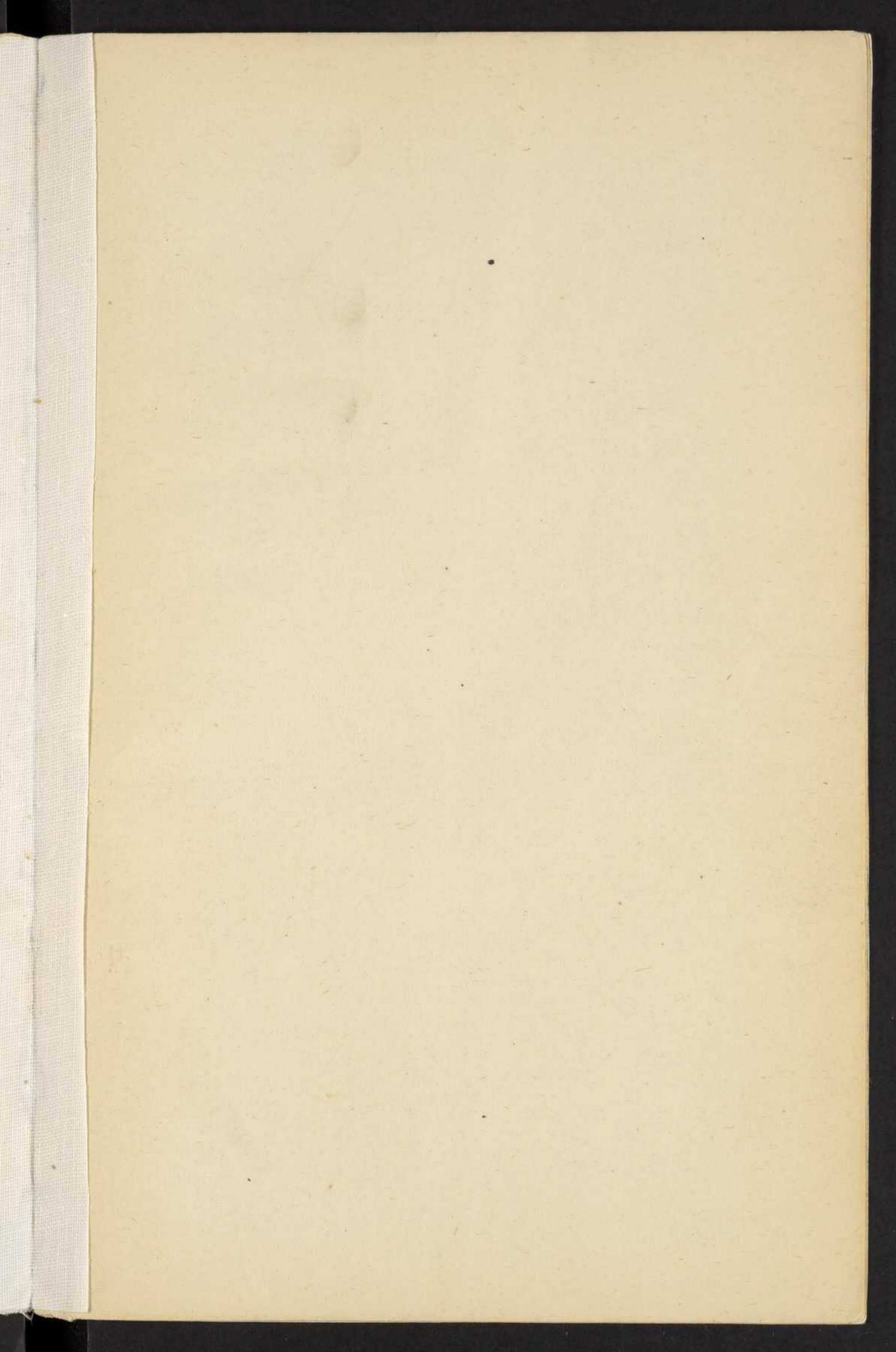


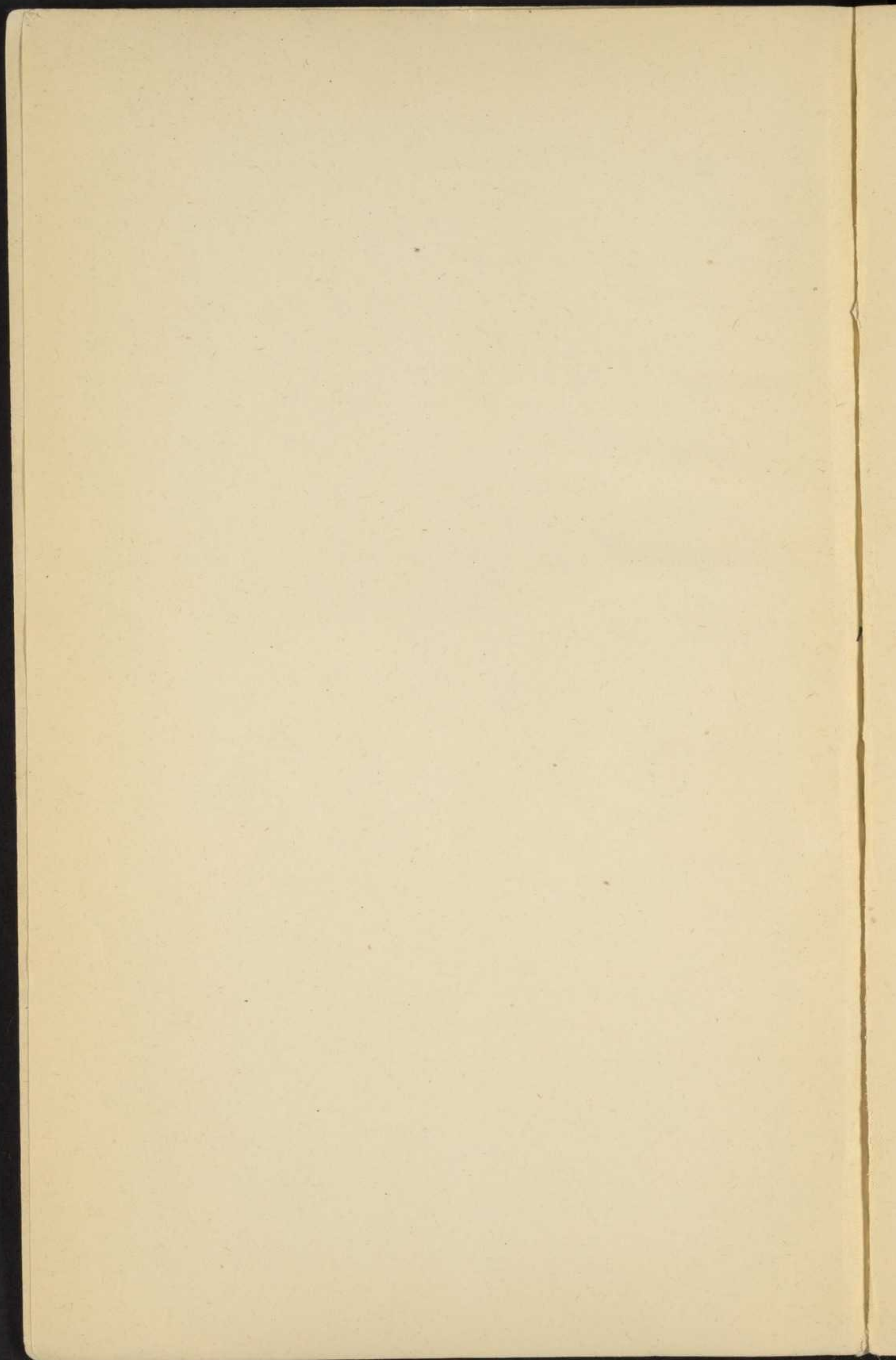


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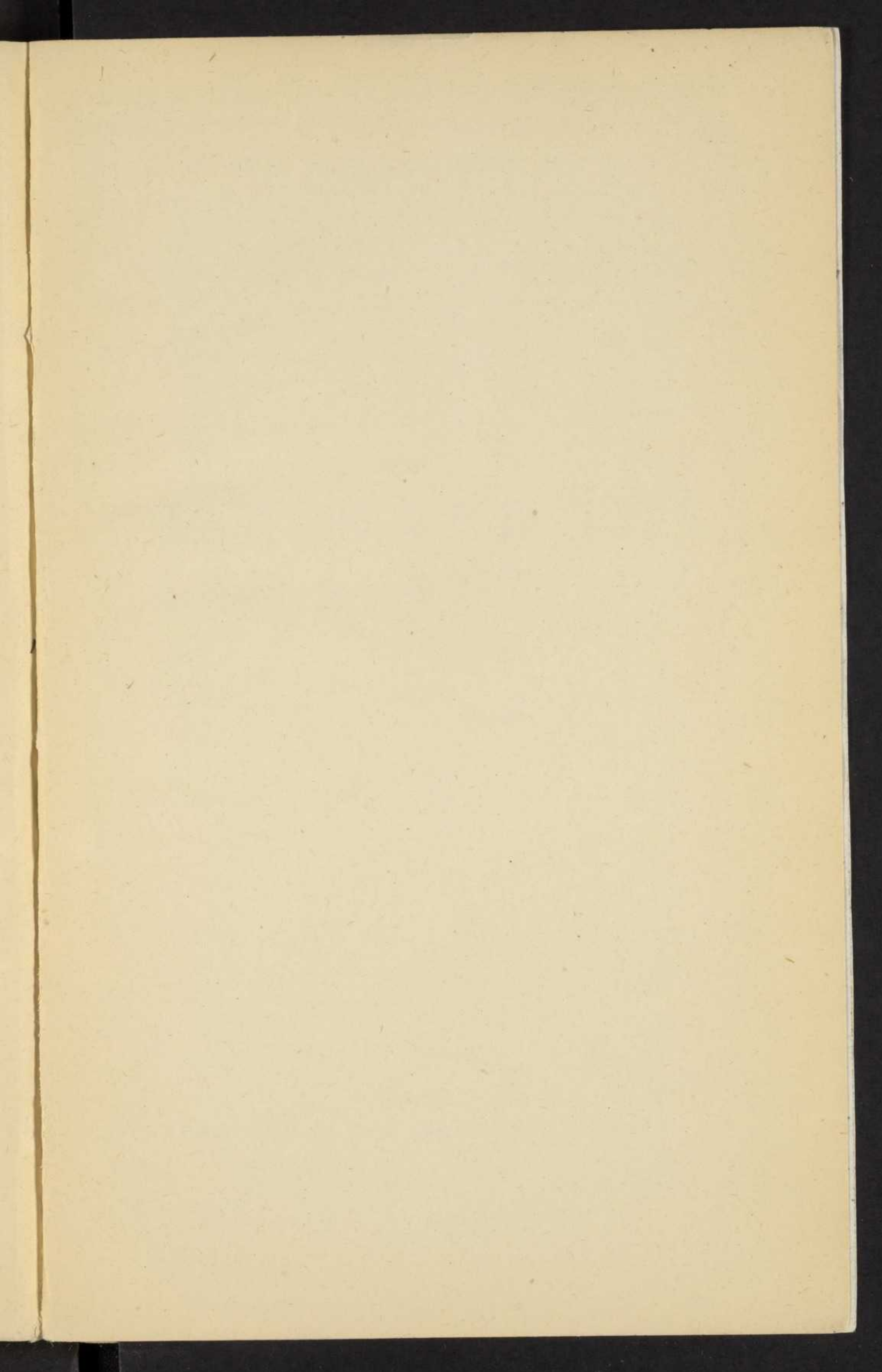
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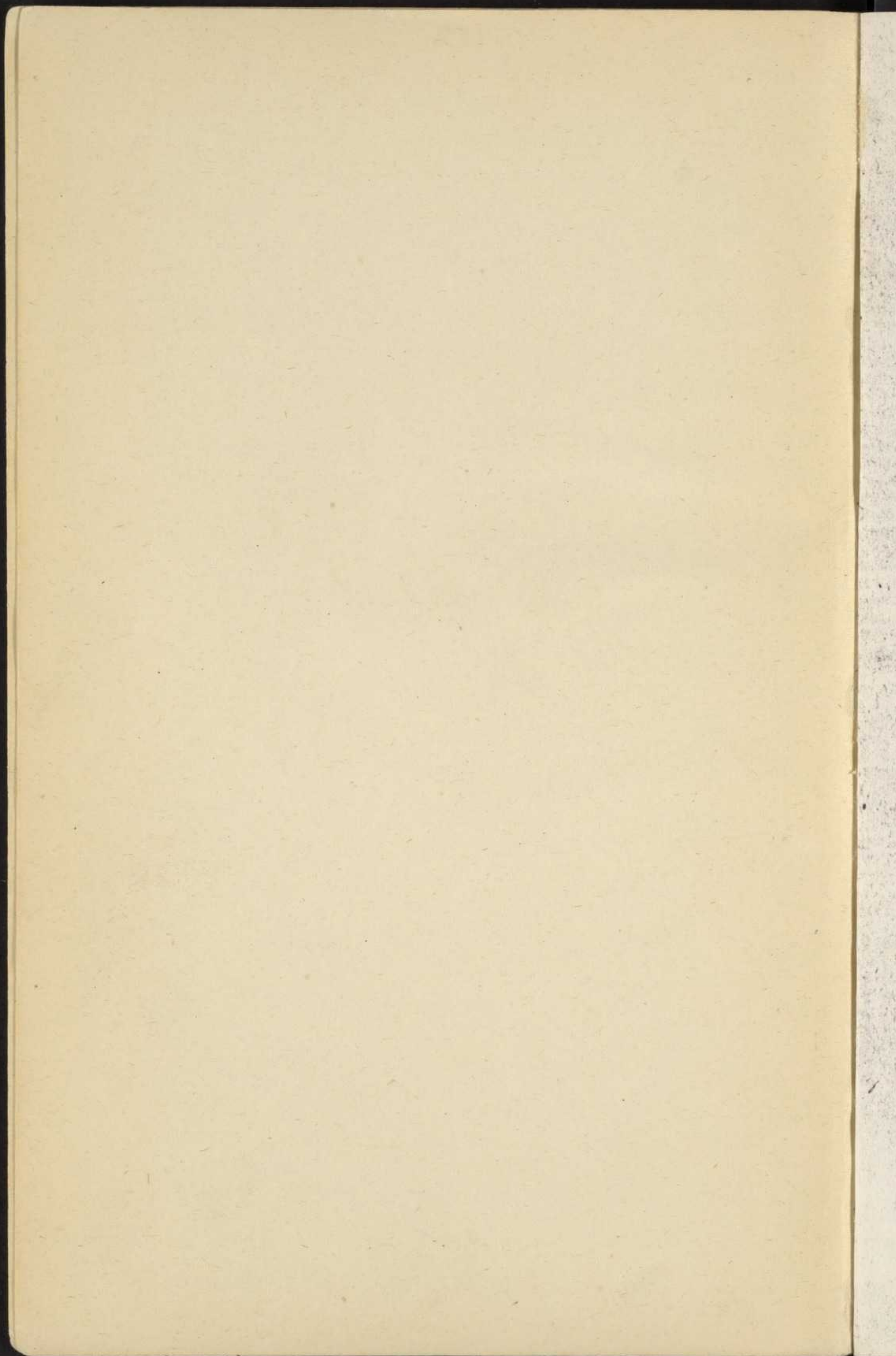














HANDBOOKS PREPARED UNDER THE DIRECTION OF THE  
HISTORICAL SECTION OF THE FOREIGN OFFICE.—No. 66

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*Gr. Brit. Foreign Office. Historical section.*

# FRANCE AND THE LEVANT

LONDON :  
PUBLISHED BY H.M. STATIONERY OFFICE

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1920



HANDBOOK PREPARED UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE  
HISTORICAL SECTION OF THE NATIONAL ANTHROPOLOGICAL ARCHIVES

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FRANCE AND THE  
LEVAULT

LONDON  
PUBLISHED BY H. K. LEITCH, 10, ST. MARTIN'S LANE  
1929

1913-1914



## EDITORIAL NOTE

IN the spring of 1917 the Foreign Office, in connection with the preparation which they were making for the work of the Peace Conference, established a special section whose duty it should be to provide the British Delegates to the Peace Conference with information in the most convenient form—geographical, economic, historical, social, religious and political—respecting the different countries, districts, islands, &c., with which they might have to deal. In addition, volumes were prepared on certain general subjects, mostly of an historical nature, concerning which it appeared that a special study would be useful.

The historical information was compiled by trained writers on historical subjects, who (in most cases) gave their services without any remuneration. For the geographical sections valuable assistance was given by the Intelligence Division (Naval Staff) of the Admiralty; and for the economic sections, by the War Trade Intelligence Department, which had been established by the Foreign Office. Of the maps accompanying the series, some were prepared by the above-mentioned department of the Admiralty, but the bulk of them were the work of the Geographical Section of the General Staff (Military Intelligence Division) of the War Office.

Now that the Conference has nearly completed its task, the Foreign Office, in response to numerous enquiries and requests, has decided to issue the books for public use, believing that they will be useful to students of history, politics, economics and foreign affairs, to publicists generally and to business men and travellers. It is hardly necessary to say that some of the subjects dealt with in the series have not in fact come under discussion at the Peace Conference; but, as the books treating of them contain valuable information, it has been thought advisable to include them.

It must be understood that, although the series of volumes was prepared under the authority, and is now issued with the



## EDITORIAL NOTE

sanction, of the Foreign Office, that Office is not to be regarded as guaranteeing the accuracy of every statement which they contain or as identifying itself with all the opinions expressed in the several volumes; the books were not prepared in the Foreign Office itself, but are in the nature of information provided for the Foreign Office and the British Delegation.

The books are now published, with a few exceptions, substantially as they were issued for the use of the Delegates. No attempt has been made to bring them up to date, for, in the first place, such a process would have entailed a great loss of time and a prohibitive expense; and, in the second, the political and other conditions of a great part of Europe and of the Nearer and Middle East are still unsettled and in such a state of flux that any attempt to describe them would have been incorrect or misleading. The books are therefore to be taken as describing, in general, *ante-bellum* conditions, though in a few cases, where it seemed specially desirable, the account has been brought down to a later date.

G. W. PROTHERO,

*General Editor and formerly*

*Director of the Historical Section.*

*January 1920.*



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## CHRONOLOGICAL SUMMARY

- 1099 Conquest of Jerusalem by the First Crusade.  
 1187 Conquest of Jerusalem by Saladin.  
 1248-54 The Crusade of St Louis.  
 1291 Loss of Acre.  
 1453 Fall of Constantinople.  
 1536 Treaty between Francis I and Suleiman.  
 1553 Renewal of Treaty.  
 1672 Leibnitz urges Louis XIV to conquer Egypt.  
 1762-81 Plans of Vergennes, Choiseul and Saint-Priest.  
 1798 Bonaparte conquers Egypt.  
 1799 Bonaparte invades Syria, but is forced to withdraw.  
 1806 Alliance of France and Turkey.  
 1831-9 Struggle between Mehemet Ali and Mahmud for Syria.  
 1840 Palmerston secures the restoration of Syria to the Sultan, despite French opposition.  
 1854-6 The Crimean War.  
 1859-60 Massacre of Christians in the Lebanon and Damascus.  
     Landing of French troops.  
 1861-4 Lebanon receives autonomy.  
 1869 Opening of the Suez Canal.  
 1882 France declines to aid Great Britain in the suppression of Arabi's rebellion.  
 1905 The French Republic breaks with the Church.  
 1918 Conquest of Palestine and Syria by Allenby.



## FRANCE AND THE LEVANT

EUROPE, ASIA and AFRICA meet in the Levant, the land of the rising sun; and of all the nations of Christendom France claims by far the largest share in its romantic story.

### I. THE CRUSADES

French interests and ambitions in the Levant date from the Crusades, which, though springing from a common Christian sentiment, owed their main impulse and their greatest achievements to France. The First Crusade was preached by Urban II, himself a Frenchman, and by itinerant preachers, such as Peter the Hermit, of Amiens, and, though the King stood aloof, was largely the work of French nobles, French troops and French money. To French feudatories belonged the glory of rescuing the Holy Places from the infidel in 1099; and the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem, ruled as it was by French Kings, was for nearly a century an outpost of France. When the inevitable counter-attack of Islam was launched half a century later and Edessa was lost, it was a French Abbot, Bernard of Clairvaux, who summoned Christendom to save the remaining Christian principalities in the Levant. Louis VII cooperated with Conrad III, and Damascus was attacked; but the Second Crusade ended in failure. The capture of Acre and Jerusalem in 1187 by Saladin set the Third Crusade in motion; but Barbarossa, who was first in the field, perished in Asia Minor. He was followed by Richard I—himself a French feudatory as well as an English King—and Philip Augustus, who recovered Acre, after which Philip quarrelled with his colleague and returned to France. Cyprus, which had been conquered by Richard I, was granted by him as a fief to Guy de Lusignan. The Fourth Crusade, though planned by Germans and aided by



Venetians, was largely French in composition; it established at Constantinople the line of French Emperors who ruled the shrinking Byzantine Empire for half a century, and created a number of petty principalities with French rulers in Greece. In the Fifth Crusade, proclaimed by Innocent III at the Lateran Council in 1215 and carried out by Germany and Austria, France took no part; and she also stood apart from the Sixth, in which the Emperor Frederick II regained Jerusalem in 1229 by negotiation. When the Holy City was lost again in 1244, St Louis in the Seventh Crusade revived the ardent piety of the First. Conquering Damietta, which had been won and lost in the Fifth Crusade, he essayed the conquest of Egypt, but was captured with his whole army in 1250. Winning his liberty by a heavy ransom, he spent three years in the Holy Land, fortifying Acre and other coast cities. On his return to France in 1254 he attempted to secure peace among the rulers of Christendom in order to combine against the infidel; but Europe had outgrown its crusading fervour, and in the Eighth Crusade St Louis found himself alone at the rendezvous. His death in 1270 in Tunis, which he had resolved to regain for the faith, consecrated the life of the last and noblest of the Crusaders. Acre was stormed by the Mamelukes in 1291, and the last Christian posts in the Levant were abandoned.

The result of two centuries of effort, marred as they were by cruelty, treachery and self-seeking, was to leave the infidel even more strongly entrenched in the possession of the Holy Places. Yet France had more to show for her pains than any of her comrades or rivals. The kingdoms and principalities founded during the Crusades in Palestine and Syria, Asia Minor and Cyprus, were French. The Latin Emperors at Constantinople were French, and French princelets retained some fragments of territory in Greece. The French tongue was never forgotten; and for centuries to come the Christians of Europe were "Franks" to dwellers in the Levant. In any future rivalry for power or privilege in the Eastern Mediterranean, France, with her memories



of *Gesta Dei per Francos*, would start with more substantial assets and richer traditions than any of her competitors.

For two and half centuries after the death of St Louis Christendom turned a deaf ear to the appeals of successive Popes to stem the tide of Turkish conquest. France averted her glance from the East, being fully occupied with the Hundred Years' War and with the consolidation of her Monarchy. Her place in the foreground of the stage was taken by the City Republics of Italy, whose steps were drawn to the Levant not by religion but by lure of gain, and who witnessed the rapid growth of the Ottoman dominion without a qualm. Bertrandon de la Brocquière, a French traveller in Syria and Asia Minor in 1432, found that the Turks were well disposed towards the French; but, whenever he or any other Frenchman was in a difficulty, he was compelled to have recourse to the protection of the Venetians or the Genoese. On reaching Constantinople he discovered that these two States possessed not only their own markets but officials corresponding to modern Consuls, and that no other Christian nation could boast of similar representatives in the capital of the Byzantine Empire. When the city was besieged and fell in 1453 no Christian Power lifted a finger to avert its fate. For one moment alone did the old glamour of the East reassert its sway, and it is characteristic of the atmospheric change of the fifteenth century that the vision of a new crusade was vouchsafed to an eccentric, if not half-witted, ruler. It was the dream of Charles VIII to prepare for the domination of the East by the conquest of Italy, and at Naples he crowned himself King of Jerusalem. But his invasion of Italy led to a combination not against the Turks but against the French, and he had enough to do to withdraw his forces to France.

## II. THE ALLIANCE OF FRANCE AND TURKEY

A new chapter in the history of France and of Europe opens with Francis I, who boldly broke with the traditional hostility to Islam and summoned the infidel



to aid him in his struggle with a Christian rival. On his accession he expressed his desire to unite all Christian Princes against the Turks, and he joined the League formed by Pope Leo X in 1517, despatching a naval force against the African corsairs. But his defeat and capture at Pavia in 1525 effected his conversion, and led to the first alliance between the ruler of a great Christian State and the Turk. Since all Europe was on the side of the Emperor, the King turned to the Turks, whose armies could attack his rival from the Hungarian plains and whose fleets swept unchallenged through the Mediterranean. Sultan Suleiman was almost as eager for an alliance as the captive monarch, for the Turks lived under the perpetual menace of a combination of Christian Powers. To detach from this potential coalition the Most Christian King and the nation which had inspired the Crusades was to insure his dominions in Europe and to render possible their extension. The theoretical unity of Christendom vanished when France substituted the policy of interest for the policy of principle, and when the dream of delivering the Eastern Christians from the infidel was replaced by the ambition to dominate Europe.

While Francis was a prisoner in Madrid, his mother sent an envoy to the Sultan imploring intervention on behalf of her son. The envoy and his suite, who carried rich presents, were murdered in Bosnia; but at the end of the same year (1525) another envoy arrived in Constantinople and began negotiations, which eventually led to a treaty signed in 1536. The original has not been preserved, but its outlines may be recovered from the pact of 1553 which renewed it. In return for handsome payment the Sultan engaged to send a fleet to the western Mediterranean to cooperate with the navy of France. The vessels of the Emperor Charles and his allies captured by the Ottoman Fleet should belong to the Sultan, the conquered towns should be given up to plunder by the Turks and their inhabitants become their prisoners and slaves, the towns themselves, with their munitions of war, falling to the King of France.



When the "Most Christian King" had made his decision, he determined to extract all possible profit from the new alliance. The Turk was expected not only to furnish military aid, but to grant commercial privileges and to improve the position of his Christian subjects. The results of the alliance, however, proved disappointing to Francis, whose policy appeared sacrilegious to the Catholic sentiment of France. The antagonism of Christendom weakened the King's arm, and he declined cooperation on land; but Turkish corsairs ravaged the coasts of the Mediterranean, and in 1541 Toulon welcomed Turkish galleys rowed by thousands of Christian slaves. In 1553 the allies agreed to take Corsica as an armed base for an attack on Spain; but Turkish methods of waging war outraged French opinion, and the enterprise was abandoned. The Turks lost faith in the sincerity of France; and in 1557 the French Ambassador reported that he could not convince the Sultan or his Ministers that the alliance was or ever had been advantageous to Turkey. Henceforth, though France and Turkey remained enemies of the Habsburgs, they no longer cooperated in the attack, and France took no part in the battle of Lepanto (1571). The destruction of the Turkish navy rendered a Turkish alliance less attractive; and the religious zeal of the Counter-Reformation, which burned nowhere more fiercely than in France, forbade close association with Islam. The substitution of the Bourbons for the Valois broke another link in the chain; and the Grand Design of Henry IV proposed to secure the equilibrium of Europe at the expense of the Turk. Within half a century of the battle of Pavia the political association between France and Turkey was at an end; and French policy, when it gave a thought to the Eastern Question, reverted to the earlier principle of the defence of Christendom.

The second element in the transaction between Francis and Suleiman was the promise of commercial monopoly. By the pact of 1536 all nations desiring to trade with the Turks were compelled to transport their goods under the French flag. This privilege was especi-



ally onerous for the Venetians, who had long maintained an active trade with Turkey and possessed an imposing mercantile marine. The French monopoly could not survive the political association with Turkey; and in 1581 the Venetians were specifically exempted from its observance. The Levant Company was founded in 1581; and, despite French protests, British vessels were allowed to trade under their own flag. A third breach in the monopoly occurred soon after, when the Dutch obtained a similar privilege; and in the eighteenth century Austria, Russia, Sweden and Spain concluded commercial treaties on the same lines. Thus, despite a good deal of trade between Marseilles and the Syrian coast, above all with Sidon, the port of Damascus, the French monopoly gradually crumbled to pieces, leaving France little but a titular primacy in the commerce of the Eastern Mediterranean.

While the military and commercial fruits of the cynical pact of Francis and Suleiman proved disappointing, the privileges secured in the domain of law and religion were more enduring. The Letters Patent granted to France in 1536, confirmed in 1569, 1581, 1597, 1604, 1607 and 1673, and commonly known as the Capitulations, secured to France a position of uncontested influence throughout the Turkish Empire. The right to appoint resident consuls who should be the sole judges in commercial and criminal proceedings between French subjects; the right to demand the assistance of Turkish officials in the execution of the consuls' decrees; the right of French subjects to have their dragoman present at the hearing of any charge against them; the right of appeal to the Sultan or the Grand Vizier against the decision of any subordinate official; the freedom of French subjects from responsibility to the Turkish Government for any but personal debts; immunity from slavery; freedom from compulsory service, civil or military; the right of French subjects dying in Turkey to devise their property by will—such was the charter granted to France and enjoyed by her exclusively for half a century. The Capitulations were renewed by



successive Sultans till 1740, when the Sultan declared that for the future they should be regarded as a contract binding on both parties for ever.

Among the rights granted by the Capitulations was that of free Christian worship; and the Catholic monks found an excuse for the Turkish alliance in the privileges thus secured to the Church. As the political and commercial primacy of France crumbled away, the Sultans granted compensation in a field which involved but little sacrifice of their power and gave lively satisfaction to their ancient ally. While in politics and commerce France had worked for herself alone, in the religious sphere the toleration of Christians and Christian worship which she had secured was shared by the priests, monks, and pilgrims of other countries. The protection of Christians of all nationalities was never conferred on France specifically by any treaty; but it came to be accepted not only by Turkey but by all the Christian Powers, including the Papacy. Little by little the Catholic clergy of the races conquered by the Turk escaped from the yoke of their territorial sovereign to participate in the privileges of the "Franks"; and the tutelage of France was extended from the clergy to their flocks. Soon the Orthodox Christians sheltered under the protection of France; for the Turkish invasion had submerged all countries of Orthodox faith except Russia, who in the sixteenth century was too weak to protect her co-religionists beyond her own borders. Thus France became the representative throughout the Levant not only of Catholicism but of Christianity in all its forms.

### III. THE PLAN OF LEIBNITZ FOR THE CONQUEST OF EGYPT

A century's experience convinced French statesmen that the Turkish policy of Francis had been a failure in its political and commercial aspects; and the Bourbon Monarchy, which prided itself on its zeal for the faith, was under no temptation to revive it. Louis XIII repeated the old wish "to draw the sword only against



the Turks, heretics or oppressors of the weak"; Père Joseph, the secret collaborator of Richelieu, dreamed of uniting Christian Europe for another Crusade; and the wealthy Mazarin left a legacy for a war against Turkey. In 1649 a letter was addressed to the Maronites, a Christian sect resident in the Lebanon, assuring them of the protection of Louis XIV; and when the young King came of age Boileau and Fénelon appealed to him to take up the cross. The Turks were at this time dominating the Mediterranean, embarking on the conquest of Crete and invading Hungary. To join them would have placed Europe at the mercy of Louis XIV; but the temptation was resisted. In 1664 French troops took part in Montecucculi's great victory at St Gotthard; and the French flag was planted on the coast of Algiers as a security against the Moslem pirates who infested the Mediterranean.

It was above all the desire to divert the Catholic zeal of Louis XIV from Protestantism to a combat with Islam that inspired Leibnitz, the German philosopher, mathematician, historian and theologian, to plunge into the region of high politics. In 1671 he composed his *Fabula Ludovisia*, in which St Louis appears in a dream and urges his descendant to undertake an expedition to Egypt, a command which the King, on awaking, promises to obey. The philosopher hoped for an introduction to Louis through the Elector of Mainz, to whom the scheme had been communicated; but it was agreed to begin by sending a summary of the plan. In February 1672 the French Minister of Foreign Affairs reported that his master wished for further explanations from the author. Leibnitz at once started for Paris, which he reached at the moment when France and England declared war against the Dutch. The Foreign Minister sent a message from headquarters that Holy Wars had gone out of fashion; but in June a quarrel occurred between France and Turkey at Constantinople, and a war was freely discussed. Accordingly, while awaiting the King's return to Paris, Leibnitz drew up a full statement of his design, entitled *De Expeditione*



*Aegyptiaca regi Franciae proponenda Justa Dissertatio.*  
A shorter edition, whether a first draft or a summary, was written under the title of *Consilium Aegyptiacum*.

The scheme is presented as the most important undertaking on which France could enter, since its success would carry with it the military leadership of Christendom. It is also the least dangerous and difficult of large schemes, and its failure would do her no irreparable damage. Egypt is the Holland of the East, and its conquest would overthrow the Dutch enemy, whose strength lies in her colonies and in the East Indian trade. The master of Egypt could render infinite service or disservice to the world, by stopping trade as the Turks have done or developing it by means of a canal. In comparison with such gains the conquest of a few towns on the Rhine or in the Low Countries is worth very little. Assuming the general interest of Europe in the expulsion of the Turk and the advance of the Christian faith, Leibnitz urges the King to take Egypt, which falls by right to France; Syria, to consolidate the domination of Egypt; Malta, where most of the Knights are French; and finally to assume the protection of the Church throughout the East.

“Constantinople,” he observes, “is the centre of the Turkish power; but, in the event of a sudden attack, Egypt is so distant that it could not receive timely succour. The whole East, and not Egypt alone, awaits the arrival of a liberating force on which it may rely for protection. If Egypt be conquered, the Turkish Empire will crumble to pieces in every direction. Its possession will open the road to the richest countries of the East, will unite the commerce of India with that of France, and will prepare the way for conquests worthy of Alexander. When the expedition is ready it will be well to countenance the rumour already in circulation that it is directed against the Morea or the Dardanelles; and then, while all Europe is in suspense, Your Majesty’s attack will fall on Egypt like a thunderbolt. By this profound discretion you will insure the success of an enterprise which has already been undertaken by your ancestors.”

Even the facilities for retreat, should the expedition unexpectedly fail, are explained in detail.



The memoranda never reached the King, for he never asked to see them. The two versions of the scheme remained buried among the author's papers at Hanover for a century and a quarter; but Bonaparte's expedition to Egypt in 1798 led the British Government, which had received a copy of the larger document, to publish a summary in pamphlet form in 1803. When the French seized Hanover shortly afterwards, they obtained a copy of the *Consilium Aegyptiacum*, which was read by the First Consul.

#### IV. LOUIS XIV AND LOUIS XV

A spirited foreign policy in the Levant was urged on Louis XIV in the same year 1672 by the French Ambassador at Constantinople, d'Arvieux, who was well acquainted with the Turkish Empire. The Turks, he complained, had permitted foreigners to enter and to trade with Turkey under the protection of other flags than that of France, had pillaged French subjects by land and sea, had imposed extra taxes on French goods, and had treated the King of France with disrespect by sending to him Ambassadors of lower grade than the French Ambassadors accredited to the Porte. It was time to show that these breaches of the Capitulations would no longer be tolerated.

"Your Majesty may bring the Grand Vizier and the Porte to reason," wrote d'Arvieux to Louis XIV, "without any other expense than that which you habitually incur in the Mediterranean. And, if you adopt my plan, Your Majesty will find the Turks ready to please you in all things and to renew the Capitulations according to your pleasure. Your Majesty has 15 men-of-war always cruising in the Mediterranean. They are enough for my purpose, but you can increase them to 20 if you will. You should then direct them to anchor unexpectedly at the entrance to the Dardanelles. Three ships of war and two fire-ships should then be sent to Princes' Islands, where the envoy who bears Your Majesty's demands should reside until they have been granted. If they resist, you will blockade the straits and in eight days there will be a famine in the capital, as they never have any store of provisions."



The advice fell on deaf ears; for Louis was deeply committed to the Dutch war and dared not embark on more distant adventures.

In 1673 the king arranged his differences with Turkey and lost interest in the plan for conquering the Levant. When, however, the Turks besieged Vienna for the second time in 1683, he recognized his obligation to defend Christendom even in the person of his Habsburg enemy; but, while he was bargaining for his services, Sobieski marched south from Warsaw and relieved the beleaguered city. In like manner, though Charles of Lorraine and Eugene of Savoy led armies against the Turks which contained many French volunteers, the French Government stood aloof from the arduous process of rolling back the invaders from South-Eastern Europe. Indeed, the French encouraged Turkey in her war with Austria in 1739, and aided her to secure favourable terms in the Treaty of Belgrade. As a reward for their services the Capitulations were extended and made permanent in 1740, special privileges being granted to French traders and Catholics throughout the Empire.

The advice of Leibnitz nevertheless haunted the minds of French statesmen; and in 1762 Vergennes presented a detailed memoir on Turkish affairs to Louis XV, urging that France should cease to drift and should once more pursue a definite policy. She should either prevent or assist the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire. In the former case her ships and troops should be near the territory which she desired to defend; in the latter, she should forestall her rivals and seize Egypt. The idea was taken up by Choiseul, but nothing came of it. A similar scheme was recommended in 1781 in a *Mémoire sur la Turquie* by Saint-Priest, the Ambassador at Constantinople. But France was not in a position to undertake adventures in the Levant, and could do nothing when the Treaty of Kuchuk Kainardji in 1774 proclaimed the Tsar protector of all Orthodox Christians in the Turkish Empire.



## V. THE REVOLUTION AND NAPOLEON

The propaganda of Revolutionary France extended as far as Turkey; and in 1793 the representatives of Austria, Russia and Prussia complained that a "Tree of Liberty" had been planted in the court-yard of the French Embassy in Pera, and that throughout the Levant French cockades were being displayed. They demanded, though in vain, that the obnoxious tree should be cut down and that the Republican fêtes and demonstrations should be forbidden. When the tide of invasion had been rolled back from her frontiers, Republican France reverted to the old aggressive policy of the Monarchy. Her Consuls and commercial agents never lost sight of the Egyptian plan; and in February 1798 one of them sent in a detailed report. In the same month Talleyrand, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, presented a memorandum to the Directory setting forth the advantages of an attack on Egypt. The document had probably been prepared with the aid of Bonaparte, who, at any rate, stood ready to carry out its policy.

The plan appealed to the Directory, which hoped to inflict a staggering blow on Great Britain by attacking her possessions and commerce in the East and founding a colonial Empire on the ruins. The expedition was approved in March, and in April the Government signed its instructions to Bonaparte.

"The Army of the East shall take possession of Egypt. The Commander-in-Chief shall chase the English from all their possessions in the East which he can reach, and in particular he shall destroy all their *comptoirs* in the Red Sea. He shall have the isthmus of Suez cut through, and he shall take all necessary steps to assure the free and exclusive possession of the Red Sea to the French Republic. He shall ameliorate the lot of the natives of Egypt and shall maintain a good understanding with the Sultan and his subjects."

An excuse for the enterprize was found in the oppression of French merchants at the ports by the Mamelukes who ruled the country subject to the nominal sovereignty of



the Sultan. Alexandria fell after a slight resistance, and the Battle of the Pyramids laid the country at the conqueror's feet. But if the French General had formed the gigantic projects which he afterwards put forward of conquering India and returning home by Constantinople to "take Europe in the rear," the possibility of their realisation vanished with the destruction of the French fleet at Aboukir.

During the autumn and winter of 1798 Bonaparte busied himself with the suppression of revolts and the administration of the country, in which he received aid from the distinguished scholars and men of science whom he had brought with him and who formed the Institute of Egypt. But his hope that the Porte would not regard the seizure of Egypt as a *casus belli* was disappointed, for by September Turkey was at war with France. He determined to forestall an attack from the combined forces of the Sultan and the Mamelukes by invading Syria, and early in 1799 he fought his way by El Arish, Gaza and Jaffa to Haifa, whence he could discern two British men-of-war lying off Acre. After fierce fighting he abandoned the siege of Acre and led his reduced forces back to Egypt amid terrible hardships, entering Cairo in June, after an absence of six months. A month later he routed a Turkish army which had been brought by sea to Aboukir. But in the moment of his triumph he slipped away from Egypt to push his fortunes at home and to defend France against the Second Coalition, leaving the command to Kléber. In August, 1801, the last French troops surrendered to a British force, and the three years' experiment in oriental conquest came to an inglorious end.

In June 1802, shortly after the Peace of Amiens, France and Turkey signed a treaty by which France recognised the Sultan's possession of Egypt. But the First Consul had no intention of abandoning his schemes in the East. In the autumn of 1802 he sent Sébastiani on a "commercial mission" to the Levant, in the course of which he visited Alexandria and Cairo, Acre, Smyrna, and Constantinople. Returning home



he reported that Turkey was weak and that 6000 troops could retake Egypt. Bonaparte's policy, however, at the moment was to maintain friendly relations with the Sultan. The Government's intention, he wrote in 1802 to the French Ambassador in Constantinople,

"is that the French Ambassador shall regain by all possible means the supremacy which France possessed in that city for 200 years. His palace is the most beautiful in Pera. He must assume a rank above that of all other Ambassadors, and must never appear without great state. He must again take under his special protection all the Christians and all Christian institutions in Syria and Armenia, and all Christian pilgrims to the Holy Places. On every possible occasion he must endeavour to attract the attention of the Turks to France. Thus the French Embassy may be illuminated on the birthday of the prophet."

Sultan Selim returned these civilities by presents to Josephine, and by giving instructions that in all future official decrees Napoleon should be described as "Padishah" and Emperor of France. In 1805, however, when Turkey renewed her treaty of 1798 with Russia, Napoleon turned from flattery to threats.

"How can you permit Russia to dictate to you?" he wrote. "If you persist in refusing me what France has always had, namely, the first place at Constantinople, I shall range myself on the side of your enemies. Trust only to your true friend, who is France, or you and your religion and your family will perish."

In the following year he ordered Cambacérès to prepare an onslaught on Russia in the shape of a brochure entitled *Un Vieil Ottoman à ses Frères*. This was translated into Turkish, and a thousand copies were despatched to Dalmatia, Vienna and Constantinople respectively, while another thousand were sent to Marseilles for distribution among the ships trading with the Levant. In 1806, after Jena and Austerlitz, the Emperor despatched Sébastiani to persuade the Sultan to declare war against England and Russia. The mission succeeded, and French aid was sent against attacks by land and sea. But Turkey was a mere pawn in the Emperor's game, and at Tilsit he abandoned his ally to the tender mercies of Russia,



finding an excuse in the deposition of Selim, the news of which arrived during the discussions. The Franco-Russian compact aimed at the spoliation of the Ottoman Empire, Napoleon, however, stipulating that the Tsar should not take Constantinople. The execution of their plans was prevented by the quarrels which succeeded their momentary reconciliation.

## VI. MEHEMET ALI, THIERS AND PALMERSTON

French influence in the Levant might be based either on the defence of Turkey against her enemies or on the support of rebellious subjects against their Ottoman ruler. After the fall of Napoleon the latter course was followed for a generation. France aided Great Britain and Russia to liberate Greece from the Turkish yoke by sharing in the destruction of the Turkish fleet in the bay of Navarino in 1827, and by landing troops in the Morea. But the most serious effort since Bonaparte's invasion of Syria was made ten years later. Since Turkey had fallen under the influence of Russia at the treaty of Adrianople (1829), the most promising policy for France was to support the most formidable of the Sultan's rivals. Mehemet Ali, the Albanian adventurer who had won the Viceroyalty of Egypt, was not content with Crete, which had been assigned to him in reward for his services during the Greek War of Independence; and in 1831 he despatched his son Ibrahim at the head of a formidable army, which over-ran Syria, crossed the Taurus, and advanced into the heart of Asia Minor. The Sultan, failing to obtain help from England or France, turned to Russia, who sent a fleet to the Bosphorus in 1833. Syria was ceded to Mehemet by Mahmud, who, however, in 1839 attempted to recover his lost province. His troops were routed by Ibrahim at the battle of Nisib, and a few days later his fleet was treacherously surrendered at Alexandria. Mehemet Ali demanded the hereditary government of Egypt and Syria, and the Sultan was ready to yield. It seemed as if Egyptian rule in Syria, detested though it was by the Mussulman chiefs, had come to stay.



In the misfortunes of the Ottoman Empire France saw an opportunity of restoring French influence in the Levant. To aid Mehemet Ali to obtain hereditary possession of Syria as well as Egypt was to secure French predominance in the Eastern Mediterranean. The plan was ingenious; but France had reckoned without Great Britain. The French Ambassador in London was summoned to the Foreign Office and informed that the Cabinet took a grave view of the crisis.

"I start with the belief," began Palmerston, "that our common object is to maintain the Ottoman Empire as a guarantee for the preservation of the European equilibrium. If it is admitted that this is the object which we both have in view, we must defend it from its friends as well as from its enemies. France and England should act together, and should send out joint expeditions to bring both the combatants to reason."

Reason, as understood by the Foreign Secretary, demanded that Egypt should be preserved to Mehemet Ali and his heirs, but that Syria should remain in the possession of the Sultan.

This conversation occurred shortly before the battle of Nisib and the death of Mahmud; but the Turkish *débâcle* failed to move Palmerston from his position. In his subsequent interview with the French Ambassador he repeated that the interest of both France and England was to restore the Turkish Empire to a condition which would involve the least risk of foreign intervention.

"This we can only obtain by separating the Sultan and his vassal by the desert. Let Mehemet Ali have his Egypt and the hereditary investiture which he demands, but do not let the two Powers adjoin. If we thought that Mehemet Ali could make himself strong and respected on the Ottoman throne, we should say Amen; but nothing will induce the Turks to regard him as a descendant of the Prophet."

If Syria were thus lopped off, he added, Russia would try to seize the European provinces of Turkey, which she had long coveted, and the Powers would have no title to protest. In a word Russia and France would dominate the Turkish Empire.



Unable to secure the consent of Great Britain to its protégé's possession of the whole of Syria, the French Government suggested that he might retain the territory up to Acre; but Palmerston cut short the discussion with the emphatic words, "Egypt only, and the desert for a frontier." In January 1840 Guizot was sent to London to convert the Foreign Secretary; but his efforts were unavailing.

"France would like to see in Egypt and Syria," Palmerston remarked with his usual bluntness, "a new and nominally independent Power, which would owe its existence to her and consequently be her ally. You already have Algeria. Between Algeria and your Egyptian ally what remains? Nothing except the poor little states of Tunis and Tripoli. The whole African shore and a part of the Mediterranean shore from Morocco to the Gulf of Alexandretta would be under your influence. That will not suit us."

The prize was too great to forgo without further efforts, and Thiers, who became Prime Minister in February, spent the first half of 1840 in naval and military preparations. On July 15 Great Britain, Russia, Prussia, and Austria concluded the Convention of London, pledging themselves to force Mehemet Ali to accept the terms arranged by them with the Sultan. A British fleet captured Beirut and Acre, and the Egyptians were swept out of Syria.

France had not been invited to discuss or to sign the Convention, for her support of Mehemet Ali was notorious. But Palmerston was convinced that Louis Philippe, whose throne was none too secure, was "not the man to run amok." The King, though angry, was wise enough to recognize facts; and in October Thiers was succeeded by the pacific Guizot. France now entered the Concert, and a second Treaty of London was signed in 1841. It was agreed that Mehemet Ali should receive the hereditary Viceroyalty of Egypt which he had sought, and renounce Crete, Syria and Palestine.



## VII. THE CRIMEAN WAR

When the Eastern question again became acute in the following decade, a new ruler, convinced of the necessity of British support, was governing France; and Louis Napoleon fought side by side with Great Britain in defence of Turkey against Russia. The Capitulations had entrusted the care of the Holy Places to France, but had neglected to enumerate the sanctuaries concerned. Profiting by this obscurity and by French neglect, the Orthodox Church occupied and repaired certain shrines, and in 1808 obtained permission to restore the dome of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre after a destructive fire. The progress of the Greek Church delighted the Tsar Nicholas, who determined to assert his power throughout the dominions of the Sultan. A quarrel in 1847 between Latins and Greeks in the Church of the Nativity at Bethlehem was followed by the return of the Latin Patriarch (who had resided in Rome since the failure of the Crusades) to Jerusalem, with a French Consul-General to back him. In 1850 Louis Napoleon took up the cause of Catholicism in the Levant; and in 1852 the French Ambassador at Constantinople was ordered to insist on the claims of the Latin monks to be the guardians of the Holy Places. The demand was supported by the other Catholic Powers and was substantially conceded by the Sultan. Nicholas was indignant, and in March 1853 sent Prince Menschikov to obtain satisfaction in regard to the Holy Places and also to press for a Treaty acknowledging Russia's Protectorate over all the Orthodox subjects of the Sultan.

The two questions were separate. The first claim had much to justify it in the history of the past century, and was settled to the satisfaction of Russia; but the second was at once pronounced inadmissible by Clarendon and Stratford de Redcliffe, on the ground that it would give Russia a perpetual right to interfere in Turkish affairs. Acting on the advice of the British Ambassador, the Porte refused to concede the pro-



tectorate. Menschikov quitted Constantinople, and a conflict became inevitable. The Crimean War, while nominally arising from a quarrel of Greek and Latin monks, was in reality a duel between France and Russia for the mastery of the Levant; and France had the best of the contest.

#### VIII. THE LEBANON

Shortly after the Crimean War events provided France with another opportunity which she was quick to seize. Syria had suffered grievously in the long duel between Mahmud and Mehemet Ali; and, though the Ottoman Empire was enabled by Palmerston to maintain its possession of the province, its prestige had suffered and the administration was weak and inefficient. Liberated from the firm hand of Ibrahim, the races and creeds of Syria resumed their quarrels. During the Egyptian occupation Christians were told by their priests that Mehemet Ali was the friend of France; but the consideration shown to non-Moslems was bitterly resented by their neighbours. Till 1840 the Maronites (Christians) and Druses (Mohammedans) of the Lebanon were governed by Sheikhs and Emirs, the central power being exercised by the (Moslem) Shehab family, which received its investiture from the Sultan. Before the Egyptian occupation an annual tribute was paid to the Porte; and in certain circumstances a contingent of soldiers had to be provided for service in the Ottoman army. In 1841, after the expulsion of the Egyptians and the Shehab Emir Beshir, Druses and Maronites flew at each other's throats. When, by 1843, Turkish efforts to restore direct government had failed, the five Great Powers intervened and compelled the Sultan to cancel the appointment of a single Turkish Governor and to divide the region into a Maronite mountain and a Druse mountain, with a Christian chief for the Maronites. A renewal of war took place in 1845, when the Maronites determined to expel the Druses and demanded the reinstatement of the Shehab family. The Porte refused and sent a strong force into the Lebanon,



but ultimately conceded a council composed of Christians and Druses. After the Crimean War the reiteration in the *Hatti Hamayun* of the promise of equal rights to Christians and Jews led the Druses to believe that the Maronites were to be supreme in the Lebanon; and in 1859 blood again began to flow.

The fighting in the Lebanon was followed in 1860 by fierce attacks on the Christians of Damascus. The Turkish Governor, finding that Moslem lads had been insulting the Christians by making crosses on the roads in the Christian quarter and then trampling and spitting on them, ordered some of the culprits to be put in chains and to clean the district. They were quickly liberated by the passers-by; and the excited mob then attacked the Christians and plundered some of the European Consulates. On the eve of the Damascus massacres the Sultan had sent Fuad Pasha to restore order in the Lebanon, and when he heard of the new explosion he issued a stern threat of reprisals against individuals and towns which should insult a Christian.

Had these events, so common in the Ottoman dominions, occurred elsewhere, little notice would have been taken of them; but Syria was bound to France by the ties of memory and ambition, and nothing that happened there could be indifferent to her ruler, himself the nephew of the invader of 1799. It was no longer a question of supporting a rival claimant to Syria, as in the reign of Louis Philippe, but of occupying the country with French troops. On the news of the Damascus massacres the French Minister of Foreign Affairs informed the French Ambassador in London that France merely desired to discover, in concert with other Governments and with the Porte, the best means of obtaining the compensations due to humanity and of re-establishing peace in Syria. His proposal was for the joint occupation of Syria by French and British troops; and Great Britain assented, but in the end sent no military force.

On August 7 the Emperor addressed the departing troops:



“Soldiers, you are going to Syria, not to make war against any Power, but to aid the Sultan to bring back to obedience those of his subjects who have been blinded by fanaticism. In this distant land, rich in glorious memories, you will prove yourselves worthy descendants of those heroes who have gloriously carried there the banner of Christ.”

The troops (barely 6000 in all) landed at Beirut, marched to within a few miles of Damascus, restored order, and withdrew. So far as the Lebanon was concerned, the problem was solved by the Organic Statute of 1861, confirmed in 1864, which constituted the district a Vilayet and granted autonomy under a Christian Governor approved by France and Great Britain. In theory the integrity of the Ottoman Empire was maintained; but French prestige had been enhanced, and her intervention secured peace to the Lebanon till the outbreak of the Great War in 1914.

#### IX. GAIN AND LOSS IN EGYPT

The prestige if not the power of France in the Levant was further advanced by the cutting of the Suez Canal by de Lesseps, who thus realized the project commended by the Directory to Bonaparte in 1798 and popularized by the disciples of Saint-Simon in the middle of the century. The Canal was opened in the presence of the Empress in 1869; and during the reign of the Khedive Ismail French influence was supreme in Egypt. The excavations of Mariette increased the reputation of French Egyptology, which had been brilliantly inaugurated by Champollion's deciphering of the Rosetta Stone. The creation by England and France in 1876 of the Dual Control to check the extravagance of Khedive Ismail, seemed to hold out the promise of growing power in the Valley of the Nile. Gambetta was eager to cooperate with Great Britain in defending the throne of the Khedive Tewfik against the rebellious Arabi; but the fall of Gambetta, after holding office for two months, brought a more cautious Ministry into power. Freycinet was ready for the military occupation of the Canal; but, scenting the hostility of Bismarck, he refused to recom-



mend armed intervention. The Chamber refused to vote funds even for the limited project, and the decision sounded the knell of French power in Egypt; for Great Britain, after suppressing the revolt, naturally became the real ruler of the country. For another twenty years France hesitated to recognize the position which her abstention had created; but the Agreement of 1904, by which France withdrew her opposition to the British occupation of Egypt in return for British recognition of French claims in Morocco, brought a period of painful tension to a close.

#### X. ORTHODOX AND PROTESTANT COMPETITION IN SYRIA

While France fought a losing battle with Great Britain in Egypt, her historic influence in Syria and Palestine was thwarted by other competitors. In 1840 the Frères des Écoles Chrésiennes and the Filles de la Charité began their educational work. The French tongue deposed Greek and Italian from their predominant position; and to-day the French possess more schools than any other Power. On the other hand the growth of Russian power throughout the nineteenth century, combined with the immense influx of Russian pilgrims to the Holy Places, gave the Orthodox Church a prestige that it had never before possessed. The interest of Protestant nations has also steadily increased. English missionaries commenced operations in the Levant in the twenties; and in 1841 Prussia and England agreed to establish a Bishopric at Jerusalem, with jurisdiction over Palestine, Chaldaea, Egypt and Abyssinia. The Bishop was to be selected alternately by the two Powers and to be consecrated by the Archbishop of Canterbury; and the system remained in operation till 1883, when Bismarck declined to fill the vacancy. Since then the Bishopric has been entirely Anglican.

During the latter half of the nineteenth century several attempts were made to challenge the semi-official position of France as Protector of the Eastern Christians. In 1870 Austria asked to be allowed to



share the protectorate, but was met with a flat refusal and had to content herself with the right of protecting the Christians in Macedonia and Albania, conferred on her by the Porte in the treaties of 1699 and 1718. The next challenge came from Germany. In consenting in 1874 to the substitution of Mixed Courts for consular jurisdiction in Egypt, France excluded religious and educational establishments, over which she reserved her ancient protectorate. When Germany gave her consent to the establishment of the Courts in the following year she declared that she could not recognize France's exclusive protectorate over Catholic institutions in the East, and reserved all her rights over German subjects belonging to any such establishment.

In accepting the invitation to the Congress of Berlin in 1878, France stipulated that it should deal only with questions raised by the Russo-Turkish war, thus ruling out the discussion of Egypt, Syria, and the Holy Places, and preventing the Congress from either confirming or condemning the action of Germany in 1875. The promise was given, but in the opinion of some Frenchmen it was not kept. On the initiative of Great Britain the following clauses were inserted in Article 62.

“Ecclesiastics, pilgrims, and monks of all nationalities travelling in Turkey shall enjoy the same rights, advantages and privileges. The right of official protection by the Diplomatic and Consular Agents of the Powers in Turkey is recognised both as regards the above-mentioned persons and their religious, charitable and other establishments in the Holy Places and elsewhere.”

In submitting this text to Congress Bismarck remarked that the British formula meant “the substitution of Christendom for a single nationality.” Instead of opposing the proposition, the French plenipotentiary Waddington contented himself with demanding that the text should have regard to the rights of France and record the maintenance of the *status quo*. He therefore proposed and carried the addition of the formula, “the rights of France are expressly reserved”; and Prince Gorchakov added, “It is well understood that no



alterations can be made in the *status quo* in the Holy Places."

In 1898 M. Delcassé, Minister of Foreign Affairs, obtained through the Cardinal-Archbishop of Reims a satisfactory declaration from the Pope in reply to the Cardinal's proposal to form a Committee of Defence of the French Protectorate of the Christians in the Levant.

"France has in the East a special mission which Providence has confided to her," wrote Leo XIII in an autograph letter. "It is a noble mission which has been consecrated not only by centuries of practice but by international treaties. The Holy See is resolved not to modify in any way the glorious patrimony which France has received from her ancestors, and which she is doubtless determined to continue to deserve by showing herself always equal to her task."

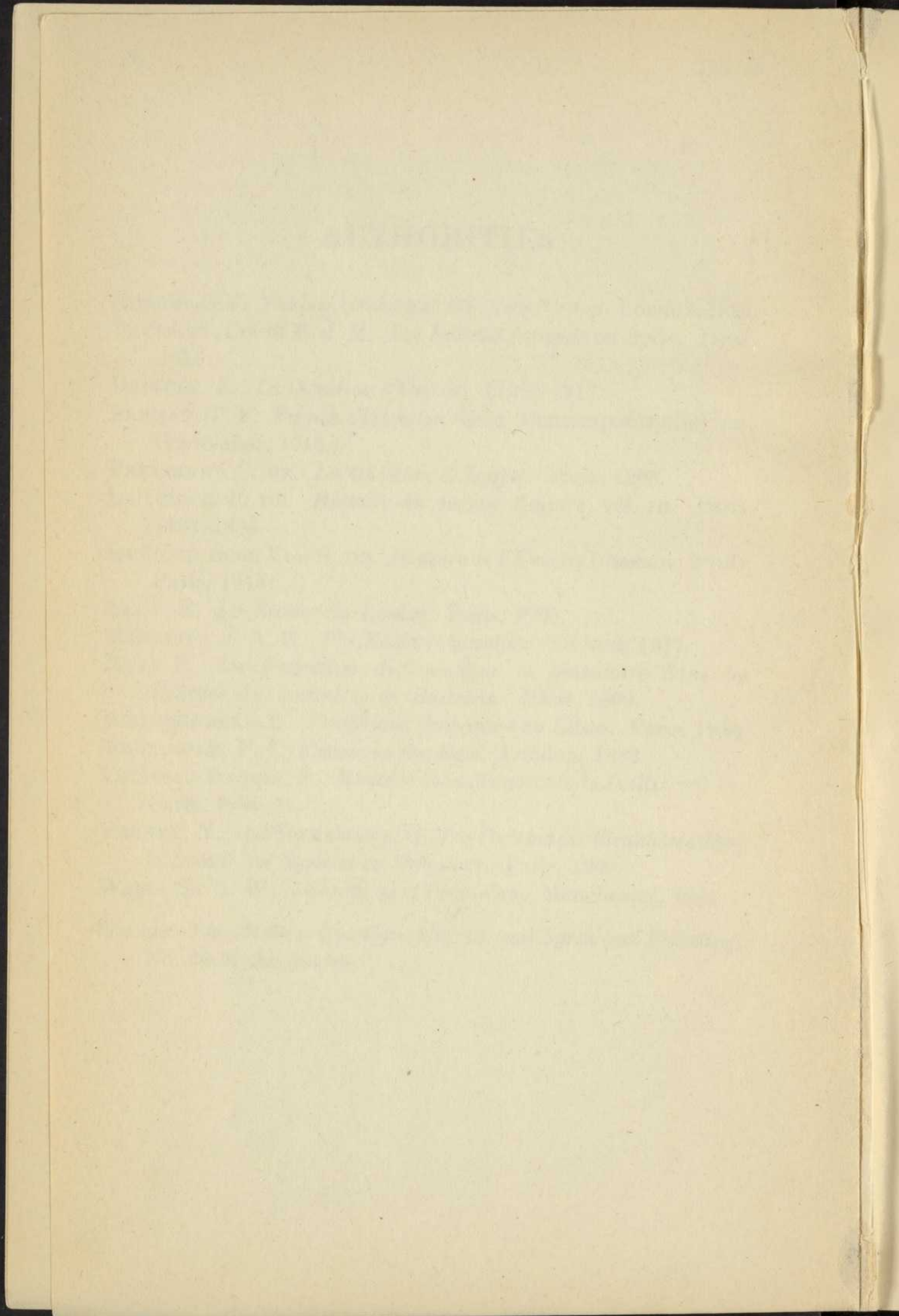
The situation underwent a serious change in 1905 when the French Government denounced the Concordat and terminated official relations with the Papacy. Austria at once informed the Vatican that in her opinion France had forfeited her right to protect the Christians, and argued that that mission should be transferred to herself. The Austrian demand failed; but a breach in the French Protectorate was made when France conceded the Italian claim to protect Catholic missions in which Italians formed a majority. Though a special application had to be made in every case, thirty-three such missions had been transferred from the protection of France to that of Italy before the outbreak of the Great War.

It was, however, perceived that the breach with Rome had regrettable consequences abroad. In a speech in the Chamber in March 1914 M. Louis Martin declared that since 1901, the year in which many of the Orders had been suppressed, the French members of the French religious establishments in the Near East had fallen from 2000 to 1000. In the following month the Chamber, on the proposal of M. Leygues, adopted a motion "inviting the Minister of Foreign Affairs to take the necessary measures to maintain and develop the French establishments in the East." A special authorization, it was suggested, should be granted to the



various religious congregations supplying the *personnel* of the missions, schools and charitable institutions in the Levant to re-open their seminaries and training schools in France. The proposal was more readily accepted by the Foreign Minister since the law suppressing the Orders contained a clause empowering the Government to permit, with the approval of the Council of State, the re-opening on French territory of establishments of congregations formerly authorized. Before, however, this considerate policy could be put into practice, the world conflict had broken out.







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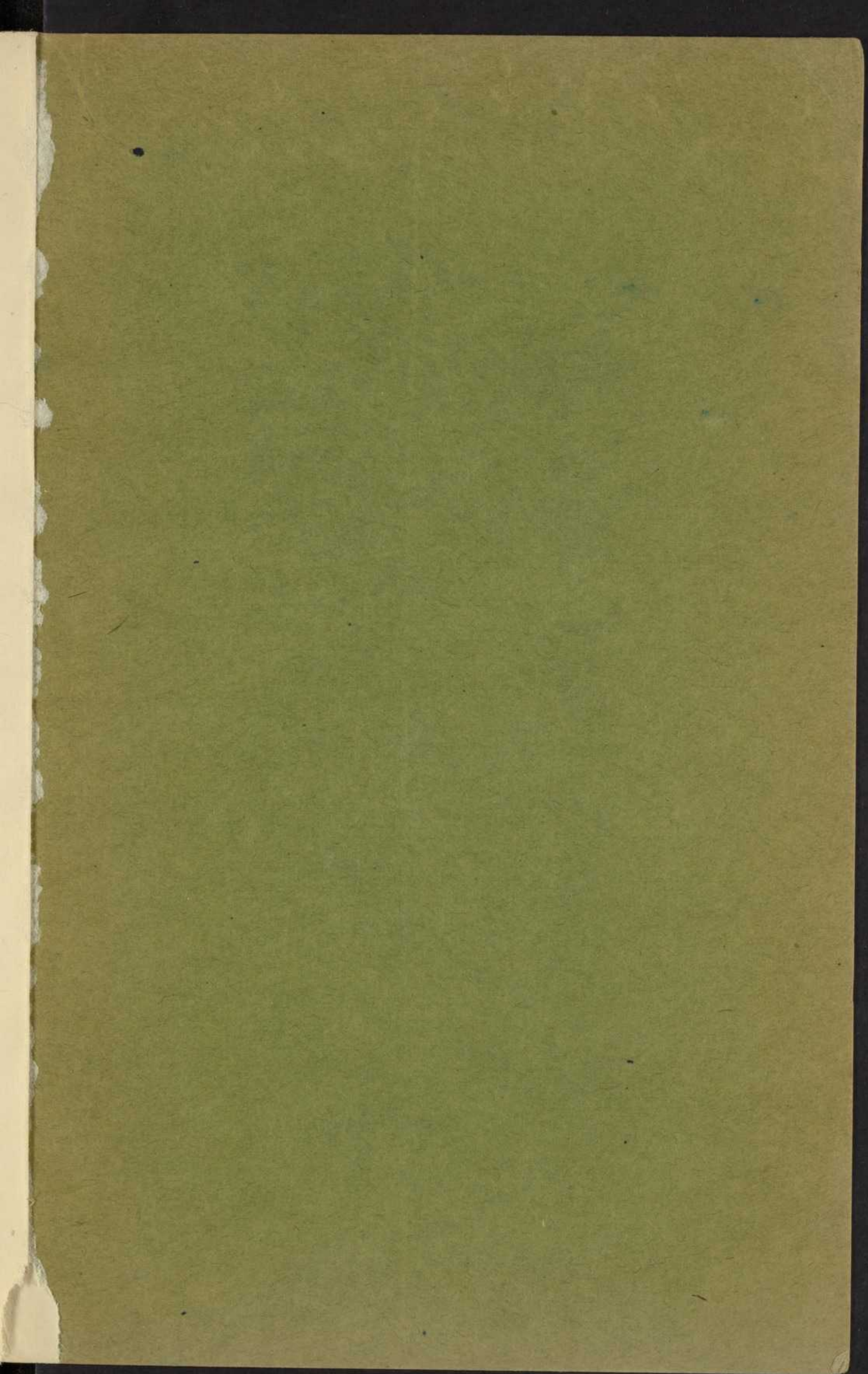
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