THE LIFE OF GEORGE CANNING

GEORGE CANNING

GEORGE CANNING AS A BOY
(IN FANCY DRESS)

From the picture by Gainsborough in the possession of the Marquess of Clanricarde

GEORGE CANNING

BY

W. ALISON PHILLIPS

WITH TWELVE ILLUSTRATIONS

NEW YORK
E. P. DUTTON & CO.
1903

PREFACE

IN preparing this little book I have used principally Stapleton's *Political Life of George Canning* (1831), Stapleton's *George Canning and his Times* (1835), Bell's *Life of Canning* and the memoir prefixed to Therry's edition of Canning's speeches (1828). Much of Canning's official correspondence is contained in the *Supplementary Despatches of the Duke of Wellington*, to which may be added Mr. E. J. Stapleton's *Some Official Correspondence of George Canning* (1887).

To the kindness of the Countess of Cork and Orrery I am indebted for the permission to republish the *Lines addressed to Miss Scott before Marriage*, while I have to thank the Marquis of Clanricarde for allowing me to reproduce the beautiful portrait by Gainsborough of George Canning as a boy, and the Earl of Crewe for permission to include the interesting picture by Hickel of Canning as a young man.

W. A. P.

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GEORGE CANNING

CHAPTER I

EARLY YEARS

The Canning family—George Canning the elder—Canning's mother—Canning at Eton—The *Microcosm*—At Oxford.

THE family of Canning is of a respectable antiquity, and characteristically British. To nobility of blood, in that narrower sense which confines this virtue to the offshoots of the peerage, it could lay no claim; but for centuries it had enjoyed that mysterious quality of distinction which is inseparably associated with the possession of real estate. The original seat of the race, indeed, at Bishop's Cannynges, in Wiltshire, devolving upon two coheiresses, passed from the name in the reign of Henry VII. Long before this, however, when Edward II. was King, a cadet of the family setting out—as the custom was for younger sons of country gentlemen in England—to seek his fortune in trade, had established at Bristol a branch of the Cannynges, which was destined in time to overshadow the parent stem. Under Edward III.

William Cannyinge was six times Mayor of Bristol, and six times represented the city in Parliament. His descendants continued to be notable citizens of the second city in England until, in the fifth generation, Thomas Cannynge regained territorial rank for his branch of the family by marrying the heiress of the Le Marshalls of Foxcote, in Warwickshire. Here the family continued, in dignified obscurity, down to our own days. Again it was a junior branch which was destined to outgrow the elder. In the year 1618 King James I. granted to George, youngest son of Richard Canning of Foxcote, the manor of Garvagh, in Ireland. Here, for six generations, the Cannings continued, through good and evil fortune, to represent that stern principle of Protestant ascendency to which they had owed their position in the country. Then came a change, as unexpected as it was unwelcome. Infected by I know not what quality in the Irish atmosphere, which has proved fatal to so much Macchiavellian statecraft, by tending to make Teutonic Irishmen more Celtic than the Celts, George, eldest son of Stratford Canning of Garvagh, revolted from the traditions of his race. Confused by a vivid imagination, he lost himself in those attractive mists of political idealism which at that time were beginning to spread over Europe from their birthplace on the abstract heights of the Paris salons. In short, he adopted democratic

principles; and to this crime, so unpardonable by a parent of stern character and just views, he added another, hardly less heinous, by falling in love with an attractive, but wholly ineligible, young woman. For a conscientious father there was but one course open. George Canning was dismissed from the paternal roof.

The unfortunate young man elected to carry once more across the Channel the fortunes of the Cannings; and these for the moment looked unpromising enough. He was endowed by nature with every amiable quality that makes for ill success, and by his father with an allowance of £150 a year. In 1757 he settled in London, entered the Middle Temple, and was, in due course, called to the Bar. But, for a youth of his temperament, the law had less than no attraction. He preferred to spend his time writing political pamphlets, under the fashionable form of "Epistles" to men of eminence, or in the composition of verses which were as rich in lofty sentiment as they were poverty-stricken in nearly every quality of art. These activities, though sometimes gratifying to his vanity, added nothing to his purse. Moreover, being attractive and sociable, he had been admitted to the intimacy of several of the leaders of his own political persuasion; and since, in the days of Wilkes and Sheridan, Spartan simplicity was not as yet associated with the profession of

Radical opinions, his expenditure soon exceeded his income, and he fell hopelessly into debt. This was the opportunity for which his father had been waiting. Mr. Canning, intent on saving Garvagh from passing to one who would make it a centre of destructive propaganda, consented to pay his eldest son's debts on condition of his joining with him in cutting off the entail, and so becoming a party to his own disinheritance. The luckless youth, having eaten his mess of pottage, had no choice but to sell his birthright. The entail was cut off, the debts were paid, and George Canning, thrown once more upon his allowance of £150 a year, resumed his old inconsequent mode of life, and so fell rapidly again upon evil days. Debts once more accumulated, and by way of improving matters he could think of nothing better than to marry. Unfortunately, Miss Costello, though the daughter of a sufficiently honourable Irish house, brought as her only dowry charm and good looks. To the Squire of Garvagh this was the last straw. The estate had already been settled on his second son, Paul. With his eldest son he would henceforth have no dealings, beyond the regular remittance of the stipulated annuity.

George now, under the dire pressure of necessity, was fain to exchange his unremunerative Muse for that perennial hope of the destitute, the wine trade. But for all the personal popularity of the

young couple, George Canning's taste in wines inspired no more confidence than his taste in poetry, and the new venture fared as ill as the old. The many-coloured world of dreams had hardened into the dull world of cruel reality; and life, which had begun with a reckless battle for impossible ideals, had shrunk into a sordid struggle for the means to live. Under these unpromising auspices, on 11th April, 1770, George Canning, the subject of this memoir, and only child of the outcast of Garvagh, was born into the world. Exactly a year after his birth, on 11th April, 1771, his father, worn out by anxiety and disappointment, died; and with him passed the pitiful allowance of £150, which had stood between him and absolute ruin.

Mrs. Canning, left absolutely without means, with great spirit determined to seek a livelihood on the stage. The influence of friends, culminating in royal patronage, procured for her at the outset a leading part at Drury Lane with David Garrick; but her talents were unequal to the place she had assumed, and when the momentary success won by her beauty and simplicity had passed, she rapidly sank to filling minor parts, and ultimately, disappearing from the London stage altogether, earned a precarious livelihood in provincial theatres. She soon, however, remarried, her second husband being the actor Reddish; and after his death she took as her husband a Mr. Hunn, a wealthy linen draper

and amateur of Plymouth. This latter step, which had seemed to end her pecuniary troubles, in the end only added to them; for the linen draper failed, and the amateur in his turn had to attempt to earn a living on the boards. When he too died he left his widow with three more children, two daughters and a son. Since this lady, for reasons shortly to be stated, had very little influence in moulding her eldest son's career, it will, perhaps, be well at once to dismiss her from the story with the briefest account of her subsequent fate. Happily, the rapid rise of George Canning soon placed him in a position where he was able to give her assistance, which he did with characteristic generosity, devoting to her maintenance the whole of the pension of £500 to which he became entitled on retiring from his first office as Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. As long as she lived, indeed, he never forgot the love and duty he owed to her, visiting her, as often as public affairs permitted, in her retirement at Bath, and never under any circumstances of public anxiety or work forgetting to write to her once a week. She had the happiness of living to see her son Prime Minister, and of dying a few months before the premature close of his career.

From the above sketch of his parentage and birth, it is clear that never infant came into this world with less apparent chances of carving out of

it a successful career. There was, however, another side to the picture. That the boy very early displayed conspicuous talent would perhaps not alone have served him; for talent often starves. But he possessed a sounder basis for worldly success in an influential and wealthy uncle. Mr. Stratford Canning, youngest brother of the unhappy George, though he shared to a certain extent the latter's liberal proclivities, had avoided his prodigality, and, as a member of the respectable banking firm of French, Burrows & Canning, had accumulated a respectable fortune. This gentleman, learning from the actor Moody of his nephew's precocious talents, and that they were in danger of running to waste in the unwholesome atmosphere of provincial green-rooms, determined to withdraw him from the guardianship of Reddish, and himself to become responsible for his education. The offer was, as might be expected, gratefully accepted; and young Canning started life anew under conditions which placed no obstacles in the path of his ambition, save those of his own creation.

There is no need to linger over the incidents of Canning's boyhood. In general it is a somewhat colourless record of unbroken and deliberate success. When, in due course, he passed from the preparatory school at Winchester, which he had attended, to Eton, he took with him a reputation already established for writing elegant verse

both in Latin and English. At Eton, then even more than now the nursery of statesmen, his activities added to his fame. His native eloquence, already brought under the discipline of conscious art, made him a power in the debating club ; and in the school paper, the *Microcosm*, of which he was editor, he "marshalled the rising talents of that celebrated seminary into emulative excellence". In this publication he certainly displayed, if not genius, at any rate a precocious culture. His wit, which in after days was to bite so trenchantly, lacks, indeed, as yet the fine edge which a wider experience alone could give ; but in these youthful effusions the leading characteristics of his later style are already perfectly represented. The sonorous periods of these early efforts in English prose are as carefully balanced, and furnished with as fine a Ciceronian polish, as anything produced by his later years. Of his verse contributions, too, one at least has been found worthy of inclusion in more than one anthology of Canning's poetical works, and—though this may-be is no great praise —it more than holds its own amongst its fellows. This poem, "The Slavery of Greece," has, in view of the part played subsequently by its author in European politics, an interest quite apart from its literary qualities, and I shall therefore quote from it sufficiently for the purpose of illustrating its spirit and style :—

THE SLAVERY OF GREECE

Unrivall'd Greece! thou ever honour'd name,
Thou nurse of heroes dear to deathless fame!
Though now to worth, to honour all unknown,
Thy lustre faded, and thy glories flown,
Yet still shall memory with reverted eye
Trace thy past worth, and view thee with a sigh.

Thee freedom cherish'd once with fostering hand,
And breathed undaunted valour through the land.
Here the stern spirit of the Spartan soil
The child of poverty inured to toil.
Here loved by Pallas and the sacred nine,
Once did fair Athens' towery glories shine.
To bend the bow, or the bright falchion wield,
To lift the bulwark of the brazen shield,
To toss the terror of the whizzing spear,
The conquering standard's glittering glories rear,
And join the maddening battle's loud career,
How skilled the Greeks; confess what Persians slain
Were strew'd on Marathon's ensanguined plain;
When heaps on heaps the routed squadrons fell,
And with their gaudy myriads peopled hell.

. . . . . .

on Greece each science shone,
Here the bold statue started from the stone;
Here warm with life the swelling canvas glow'd;
Here big with thought the poet's raptures flow'd;
Here Homer's lip was touch'd with sacred fire;
And wanton Sappho tuned her amorous lyre.

. . . . . .

This was thy state! but oh! how changed thy fame,
And all thy glories fading into shame.
What! that thy bold, thy freedom-breathing land
Should crouch beneath a tyrant's stern command!
That servitude should bind in galling chain
Whom Asia's millions once opposed in vain;

Who could have thought? who sees without a groan
Thy cities mouldering, and thy walls o'erthrown?
. . . . . .
Thy sons (sad change!) in abject bondage sigh;
Unpitied toil, and unlamented die.
. . . . . .
The glittering tyranny of Othman's sons,
The pomp of horror which surrounds their thrones,
Has awed their servile spirits into fear,
Spurn'd by the foot they tremble and revere.
. . . . . .

Compare this with Byron's treatment of the same theme :—

The isles of Greece! The isles of Greece!
Where burning Sappho loved and sang,
Where grew the arts of war and peace,
Where Delos rose and Phoebus sprang.
Eternal summer gilds them yet,
But all, except their sun, is set.

In general it would, of course, be idle to compare the work of a clever lad with a talent for versification with that of a poetic genius at the maturity of his powers. In this case, however, the comparison is not without its interest; for the contrast lies deeper than the mere difference between mature and immature art. Of none was the saying that "the boy is father to the man" truer than of George Canning; and in this youthful poem are already conspicuous all the essential characteristics of his later attitude towards life. The inspiration in Byron's poetry is the same as that which sent

him to Missolonghi, and kept him there, through disillusionment and disappointment, to die. On Canning's nature no such tongues of fire had fallen. No erratic impulses, however generous, were ever allowed to disturb the equal balance of his mind. "The Slavery of Greece" is but the academic expression of an academic sympathy, not with the Greece of actual fact—which, indeed, to Canning's generation was but little known—but with the ideal Greece of the schools; and when the time came to give this sympathy practical expression Canning's attitude is not that of the poet, but of the statesman. Sentiment had but little place in his nature. It had none in his policy.

For the rest, it must be confessed that Canning's boyhood would seem to have been characterised by a singular absence of boyishness. For games and sports he cared nothing, and the whole admirable energy of his mind seems to have been set on self-improvement; and this, not so much from the model boy's sense of present duty, as a process consciously directed by definite ambitions. The determination to succeed was, in fact, already the dominant motive of his life; and already he had by instinct or by art acquired that first essential of success: the talent of the skilful chess-player for looking many moves ahead, so as to avoid the first false step that leads to ultimate failure.

Throughout his school career, if we may trust the records, his portentous progress was unrelieved by a single escapade.

At the age of eighteen he passed from Eton to Oxford, matriculating as a commoner of Christ Church. Mr. Stratford Canning was now dead, but by this time George Canning had ceased to be dependent upon the generosity of his uncle; for, at the instance of his grandmother, his grandfather, old Mr. Canning of Garvagh, had so far relaxed as to bequeath to him a small estate in Ireland, which brought him in an annual sum of £200, sufficient to cover the expenses of his education. This income was not, of course, wealth even for an undergraduate of those days; but it was sufficient to enable him to hold his own in the aristocratic set to which the reputation he brought with him from Eton served to introduce him. The boy had never been indiscriminate in his friendships. He selected his acquaintance, as he selected his books: not—to be just—solely for their worldly use, but for their style and their general agreement with his own instincts and aspirations. And so, at Oxford, his circle, if small, was decidedly select. It included the names of many destined, later on, to play a part in the world of affairs: Lord Holland, Lord Carlisle, Lord Seaford, Lord Granville, Lord Boringdon (afterwards Earl of Morley) and the Hon. Charles Jenkinson, after-

wards created Earl of Liverpool. Of these young gentlemen and a few other chosen spirits, it would seem, there was formed within the college a sort of close corporation for mutual improvement, if not for mutual admiration. Its atmosphere exactly suited Canning's temper; and in the little world of the University he tasted by anticipation some of the joy which in after days he was to drain to the dregs: the joy of the self-made man, whose talents have raised him above the level of those who were born to power. For power seemed to him, even at this early age, the one thing in this world supremely worth having. The boyish pleasures of the average young Oxonian had for him no attraction; he despised the undisciplined state of mind of which they were the outcome, and spoke contemptuously of "the utter emptiness and unamiableness of the generality of good folks Christ Church can boast". He himself had already made up his mind what he wanted of the world, and was calculating the means for attaining it. The House of Commons, indeed, "the only path to the only desirable thing in this world—the gratification of ambition," he recognised as, for the present, beyond his reach; but there remained the Law, "a profession which, in this country, holds out every inducement that can nerve the exertions, and give vigour to the power of a young man. The way, indeed, is long, toilsome and rugged; but it leads

to honours, solid and lasting; to independence, without which no blessings of fortune, however profuse, no distinctions of station, however splendid, can afford a liberal mind true satisfaction; to power, for which no task can be too hard, no labours too trying." Surely a remarkable epistle to be penned by a boy of eighteen to a college friend!

The letter, from which the above is an extract, was written in September, 1788. Three years later George Canning left Oxford and entered as a student of Lincoln's Inn.

CHAPTER II

PITT AND CANNING

Canning and the Whigs—The French Revolution—He enters Parliament—His maiden speech—Character of his eloquence—Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs—Bonaparte and the revolutionary wars—Policy of Pitt—Canning and the new Humanitarianism — The *Anti-Jacobin* — The *coup d'État* of 18th Brumaire.

TO the young student, chafing over his law books, the prospect of ever realising his ambitions seemed for the moment distant enough. Yet, though his circumstances bound him to follow a profession, his eyes were ever fixed on the great world of affairs beyond the shadow of the courts. For a youth of his temper, indeed, it would have been impossible at that time to concentrate his attention on the subtleties of the law. The French Revolution had shaken the world of politics to its foundations; every day it assumed new shapes; every day it seemed to bring to birth fresh forces, strange, portentous, terrifying. The sober judgment of men was overset by a phenomenon incalculable and menacing; and, amid the death of old

ideas, and the loosening of old allegiance, civilisation seemed to many to be reeling to its ruin.

The constitutional movement of 1789 in France had been greeted by Englishmen with fairly general approval; but when the demand for the removal of abuses developed into open defiance of all the principles on which society was held to rest, and Reform had become Revolution, approval gave place to anger and alarm, which the Terror turned into fanatic hate. For the moment, indeed, it seemed as though the sickness of France were about to infect the English body politic. The mass of the people, unrepresented in Parliament, were suffering and ill content. To the more intelligent the cruel anachronisms of the Statute Book: the Test Act, the barbarous penal code, above all the scandals of the parliamentary franchise, were an ever present source of irritation. To these the catch-words of the French Revolution were welcome as giving voice to their own grievances; societies, of which the most respectable was that of "The Friends of the People," were formed in the great towns to agitate for change; at Sheffield and Dundee riots broke out, and the cry went up for "Equality" and "The Republic". Amid these alarming symptoms the old party cries rang hollow and unreal, and soon ceased to be heard. Burke, hitherto the protagonist of freedom, revolted from a liberty that tended to degenerate into licence, and headed a Whig secession into the Tory camp.

The parliamentary balance was upset; and when Pitt took up the gage of defiance flung down by revolutionary France, he had behind him a vast and docile majority, while on the Opposition benches a sorry remnant of the once all-powerful Whig party championed the seemingly forlorn hope of a Liberalism as yet unweaned.

The Opposition, however, though weak in numbers, was powerful in talent. To meet the burning eloquence of Fox, the biting wit of Sheridan, the cultivated common sense of Grey, Pitt could rely upon himself only. It is true that no artillery of argument, however well directed, could have shaken the stolid battalions of country gentlemen who supported the Government; but the situation was discreditable, and might prove perilous. Pitt, too, was beginning to feel the strain of this single-handed battle against intellectual odds; and since Parliament could not supply him with lieutenants, he began to look abroad for young men of talent to help him in his need. It was under these circumstances that his attention was directed to George Canning, of whom he had already heard as a young man of parts and avowed ambitions; and realising that here was exactly what he wanted, he offered him a seat in Parliament, in return for his support.

The opportunity, so ardently longed for, had come; and but one apparent obstacle stood in the

way of Canning's accepting an offer as grateful as it was unlooked for. This obstacle was, at first sight, a serious one to a youth of high principle. At his uncle's house he had been brought up a Whig amongst Whigs. On first coming to town, he had been greeted as a coming hope of the Opposition, welcomed in the circle of Fox and Sheridan, and introduced as a young man of talent into the rarefied atmosphere of Devonshire House. Under these circumstances, to accept the first offer of the Tory Government, at a time when the Tory allegiance was the sole apparent avenue to success, would infallibly expose him to the obvious charge which was actually flung in his face. Yet the charge was as shallow as it was unjust. In any case it would have been no great treason in a boy of twenty-three to exchange a fortuitous and doubtful allegiance to principles fallen obsolete for the certainty of a brilliant and useful career; but, as a matter of fact, whatever Canning's views may have been before the Revolution, this catastrophe had wrought in him the same change which it had produced in so many of the Whig leaders. With the abstract political principles of the new "French" school his nature, practical and British to the core, was thoroughly out of sympathy. Offers, tempting enough to the vanity of youth, had been made to him by the party of Reform; but he recognised in "The Society of

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After Hoppner

the Friends of the People" the organ of what he called "not at random, but deliberately," the French party; and in a letter of 13th December, 1792, addressed to his friend, Lord Boringdon, he declared that he could attach himself to neither section of the Opposition, and that, should he ever succeed in entering Parliament, it would be as a follower of Pitt. When, therefore, he received the Prime Minister's offer of a seat, he accepted it without hesitation, and in the session of 1793 made his entry into Parliament as member for the borough of Newport.

The first few months of Canning's parliamentary career were distinguished by a masterly inactivity wholly characteristic. There was every temptation for him to rush at once into the fray. He appeared in the House with a reputation ready made; and friend and foe alike expected great things of him. But he was not of those who believe they will be heard for their much speaking; and he was determined that, when the proper time for speech should come, there should be no doubt about his success. He remained, therefore, in silence, studying the methods, and diagnosing the temper of the House, until, on 31st January, 1794, his opportunity came during the debate on Pitt's motion for granting a war subsidy to the King of Sardinia.

Canning tells us that he rose to speak with

anxiety, that his vanity was hurt by the ostentatious inattention of the front Opposition bench, and that his equanimity was only restored by the vociferous applause of his party. Whatever his own emotions during the delivery of his maiden speech, of its effect on the House there could be no doubt. When he rose, Canning was known as a young man of brilliant promise; when he sat down, he was a recognised master of parliamentary oratory.

To appreciate truly the great speakers of the past is only less difficult than to estimate the qualities of its great actors. Garrick and Talma survive but as names. Of Canning and Mirabeau the words may still be read; but it is impossible to conjure up the personal qualities, the subtleties of look, and voice, and gesture, which gave to the sounding periods a double portion of life. Then, too, the art of oratory consists largely in the appeal to the tastes, the temper, the idiosyncrasies of a particular audience. We read with amazement of the effect produced by Canning's eloquence; of a crowded audience rapt by a phrase into a frenzy of almost uncontrollable emotion; of the ready response of laughter or of tears which at all times he knew how to evoke. Yet, in the speeches as they have come down to us it is difficult to detect the secret of this art magic. Their style is elaborated with an extravagance of care which

makes them almost unconvincing, and in their ostentatious avoidance of the least suspicion of vulgarity of phrasing they sometimes verge upon pedantry. No orator would now substitute for "cat's-paw" "the paw of a certain domestic animal," nor, in order to avoid the word Quixotic, speak of an "enterprise romantic in its origin, and thankless in its end, to be characterised only by a term borrowed from that part of the Spanish literature with which we are most familiar";—but then we have lost, for better or for worse, the taste for Ciceronian periods. In making these criticisms, however, it must be remembered that Canning's speeches have not come down to us as they were delivered, but as they were emended by him for purposes of publication. His orations, though prepared with extreme and anxious care, were not written down before delivery, and as a guide to his memory he held in his hand only the barest outline of his argument. Yet the impression made by his published speeches is confirmed by the opinion of contemporaries not incapable of forming a sound and impartial judgment. Of these Hobhouse was assuredly not one, yet his "appreciation," every stinging line of which is venomous with party spite, is worth giving, if only to illustrate the kind of criticism to which Canning was exposed during his lifetime. "A smart, sixth-form boy," he writes of Canning, "the little hero of a

little world, matures his precocious parts at college, and sends before him his fame to the metropolis; a Minister, or some Borough-holder of the day, thinks him worth saving from his democratic associates, and from the unprofitable principles which the thoughtless enthusiasm of youth may have inclined him hitherto to adopt. The hopeless youth yields at once, and, placed in the true line of promotion, he takes his place with the more veteran prostitutes of Parliament. There he minds his periods; there he balances his antitheses; there he adjusts his alliterations; and, filling up the interstices of this pie-bald, patchwork rhetoric with froth and foam, this master of pompous nothings becomes first favourite of the Great Council of the nation." These, of course, are the ravings of political lunacy, hardly more respectable than those gutter broad-sheets of the time which, when they had exhausted their abuse of Canning himself, proceeded to attack the character of his mother. Yet though Canning was most certainly not merely a "master of pompous nothings," there was enough of the temper of truth in the accusation to give it a cutting edge. Brougham, who, though a political opponent, was not an unkindly critic, speaks of Canning as an actor rather than an orator, and in comparing his eloquence with that of Pitt said: "Pitt gave you the impression of a man who stood clearly on his purpose, and was too much in earnest

to be conscious of any ambition beyond it. Canning always had the classical air about him of an orator who felt he was addressing posterity."

Whatever the qualities of his oratory, Canning, even after his first successful essay, was not prodigal of it. In December, 1794, he was chosen to second the Address; in March of the following year he made a few remarks in the committee on the state of the nation. In December of the same year he was appointed to the Under-Secretaryship for Foreign Affairs, and, devoting himself completely to the business of his office, for two years he never, but once, opened his mouth in Parliament. This self-repression in a character so naturally self-assertive was as rare as it was admirable. George Canning had his aim sun-clear before him. He intended some day to govern; and government was, he realised, an art that must be learned. Meanwhile he had his reward. On 21st August, 1796, he wrote to his friend, Lord Boringdon, "The happiness of constant occupation is infinite". Which is true—if the occupation be congenial.

There was certainly in the circumstances of the times enough material to absorb the attention of a Minister of Canning's keen and ambitious nature. There were questions of vital importance at home, social, economic, political; above all, the perennial problem of Ireland. All these were, however, being rapidly overshadowed by the surprising de-

velopments of the war. The first effort of the "legitimate" Powers to unite against the common revolutionary peril had ended in discord and disaster. Republican France, in answer to the threats of the Coalition, had thrown down the gage of defiance to monarchical Europe; and, inspired by the double motive of love of country and revolutionary fanaticism, the armies of Humanity had poured over the frontiers to the conquest of the world. Their strength was the outcome largely of their very weakness. In face of a France apparently disorganised and bankrupt, the Powers had no sufficient motive for sinking their individual jealousies and ambitions in a common cause. Russia, which under the Emperors Alexander I. and Nicholas I. was to become the banner-bearer of confederated Europe, had, under the cynical guidance of the Empress Catherine, taken advantage of the preoccupation of the Powers to close her grip upon Poland; and Prussia, repenting her unnatural league with Austria, had withdrawn from the Alliance, and hastened eastward to take her share of the spoil. France, the league of her enemies dissolved, had time to organise her enthusiasm under the discipline of the Terror. Defeat and fear gave place to victory and visions of military glory, till, as conquest followed conquest, the world began to realise that out of the chaos of the Revolution a new force, sinister and menacing, was

gradually taking shape. When, in 1797, the career of Napoleon Bonaparte in Italy was crowned by the Treaty of Campo Formio, the birth of the Napoleonic Idea, which "sprang from the Revolution, like Minerva from the brow of Jove, helmet on head, and all sheathed in iron," was already manifest to men of discernment.

It was among these momentous events that Canning served his apprenticeship to Foreign Affairs under the statesman who, from first to last, was alone by him admitted to be his master. In the policy of Pitt we find, indeed, the key to those principles of international action which, throughout his career, and under very changed conditions, Canning was consistently to apply. This policy, by which for nigh on a quarter of a century British blood and British wealth were poured out to maintain the struggle against France, was not the outcome of mere hatred of the abstract principles of the Revolution. When, in 1793, Pitt took up the reckless challenge of France, it was with no intention of forcing upon her a system of government which she had rejected. The doctrine of Non-intervention, which in after years Canning was to champion against the Holy Alliance, was also his. It was the defiance of this principle by France, and her claim—issuing in a policy of frank conquest—to impose her own model upon other nations, which moved him to begin and to

persevere in the war. Nor, in subsidising foreign Governments, was his motive the altruistic one of succouring "oppressed nationalities". Pitt's policy, though it issued in "saving Europe," was in intention purely British. Europe must be saved, because upon the maintenance of the international balance of power depended the safety and the influence of England.

From the first Canning had identified himself whole-heartedly with this policy, so congenial to his own temperament. Even before entering Parliament, in a letter dated 13th December, 1792, he had insisted to his friend, Lord Boringdon, on "the right of a nation to choose for itself its own Constitution" as "a right derived from God and nature alone"; and, in his first speech to the House of Commons, he declared that had the "madness" of France "been a harmless idiot lunacy, contented with playing its tricks, and practising its fooleries at home; with dressing up strumpets in oak-leaves, and inventing nicknames for the calendar," Great Britain might have watched "their innocent amusements" with pity and contempt. But their madness had not been of this sort. "Theirs was a moody and mischievous insanity by which, not contented with wounding and tearing themselves, they proceeded to exert their unnatural strength for the annoyance of their neighbours, and, not satisfied

with weaving straws and wearing fetters at home, they attempted to carry their systems and their slavery abroad. This was a disposition which, for the safety and peace of the world, must be repelled, and, if possible, eradicated."

In taking up this attitude, Canning professed to study primarily the interests of Great Britain, though he rejoiced that what made for his country's good tended also to benefit the world at large. "Every nation for itself, and God for us all!" was already his motto; and in the great speech of 11th December, 1798, on Mr. Tierney's motion to end the war, which finally established his reputation as an orator, he poured scorn "on that large and liberal system of ethics" which had superseded "all the narrow prejudices of the ancient school—that we are to consider not so much what is good for our country, as what is good for the human race; that we are all children of one family;" and other like "fancies and philanthropics" to him incomprehensible. Yet, though he still conceived it to be "the paramount duty of a British member of Parliament to consider what was good for Great Britain," his attitude was not the outcome of a reckless Chauvinism, but because he saw in the honest rivalry of nations the healthy state of the world. "Ours has been a generous ambition," he exclaimed on the same occasion, "and it has not been disappointed so far as we ourselves are con-

cerned; but it looks to larger and more elevated objects—to the peace and prosperity of the world."

While, however, Canning found no difficulty in pulverising the somewhat brittle arguments of the Opposition in Parliament, the situation in the country was, from the point of view of the Government, less satisfactory. There the argument was for the moment all on the other side; the wits of the "French" party had at command a whole armoury of satire and invective with which they mercilessly riddled the only too vulnerable unreformed body politic, while the friends of the established order sought shelter behind their intrenchments of privilege, without venturing to reply. It was for the purpose of remedying this state of things that Canning collaborated with others like minded with himself in bringing out the *Anti-Jacobin* — the title sufficiently explains its principles—a paper intended to combat the enemies of the Government with their own weapons. The first number appeared in November, 1797, the last in July, 1798. But though the life of the paper was short, it was from the outset a brilliant success. To this Canning, who was a frequent contributor, added much. His mastery of satire, which sometimes tended to cause scandal in debate, was invaluable to him as a pamphleteer; and, though no poet, his facile verse possessed just the qualities best suited for political ends. In

days of imperfect reporting the full-blooded periods of Canning's parliamentary orations failed of their effect outside the walls of the House of Commons. But the "man in the street" could appreciate and remember his description of the typical apostle of the New Morality.

> Taught in her school to imbibe thy mawkish strain,
> Condorcet, filtered through the dregs of Paine,
> Each pert adept disowns a Briton's part,
> And plucks the name of England from his heart.
> What! shall a name, a word, a sound, control
> Th' aspiring thought, and cramp th' expansive soul?
> Shall one half-peopled island's rocky round
> A love, that glows for all creation, bound?
> And social charities contract the plan
> Framed for thy freedom, Universal Man!
> No—through th' extended globe his feelings run
> As broad and general as th' unbounded sun!
> No narrow bigot he;—his reasoned view
> Thy interests, England, ranks with thine, Peru!
> France at our doors, he sees no danger nigh,
> But heaves for Turkey's woes th' impartial sigh;
> A steady patriot of the world alone,
> The friend of every country—but his own.

The poetry of the *Anti-Jacobin* was to a considerable extent the result of collaboration; and it would require a more elaborate critical analysis than I am able to present in order to determine how much was contributed by Canning, and how much by his colleagues, Frere, Ellis or Gifford. Of Canning's undoubted compositions, "The New Morality," from which the above lines are quoted,

is the most notable both in length and style. Two others, "The Needy Knife-grinder" and the "Inscription for the Door of the Cell in Newgate, where Mrs. Brownrigg was Confined," are "often quoted"; and since often-quoted things are by the generality of people but seldom heard, I will quote them again. "The Needy Knife-grinder" is a parody of Southey's Sapphic poem "The Widow".

SAPPHICS

THE FRIEND OF HUMANITY AND THE KNIFE-GRINDER

Friend of Humanity

"Needy Knife-grinder! whither are you going?
Rough is the road, your wheel is out of order—
Bleak blows the blast; your hat has got a hole in't,
So have your breeches!

"Weary Knife-grinder! little think the proud ones,
Who in their coaches roll along the turnpike-
Road, what hard work 'tis crying all day 'Knives and
Scissors to grind O!'

"Tell me, Knife-grinder, how came you to grind knives?
Did some rich man tyranically use you?
Was it the squire? or parson of the parish?
Or the attorney?

"Was it the squire, for killing of his game? or
Covetous parson, for his tithes distraining?
Or roguish lawyer, made you lose your little
All in a lawsuit?

"(Have you not read the *Rights of Man*, by Tom Paine?)
Drops of compassion tremble on my eyelids,
Ready to fall, as soon as you have told your
Pitiful story."

Knife-grinder

"Story! God bless you! I have none to tell, sir,
Only last night a-drinking at the Chequers,
This poor old hat and breeches, as you see, were
Torn in a scuffle.

"Constables came up for to take me into
Custody; they took me before the justice;
Justice Oldmixon put me in the parish-
Stocks for a vagrant.

"I should be glad to drink your Honour's health in
A pot of beer, if you will give me sixpence;
But for my part, I never love to meddle
With politics, sir."

Friend of Humanity

"I give thee sixpence! I will see thee damned first—
Wretch! whom no sense of wrongs can rouse to vengeance—
Sordid, unfeeling, reprobate, degraded,
Spiritless outcast!"

(Kicks the Knife-grinder, overturns his wheel, and exit in a transport of Republican enthusiasm and universal philanthropy.)

The second poem is also a parody on one of Southey's. The original I will also give in full, for without a full knowledge of it the keen edge of Canning's satire is not felt.

INSCRIPTION

FOR THE APARTMENT IN CHEPSTOW CASTLE, WHERE HENRY MARTEN, THE REGICIDE, WAS IMPRISONED THIRTY YEARS

For thirty years secluded from mankind
Here Marten lingered. Often have these walls
Echoed his footsteps, as with even tread
He paced around his prison: not to him

Did Nature's fair varieties exist;
He never saw the sun's delightful beams,
Save when through yon high bars he pour'd a sad
And broken splendour. Dost thou ask his crime?
HE HAD REBELLED AGAINST THE KING; AND SAT
IN JUDGMENT ON HIM; for his ardent mind
Shaped goodliest plans of happiness on earth,
And peace and liberty. Wild dreams! but such
As Plato loved; such as with holy zeal
Our Milton worshipp'd. Blessed hopes! awhile
From man withheld, even to the latter days
When Christ shall come, and all things be fulfill'd!

This effusion contains all the elements that invite parody, for it is, in fact, itself a serious parody of the truth. Henry Marten himself, who, if he had no morals, possessed at any rate a cynical wit, would have been the first to laugh at his own exaltation into a martyr in the cause of humanity. Canning had no compunction in pillorying such sham sentiment. He did it effectually in the following poem:—

INSCRIPTION

FOR THE DOOR OF THE CELL IN NEWGATE, WHERE MRS. BROWNRIGG, THE 'PRENTICE-CIDE, WAS CONFINED PREVIOUS TO HER EXECUTION

For one long term, or e'er her trial came,
Here Brownrigg linger'd. Often have these cells
Echoed her blasphemies, as with shrill voice
She screamed for fresh Geneva. Not to her
Did the blithe fields of Tothill, or thy street,
St. Giles, its fair varieties expand;
Till at the last, in slow-drawn cart she went

To execution. Dost thou ask her crime?
She whipped two Female 'Prentices to Death
And hid them in the Coal-hole. For her mind
Shaped strictest plans of discipline. Sage schemes!
Such as Lycurgus taught, when at the shrine
Of the Orthyan goddess he bade flog
The little Spartans; such as erst chastised
Our Milton when at college. For this act
Did Brownrigg swing. Harsh laws! But time shall come
When France shall come, and laws be all repeal'd!

While allowing Canning and his collaborators, however, all credit for their wit and literary style, it is far from possible in every case to admit the justice, or even the decency, of their satires. Many of the parodies, especially those that—like "The Loves of the Triangles"—are not political, exhibit an abounding sense of humour and a sound spirit of literary criticism. But what are we to say of the taste or judgment which could represent the great advocate Erskine, or the moderate and philosophic Sir James Mackintosh, as taking a prominent part in a republican orgy and drinking to "Bonaparte and the Revolution"? or of the knowledge of men and affairs which could include the gentle Charles Lamb amongst the enemies of social order? The explanation, and possibly the excuse, for the tone of the *Anti-Jacobin* lie in the overheated political atmosphere of the times. The aim of the paper was frankly partisan; and its authors condescended deliberately into the gutter at a

time when the polemical weapons of the gutter were even less savoury than they are now. It is true that if Canning gave, he also received, hard knocks. His antecedents, his character, his person, his motives, were in turn ridiculed and abused. Even the character of his mother was not spared. It would perhaps have been more dignified had he abstained from retaliating in kind. Possibly it would also have been less effective.

In any case, however, revolutionary "sentimentality" was destined soon to receive a ruder blow than could have been dealt it by the hardest polemical bludgeoning or the keenest intellectual sword-play.

In May, 1798, Bonaparte sailed on his Egyptian expedition; and on the following August 1 Nelson's victory on the Nile cut him off from Europe. This catastrophe, apparently so fatal to his ambitions, proved in effect helpful to his success. During his enforced absence, Pitt had succeeded in forming a fresh coalition against France; and the defeats suffered by the French arms at the hands of the Archduke Charles in Germany and of the Russian General Suvoroff in Italy turned the eyes of the French people to the young general who was reaping fresh laurels in Africa and in Syria. Bonaparte, watching affairs at home with a keen eye, at last saw that his time had come. Leaving Kleber in command in Egypt,

he set sail with a few chosen companions, and, managing to evade the British cruisers, landed at Fréjus on 9th October, 1799. Seven days later he was in Paris. On 10th November his grenadiers had driven the deputies from the hall of assembly at the point of the bayonet, and Bonaparte was in effect, though not in name, sole master of the destinies of France.

To Canning the *coup d'État* of the 18th Brumaire was wholly welcome, and he greeted it with loudly expressed satisfaction. "I would give France India," he wrote to a friend, "to ensure her a despotism, and think the purchase a cheap one. No! no! It is the thorough destruction of the principles of exaggerated liberty—it is the lasting ridicule thrown upon all systems of democratic equality—it is the galling conviction carried home to the minds of all the brawlers for freedom in this and every other country, that there never was, nor will be, nor can be, a leader of a mob faction who does not mean to be the lord, and not the servant, of the people."

The hatred and distrust of democracy revealed in the above letter gives us the extreme measure of Canning's Toryism. Yet, however exaggerated his fears of popular government may have been, they were founded upon no mere blind resistance to all reform. But he thought he saw in democracy the same danger as in autocracy, and objected

to committing unlimited power to the great mass of the people because "all unlimited and irresponsible power is sure to be abused"; and in the established balance of forces in the British Constitution, however glaring its anomalies, he recognised the palladium of British liberty. So long as a system seemed to him to work well, he cared not a rap for the soundness or unsoundness of its logical foundation; and the French passion for reconstructing institutions on general principles was wholly foreign to him.

"The temper and practice of the British Constitution," he said, "is to redress practical grievances, but not to run after theoretical perfection." But even the redress of admitted wrongs, whether of classes or of individuals, seemed to him only advisable in the public interest where the grievance had attained proportions perilous to the body politic. When, however, the general interests of the State seemed to him bound up with such redress, he was fearless and untiring in his championship of change.

This principle, Conservative rather than Tory, was well illustrated in Canning's attitude towards the Irish question, which, while Bonaparte was consolidating his power in France, was passing into a phase even more fateful for the future of the British Empire.

CHAPTER III

CANNING AND THE IRISH QUESTION

Grattan's Parliament—The rebellion of 1798—Pitt and Ireland—The Union proposed—Canning and the Union—The question of Catholic emancipation—Resignation of Pitt.

IN 1782, helped by the entanglement of Great Britain in the war with the American colonies, Grattan had succeeded in achieving the legislative independence of Ireland, subject, however, to the ultimate control of the Imperial Parliament. The experiment, based as it was on the unsound principle of Protestant ascendency, failed to bring peace and contentment to the unhappy country; Pitt's enlightened policy of creating a solidarity of material interests between the two nations by abolishing the restrictions upon Irish trade intercourse with England, and through England with the British colonies, broke down on the selfish opposition of the English commercial classes; and when, stimulated by the revolutionary propaganda of France, the unrest in the sister island had culminated in the great rebellion of 1798, it was

recognised that nothing short of a complete readjustment of the relations between the two countries would give any chance of a permanent and a satisfactory settlement. On 22nd January, 1799, a royal message was brought down to the House of Commons suggesting the legislative Union between Great Britain and Ireland.

In view of the unhappy fact that the "final adjustment" of the Irish question seems, after a hundred years, as remote as ever, Canning's reasons for supporting the Unionist policy of Pitt have still an interest more than historical; and, if we eliminate the note of confidence and hope which at first inspired them, they are as cogent at the outset of the twentieth century as they were at the close of the eighteenth. In general Canning's attitude towards the question of the Union was singularly illustrative of his political principles. No one, after reading his speeches, can accuse him of taking a low view of a great problem, or of a cynical desire to exploit the woes of Ireland for the advantage or security of Great Britain. Yet, the end being in his view salutary for both countries, he is not concerned to inquire too anxiously into the purity of the means employed for its attainment. Holding the views he did on constitutional questions, he was not likely to be impressed by the argument that the members of the Irish Parliament did not represent the will of the Irish people. By what-

ever constituency elected, theirs was the undoubted right to dispose of the destinies of the nation, and to dispute this right was to loosen the structure of the Union between England and Scotland, long accepted by both peoples, which rested on no firmer foundation. He poured scorn also on the charge that the Parliament in Dublin could only be gained over to the policy of union by intimidation and corruption. The former could be so easily disproved; the latter was at least incapable of proof. It was no business of English ministers to inquire into the process by which Irish members had arrived at a conclusion which they believed to be in the best interests of both countries.

It is easy, of course, to criticise this line of argument, which, to a generation saturated with democratic principles, appears disingenuous; and it is precisely from this point of view that in our own day the Union has been most bitterly attacked. Yet it is easier to condemn the means actually employed than to suggest, under the circumstances of those days, any practical alternative by which a policy believed to be so essential to the welfare of both countries could be carried through. The Act of Union, in fact, must be judged upon its merits, and its framers by their motives. If the goal was worth striving for, we may be content to overlook the mud splashed on the clothes of the racers: the accident of the stormy times and of roads not yet made straight.

To Canning at least the goal seemed superlatively worth attaining. To him it seemed that the legislative Union was the sole method of escape from a state of things which was at once a misery to Ireland and a menace to Great Britain. Nor would he admit for a moment that in voting away their independence the representatives of Ireland had sold the interests of their country. In reply to Sheridan, who compared the project of the Union to the annexations of Napoleon, and who warned the House of Commons against "imitating French practices, while reprobating French principles," he denied the validity of the parallel. What comparison, he asked, could there be between the unwilling tributaries of a foreign Power and a nation admitted, as the result of a free contract, into full partnership with the greatest Empire on earth? The moral of the parallel, indeed, might be exactly reversed; for as long as the Irish Parliament remained independent, the Irish people were subject to the British Empire, without having the smallest voice in its affairs. By its union with that of Great Britain the Irish Parliament would, in fact, receive an immense accession of power and prestige. "Look at other essential rights and powers of a Parliament, and see how they can be made to belong to a separate and unconnected Parliament in Ireland, or how they can be effectually exercised by it. The right of impeachment, can that be exercised by the Parlia-

ment of Ireland against the King's ministers in Great Britain? And yet does anybody doubt that the King's British ministers are his proper and constitutional advisers in respect to the affairs of Ireland as well as to those of the Empire at large? The power of altering or limiting the succession of the Crown—the Crown of Ireland as well as Great Britain—who shall deny that power to the Parliament of Great Britain? To ascribe the same power to the Parliament of Ireland would be treason. Where, therefore, do there exist, or where can there exist, that perfect equality and independence, which it is imagined the Irish Parliament must resign the moment that it ceases to be distinct from that of Great Britain?

"But if this be all that the Irish Parliament is to keep and maintain by keeping its separate state, let us next see what it will lose by incorporation with the Parliament of Great Britain. Let us see which of its powers or privileges will be abridged, what salutary and important function it will be disabled from exercising, when it shall be received into the bosom of this Parliament, and made part of the general superintending legislature of the Empire. To watch over the local and immediate interests of a country, and to preserve its interests, peace and tranquillity, is one great duty of a Parliament: another is, to guard and improve the civil and political rights of the people, and the

laws and institutions on which they rest. For which of these functions will the Irish Parliament be disqualified, when united with that of Great Britain? Will it be less qualified to adjust and to control the local feuds and animosities arising from religious differences in Ireland, when removed out of the reach of the immediate influence of every sudden and varying gust of popular frenzy? Instead of being committed as a party, it becomes an impartial judge of the conflict, when it is placed in a situation which enables it to weigh every claim with dispassionate calmness and dignity, to resist what may be extravagant without the appearance of enmity, and concede to the Catholics what may remain to be conceded without the appearance of intimidation, and without hazard to its own authority and power. If we consider the various other objects of legislation, in matters of commerce, of civil liberty and of political constitution, will the people of Ireland feel their interests less safe, their rights and privileges less guarded, when those whose duty it is to watch over them shall sit among the guardians of the British Constitution, and when no law shall be passed affecting the condition of an Irishman, which does not include in its operation millions of his fellow-subjects in Great Britain?"

It is of course an easy thing, in the light of subsequent history, to throw ridicule on these arguments.

Canning's vision of the Imperial Parliament, fortified by the presence of the representatives of Ireland, discussing Irish affairs "with dispassionate calmness and dignity," has hardly been realised. Nor can it truthfully be said that the bulk of the Irish people have felt their interests safe in the hands of the guardians of the British Constitution, or that Ireland since the Union has never been made the subject of exceptional legislation. Into the reasons for these unhappy truths it is no part of my task to enter. Canning himself lived to see his confidence belied, and declared later, as member for the Irish constituency of Tralee, that had he foreseen the attitude of the British Parliament to Irish affairs he would have hesitated before giving his vote for the Union. Yet his arguments for the Union remained, and remain, sound. He realised that Ireland was suffering from a sickness at once moral and material. The moral sickness was due to the irreconcilable religious differences, having their roots deep down in Irish history, which made a settlement from within well-nigh impossible. The "final settlement" of 1782 had, as he pointed out in answer to Sheridan, in fact settled nothing, for in it "the word *catholic* never occurred"; and what manner of "settlement" was that which left out of account three-quarters of the population? "Catholic emancipation" Canning regarded as absolutely essential to preserve

Ireland from a repetition of the troubles of '98, a question not so much of abstract right as of supreme expediency. But the Irish Parliament, living, moving and having its being in the principles of Protestant ascendency, would never consent to commit political suicide by yielding the vote to the Catholic majority. "Catholic emancipation," in fact, could only be brought about by merging the Irish Parliament in the larger entity of that of Great Britain which, representing on the whole a similar point of view, would prevent it from being swept away in a revolution which would have completely overset the traditional balance of Irish life. It was this fact which, as Canning pointed out, enabled the Government to hold out to the Catholics, as an inducement to vote for the Union, the prospect of emancipation, and to the Protestants the certainty of being secured from a Catholic domination. In this double promise there was nothing to justify the scornful attacks of the Opposition.

If the moral sickness of Ireland was thus obvious, the material sickness was not less so; and the cure, in Canning's opinion, was the same. The necessity for this cure, he said, "argues no blame to the people, or to the Government, of Ireland. The fault is in the nature of things: in the present disposition of property, and division of the classes of society, in that country. They want commerce,

they want capital, they want a generally diffused spirit of industry and order; they want those classes of men who connect the upper and lower orders of society, and who thereby blend together and harmonise the whole. But it is not an Act of Parliament that would effect these great and beneficial objects; no, it is only by a connection with a country, which has capital, which has commerce, which has that middle class of men, of whom skill and enterprise, and sober orderly habits are the peculiar characteristics; it is by such a connection alone, diffusing these blessings, diffusing the means of wealth, and the example and encouragement of industry throughout the sister kingdom; it is by such a connection that so great and beneficial a change must be effected." Partial remedies had been tried, with but partial success. Moreover these remedies had taken the form of concessions, as was inevitable; for Ireland, as an independent nation, could have no *right* to demand equality of privilege with Great Britain. But, once incorporated with England and Scotland, she would be enabled to claim of right what had hitherto been yielded only as a matter of grace, and would enter into a full share of Britain's imperial heritage.

Such, in brief, were Canning's views on the Union; or perhaps it would be truer to say Pitt's views as reflected through Canning's mind. In

expressing them he could honestly declare that he had, from first to last, the best interests of Ireland at heart. In replying to Sheridan, during the debate on the royal message, while doing full justice to the patriotic motives of the eloquent Irishman, he declared that he too, though not born in Ireland, was connected with that country by the closest ties of blood and sympathy. And, if his confident arguments were to a sorry extent disproved in the sequel, this was not that they were in themselves unreasonable, but that he had in his lofty view of the character and functions of the governing powers exaggerated the part played by reason in their august brains. Certainly if the Union failed to produce the results he had expected of it, the fault was not his, nor Pitt's.

The Act of Union was passed on 2nd August, 1800; but the promised emancipation of the Catholics did not follow. In making this promise, in fact, Pitt had neglected to reckon with the narrow and stubborn mind of his royal master. George III. absolutely refused to consider a proposal which would, in his view, constitute a breach of his coronation oath to defend the Protestant religion, and in this attitude he was encouraged by a powerful and influential party in Parliament and at court. When, in the first session of the united Parliament, in 1801, Pitt introduced the promised Relief Bill, the King requested him to withdraw it. The

honour as well as the policy of the Prime Minister was bound up with the fulfilment of his undertaking to the Irish Catholics; and, realising the hopelessness of carrying the measure through in face of the King's attitude, he resigned his office. With him Canning went into retirement.

CHAPTER IV

THE DEATH OF PITT

Marriage—Canning and Addington—Speech on the island of Trinidad (Slave Trade)—Canning an Irish member—The peace of Amiens — Pitt's last administration—Napoleon Emperor of the French — The new Coalition—Battles of Trafalgar and Austerlitz—Death of Pitt—"Ministry of all the Talents"—Death of Fox—Portland Administration — Canning at the Foreign Office.

DURING the first five years of his parliamentary life Canning had been bound to his leader, not only by the ties of willing allegiance, but by the straitness of his means, and by the fact that he sat as the representative of a close borough. The defect of poverty he had already cured at the time of Pitt's retirement. On 8th July, 1800, he married Joan Scott, younger daughter and coheiress of General Scott, who had divided between his daughters what was at that time the great fortune of £200,000, accumulated by his skill and good luck at the gaming table. The elder sister was already married to the Duke of

GEORGE CANNING

From an engraving by B. Lane

Portland. The match was, therefore, not only advantageous from the pecuniary point of view, but also gave to the young politician, who had hitherto possessed no influence save that derived from his own talents, the advantage of a powerful family connection.

Of this improved state of his fortunes Canning was determined to take full advantage, in order to secure that independence without which, even as a boy, he had declared that neither "blessings of fortune" nor "distinctions of station" could bring any true satisfaction. His position in Parliament after Pitt's retirement was to him increasingly intolerable. The reins of government, which Pitt had dropped, were in the feeble hands of Addington; the strenuous policy of pursuing the war to a definite issue was exchanged for a temporising policy of peace; and Pitt, though deposed, watched in silence the unravelling of his work. Canning, bound to follow the example of the leader on whose patronage he depended for his seat, chafed at the enforced inaction. He vented his impatience in letters to his friends. "I would have cut off my right hand," he wrote on 29th October, 1801, to Lord Boringdon, "rather than have signed this treaty (with France)!" and, in the same letter, he added: "I mean to have an independent seat in Parliament; I mean never to set my foot within the House of Commons again,

till I can speak and act in that House according to my own judgment purely, without reference to the will of any other man". For the remainder of the Parliament, in fact, he maintained silence, except for one speech: that on the cultivation of the newly acquired colony of Trinidad.

This speech is interesting, not only as the first mention in the House of Commons during the nineteenth century of a subject which, as Addington pointed out, had been allowed to sleep for five or six years, but as the first public declaration of Canning's own views on the question of the abolition of the Slave Trade. The occasion was the moving by Canning himself of an address to the Crown praying that any grants of public lands in the new colony should be made only under such conditions as should prevent any increase in the traffic in slaves, and that regulations should be made for promoting the cultivation of the island "in the manner least likely to interfere with the gradual diminution and ultimate termination of the Slave Trade". In making this motion Canning pointed out that the House of Commons had twice endorsed the general principle on which it was based; once on 2nd April, 1792, when it had agreed to the motion "that the Slave Trade ought to be gradually abolished"; and again on 6th April, 1797, when it had passed an address to the Crown to the effect "that His Majesty

would direct such measures to be taken as should gradually diminish the necessity for and ultimately lead to the termination of the Slave Trade". Into the general question, then, he did not feel called upon to enter; but the present occasion seemed to him eminently favourable for giving to accepted principles practical expression, without imperilling any of those vested interests which all of them were called upon as far as possible to respect. For, unless special precautions were taken, the opening up to British enterprise of the island of Trinidad, a country eminently suitable for the cultivation of the sugar cane, would not only create new vested rights, but would tend "to create a new slave trade" for the special supply of the island. To obviate "the shame and danger" attending this, Canning suggested that the importation of negroes from Africa to the new colony should be forbidden, and furthermore that the public lands should be distributed, not in great estates to capitalists, but in small holdings to European, creole, or free negro settlers, so as to lay the basis in the new colony "of a natural population, which is alone the great cure for all evils that are suffered, and all that are apprehended in that quarter of the world".

In advancing these arguments Canning declared that his appeal was not to extremists on either side, but to moderate men of all parties. With "that

select class" who admired the Slave Trade for itself he said that he could have no argument. "It requires," he said, "a degree of fellow-feeling to be able even to differ in discussion to any purpose. One must settle at what point the difference begins; but such persons must have their minds altogether so differently constituted, their sentiments, affections and passions must be so unlike anything that I can conceive, that I avow my incapacity to understand them, and my despair of making them understand me. To their opposition, therefore, I must make up my mind: but I trust to theirs only. The other class to which I have alluded is one whose opposition I should be concerned to have to encounter; that of those with whom from the beginning I have cordially agreed in opinion respecting the necessity of abolishing the Slave Trade. I trust it will not be felt by such persons that the proposition which I offer, because a modified, is an unsatisfactory one. I know that in minds of a sanguine cast such a feeling is apt to prevail; that partially to redress a grievance is often erroneously conceived and represented as giving sanction and establishment to all that part which you leave as you found it; and that this feeling is even sometimes carried so far as to rejoice in any increase of the grievance, from the notion that it must ensure and accelerate the total remedy. But this doctrine is surely to be received with

some qualification. First, indeed, it may possibly be true, where those who are to bear the ill, and those who are to administer the remedy, are the same persons. And, in any case, the augmentation of the ill might be so great, that no man would be justified in consenting to it on a precarious hope of ultimately hastening the remedy. But in this case it was obviously not desirable to increase the oppression in order to force the oppressed to resist."

I have quoted these paragraphs from Canning's speech because, though directed to a particular occasion, they have an application for all time, and because they are highly characteristic of the peculiar sanity of his point of view. That he felt deeply on the question of the slave traffic there can be no doubt. In the speech we have been considering there is more of natural feeling, and less of studied art, than in many of his more famous orations. Yet he is never carried by emotion beyond the bounds of the possible. The bulk of his argument is engaged with figures and statistics; his concern is, not to enlarge on the splendour of principles already accepted, but to prove the expediency from the mundane point of view of their immediate application. After all, God did not give men wings; on the great majority he even laid the serpent's curse.

Canning's motion, though lost, was not in vain. It drew from Addington a promise that the whole

question of the Slave Trade would be raised by the Government during the next session, an assurance with which even Wilberforce declared himself for the time being satisfied.

After the dissolution of 1802 Canning, true to the resolution above expressed, resigned his candidature for Newport, and was returned as an independent member for the Irish borough of Tralee. He now felt himself free to express at large his views on the Addington Administration, and to agitate, in season and out, for the return of Pitt to power. In Parliament, he threw himself into irregular opposition to the Government, and overwhelmed the "doctor"—as with questionable taste he nicknamed the Prime Minister (whose father had been a country physician)—with criticism and ridicule. Outside, he made his home in Conduit Street the centre of an agitation directed to the same end; and even furbished up, for use against the degenerate Tory Government, the poetical weapons which, since the days of the *Anti-Jacobin*, had been laid aside.

> If the health and the strength and the pure vital breath
> Of old England, at last must be doctor'd to death,
> Oh! why must we die of one doctor alone?
> And why must that doctor be just such a one
> As Doctor Henry Addington?

It was, above all, the weak and compromising spirit of the new Prime Minister that roused his

wrath. "Since Pitt," said Count Nesselrode some years later, "England has been better governed by mediocrities than by geniuses." With this opinion of the Russian statesman Canning would hardly have agreed; but, in any case, it had no present application, for Pitt still lived; and, with Pitt alive, mediocrity at the helm of State would, under any circumstances, have been an absurdity. In the actual state of affairs, with Napoleon's power yet unbroken, it seemed to Canning more than an absurdity. The safety of England was, in his opinion, bound up with the continuance of the vigorous policy of Pitt; and "moderate men and moderate measures" constituted a serious peril to the State. That is his justification for giving to the world the following poem:—

MODERATE MEN AND MODERATE MEASURES

Praise to placeless proud ability,
Let the prudent Muse disclaim;
And sing the statesman—all civility—
Whom *moderate* talents raise to fame.
He, no random projects urging,
Makes us wild alarms to feel;
With *moderate measures*, gently *purging*
Ills that prey on Britain's weal.

CHORUS

Gently *purging*,
Gently *purging*,
Gently *purging* Britain's weal.

Addington, with measured *motion*,
Keep the tenor of thy way;
To glory yield no rash devotion,
Led by luring lights astray;
Splendid talents are deceiving;
Tend to councils much too bold;
Moderate men we prize, believing,
All that glitters is not gold.

GRAND CHORUS

All that glitters,
All that glitters,
All that glitters is not gold.

But Canning was not content with attacking the Ministry in front and in flank with satirical verses and outspoken criticism. He even bombarded Pitt himself with letters, adjuring him to cease from sulking in his tent, and once more to take the lead of England in her time of danger. This tendency to lecture at large, and to instruct his betters in the way they should go, did not increase Canning's popularity. Men commented disparagingly on this youthful upstart, whose head had been turned by premature success. "He had been forced like a thriving plant in a well-managed hothouse," said Lord Malmesbury, "had prospered too luxuriantly; had felt no check or frost; and too early in life had had many and too easy advantages." His haughty manner, moreover, and his impatience of the petty prejudices of rank or office, increased this unfavourable impression; and he reaped in

full measure the reward of those who do the right thing in the wrong way.

That he was in essence right the sequel was to prove. The short-lived peace of Amiens had ended on 18th May, 1803, but it had lasted long enough to proclaim to all the world the hollowness of the arguments of those who had opposed the war with France. The overtures begun by the British Government had led Napoleon to misread the temper of the British people; and he had used the respite allowed him by the temporary triumph of the peace party to continue his high-handed acts of aggression. The renewal of the war became inevitable; and with the renewal of the war the return of Pitt to power. Canning set himself with renewed ardour to hasten this latter consummation. He supported the Government, indeed, in its demand for the supplies necessary for the increased armaments called for by the denunciation of the Treaty of Amiens; but at the same time he exclaimed that "men and not measures" were wanted, and that, while he was far from objecting to the large military establishments proposed, "for the purpose of coping with Bonaparte, one great commanding spirit was worth them all"; and on 23rd June, 1803, in the debate on Colonel Patten's motion of a vote of want of confidence in the Government, when Pitt himself moved the previous question, he spoke and voted against his leader.

The motion was lost; but Canning's purpose was none the less served; for the debate disclosed a state of opinion in the House from which the Government, already somewhat discredited, never recovered. Pitt, who had been merely biding his time, began to throw himself into opposition; and the weight of his criticism, added to that of Canning, proved fatal to the Ministry. In May, 1804, the Addington Government fell, and the King sent once more for Pitt.

The two years of Pitt's last Administration were destined to be the most momentous in the history of Great Britain; and Pitt himself was very conscious of the tremendous issues at stake. In view of the greatness of the crisis he endeavoured to form a strong Government on a comprehensive basis, and to this end approached Fox with a view to a coalition. But Fox refused to take office, well knowing that he would be hampered at every turn by the hostility of the King; and his friends refused to join the Government without him. Canning had made it clear to his leader that in his opinion a stable Administration could only be erected on the basis of a coalition; but at the same time he placed his services, in any event, at his disposal; and when Pitt was forced to patch up a Ministry out of the *débris* of the Addington Cabinet, he took office under it as Treasurer of the Navy. The Government, weak from the outset, was still

further shaken by the impeachment of Lord Melville for misappropriating the funds of the Admiralty; and upon Pitt alone, old before his time and shaken by the disgrace and ruin of his friend, was laid the whole burden of the nation's safety in a time of unparalleled danger and anxiety.

On 18th May, 1804, only a few days after the King had sent for Pitt, Napoleon proclaimed himself Emperor of the French, a title then of greater significance than now; and against the world-wide ambition implied in it England alone was in arms. To crush this implacable opposition to his plans the Emperor was assembling a vast armament at Boulogne, with a view to the invasion of England. His power was already swelled by the tribute in money and men of the subject states; and during the year it became apparent that it was about to receive a still further increase by the accession of Spain, under the corrupt and incompetent leadership of the Queen's lover, Godoy. In December the Spanish-French coalition was an acknowledged fact, and England declared war against Spain. In view of these accumulating perils, Pitt exerted himself to the uttermost to renew the European coalition against France; and by September, 1805, he had so far succeeded that Russia, Austria, Sweden and Naples were once more leagued together against the common emeny. In the following month, moreover, all danger of an in-

vasion of England was dissipated by Nelson's victory of Trafalgar. This, however, was the last triumph of Pitt's strenuous career. On 2nd December was fought the battle of Austerlitz, which shattered his plans and broke his spirit. Less than two months later, on 21st January, 1806, the great statesman, worn out with work and anxiety, and prematurely old at forty-seven, passed away.

The death of Pitt for the time set back the rapid progress of Canning's advancement. The retirement of Lord Harrowby from the Secretaryship of Foreign Affairs in December, 1805, had revealed to Pitt the weakness of his Cabinet; and when, next year, the negotiations which he once more opened with the Whig leaders failed, he began to make arrangements for including Charles Yorke and Canning in the Cabinet. The prestige given to the Government by the victory of Trafalgar had postponed, however, the necessity for change; and with the death of Pitt the Ministry broke up. But the death of Pitt not only deprived Canning of a patron; it left him in the position, more or less, of a political free lance. "To one man, while he lived," he declared in a speech at Liverpool, six years later, "I was devoted with all my heart and all my soul. Since the death of Mr. Pitt I acknowledge no leader; my political allegiance lies buried in his grave."

Pitt being no more, even the prejudiced mind of

the old King could not but realise that his great rival Fox was the only possible leader in the crisis of the nation's affairs. The coalition Ministry, for which Pitt had striven in vain, was thus rendered possible; and Fox assumed the reins of power. In the "Ministry of all the Talents," formed in February, 1806, Canning was offered a place. He refused on the ground—curiously illuminative of his essential Toryism—that in its composition the King's wishes had not been sufficiently consulted, and threw himself into opposition as the leader of the party known as Pitt's friends. His attitude was dictated mainly by his distrust of Fox's foreign policy, which, while it recognised the present necessity for a vigorous prosecution of the war, was ever directed to the discovery of an opportunity of coming to terms with Napoleon. On one great question, indeed, he found himself in general agreement with the Government. On 31st March, 1806, Fox introduced a motion in favour of the abolition of the Slave Trade. Canning, while declaring that "he thought it impossible for the ingenuity of man to devise a form of words contributing to the repeal of the Slave Trade that he should not concur in," criticised the Government for merely bringing forward once more an abstract motion which had twice already received the assent of the Commons, and "lamented that the House had not the subject more fully before them". The motion, such as it

was, was the last one made by the great Whig leader in Parliament. On 13th September of the same year he followed Pitt to the grave.

The Government of which he had been the leading spirit did not long survive him. During his illness, Grey had once more opened negotiations with Canning with a view to his inclusion; but the latter had refused his adhesion so long as Fox's fate was yet uncertain, and the chance of a compromise with France yet remained. Fox was succeeded at the Foreign Office by Lord Howick; but before he had been many months in office the Ministry to which he belonged came to an honourable end. In March, 1807, a bill was introduced for the purpose of allowing Catholics, who were already permitted to serve in the army in Ireland, to hold commissions in England. The proposal, reasonable in itself, and still more so in view of the obvious inconvenience of the actual conditions, was wrecked once more on the rock of the King's unyielding bigotry. On 24th March the Ministry of all the Talents was dissolved. Canning composed its epitaph in the following verses:—

ALL THE TALENTS

When the broad-bottom'd Junto, with reason at strife,
Resign'd, with a sigh, its political life;
When converted to Rome, and of honesty tired,
They gave back to the devil the soul he inspired.

The demon of Faction that over them hung,
In accents of horror their epitaph sung;
While Pride and Venality join'd in the stave,
And canting Democracy wept at the grave.

"Here lies in the tomb that we hallow'd for Pitt,
Consistence of Grenville, of Temple the wit;
Of Sidmouth the firmness, the temper of Grey,
And treasurer Sheridan's promise to pay.

"Here Petty's finance, from the evils to come,
With Fitzpatrick's sobriety creeps to the tomb;
And Chancellor Ego, now left in the lurch,
Neither dines with the Jordan, nor whines for the church,

"Then huzza for the party that here is at rest,
By fools of a faction regretted and bless'd;
Though they sleep with the devil, yet theirs is the hope,
On the downfall of Britain to rise with the Pope."

Considering Canning's own views on the question of Catholic emancipation, it is hard to acquit him of having himself been somewhat inspired by "the Demon of Faction" when he penned the above lines.

The task of constructing a new Administration was entrusted to Canning's kinsman, the Duke of Portland, a nobleman of indolent character and little given to speech, but honourable, and of a conciliatory temper, invaluable in holding together a Ministry in which were represented very divergent views and tendencies. The late Government had fallen on the question of Emancipation; and it was certain that no Ministry could live that

should attempt to pass measures favourable to the Catholic claims. The new Government was, in effect, founded upon a basis of uncompromising Protestantism, which found its chief exponents in Lord Eldon, the Chancellor, and Perceval, whose influence in the Cabinet, backed as he was by the support of the King, outweighed that of the more tolerant Prime Minister. And in this Government Canning, a consistent upholder of the Catholic claims, was offered a place with Cabinet rank. That he accepted it was proclaimed by his enemies to be the final proof of his unscrupulous ambition; and he himself recognised the necessity for justifying his action. His support of Emancipation had from the first been the outcome rather of a belief in its expediency, than of any deep-seated conviction of its abstract justice; and, now that he realised that its attainment was impossible during the life of George III., he did not think that that alone should prevent him from sharing in the work of a Government with which, on all other points, he was in sympathy. Therefore, on the offer of the Secretaryship for Foreign Affairs being made to him, he accepted it, convinced that he was well qualified to carry on the great work of the statesman who had been his master. Thus, at the age of thirty-seven, Canning was a Cabinet Minister, and entrusted with the oversight of the foreign relations of the country at a time of singular

danger and difficulty. Among his colleagues were some whose names were destined in the future to be closely associated with his. Lord Castlereagh, in some sort already his rival and competitor, was Secretary at War; Sir Arthur Wellesley (afterwards Duke of Wellington), whose military genius it is one of Canning's merits to have early recognised and employed, was Secretary for Ireland.

CHAPTER V

AT THE FOREIGN OFFICE

Napoleon and Alexander—Treaty of Tilsit—Bombardment of Copenhagen — The continental blockade—England and the United States—Napoleon and Spain—The Peninsular War — The Walcheren Expedition — Canning's duel with Castlereagh.

CANNING had not been long at the Foreign Office before developments took place on the continent which called out every quality of foresight and resolution for which he was distinguished. On 14th June, 1807, Napoleon defeated the Russians at Friedland ; on the 22nd an armistice was arranged ; and, two days later, took place the momentous meeting between the Emperor and the Tsar Alexander I. at Tilsit. On the field of battle the Russian arms had been overcome by Napoleon's military skill ; in the conference the impressionable mind of the Russian autocrat was taken captive by Napoleon's genius and vast political imagination. France and Russia united could rule the world ; their division merely served the selfish ends of commercial England ; and

GEORGE CANNING AS A YOUNG MAN

From the picture by A. Hickel in the possession of the Earl of Crewe

Napoleon dazzled the eyes of Alexander with a vision of the Empires of the East and West restored, and holding the balance of the world. But for the opposition of Great Britain the Western Empire was already re-established in his own person; it would be easy for the Russian to overset the tottering fabric of the Ottoman power, and re-erect on the shores of the Bosphorus the orthodox Empire of the East. Here, too, all that was needed was the destruction of the British sea-power. The plan was one which appealed irresistibly to Alexander's grandiose imagination; and he threw himself into it, for the time, heart and soul. The immediate result was the signature of the Treaty of Tilsit.

Austria had been overthrown at Austerlitz, Prussia at Jena. By the Treaty of Tilsit Russia became a party to the "continental system" of Napoleon devised against England and enunciated in the Berlin decrees. But this was not all. It came to the ears of the British Government that, by additional secret articles of the treaty, arrangements were to be made to unite the whole of the naval forces of the continent in one vast effort to wrest from England the supremacy of the seas. As the nucleus of this combination the fleet of Denmark was to serve.

The situation was one of extreme peril to England, and also one of extreme difficulty. When

the battle of Trafalgar was fought, nearly the whole continent had been in arms against France. Nelson's victory had wrecked the sea-power of France; but this was now to be reinforced by that of Powers hitherto friendly to England; and against such a combination it was doubtful whether, in the long run, Great Britain would be able to hold her own. The position was complicated by the fact that Denmark, on whom the new Alliance chiefly reckoned, was still nominally neutral; though it was obvious that her neutrality would not long withstand the combined pressure of the French and Russian Empires, even if she had not already become a party to their plans.

Under these circumstances Canning saw the necessity for immediate and bold action. No sooner had the terms of the secret articles of Tilsit been communicated to him, than he despatched a strong British armament, under Lord Cathcart, to demand that the Danish fleet should be handed over to Great Britain, to be held till the conclusion of the war. The not unnatural refusal of the Danish Government to comply with this demand was followed by the bombardment of Copenhagen and the complete destruction of the fleet of Denmark.

That this prompt action saved England from the most dangerous combination that had ever threatened her independence was proved by evi-

dence subsequently published. At the time, however, it had all the appearance of a wanton act of international piracy; and as such it was denounced, not only by the Powers whose plans it had overturned, but by many voices of weight in Parliament. The Government laboured under the disadvantage of not being able to give proof of the existence of the secret articles, which were the justification of its policy, without betraying the confidence of those by whom they had been communicated. Canning, in reply to those who in a tone of righteous indignation denounced him for this murderous attack on a friendly Power in time of peace, the true character of which it was sought to cover by a transparent subterfuge, could only stand on his integrity, and declare that he was in the possession of arguments which he was not at liberty to publish to the world. Happily the House believed him; and a vote of censure moved against him was rejected by a large majority.

Meanwhile, the situation created by the policy of the Berlin and Milan decrees was leading to complications in somewhat unexpected directions. The closure of all the ports of the continent to goods carried in British vessels came as a godsend to the hitherto struggling oversea trade of the United States of America, and the business instincts of transatlantic "Anglo-Saxons" did not permit any sentimental sympathy with the mother-

country in her life and death struggle with Napoleon, or any Republican antipathy to the wrecker of republics, to prevent them from taking advantage of so obvious an opening for profit. To meet this situation, the British Government replied to the "Decrees" by the "Orders in Council," by which a blockade of the whole continent was established, and British ships of war were ordered to intercept all trading vessels attempting to enter continental ports. In answer to this the Congress of the United States passed the "Non-intercourse Act," prohibiting commercial relations with either combatant. At a time when the trade of Great Britain with Jamaica alone exceeded by £1,000,000 the whole of her trade with the United States, this was no very serious blow to British prosperity; but it still further strained the relations between the two nations, and roused a bitterness of feeling which was intensified by a series of incidents, not in themselves very serious, but important in their cumulative effect. The cruel discipline of British ships of war led to constant desertions to American vessels, on which pay was higher and treatment better. At American ports, too, British seamen would slip on shore, sign papers of naturalisation—a process then as now extremely easy—and defy their officers to lay hands on free American citizens. Under these circumstances the wrath of zealous captains was apt to break through the

technical entanglements of misused international law; and the United States Government complained of American territory violated; of American citizens forcibly carried on board British men-of-war; and of American vessels held up on the high seas and searched for British deserters. The trouble culminated at last in the affair of the *Chesapeake*, an American ship which had offered armed resistance to the right of search claimed by a British war vessel. The American was worsted, some of her crew slain, and not only a certain number of British deserters, but also some genuine Americans, were detained in custody.

This was an episode too serious to be overlooked; and Canning made it the occasion for attempting to arrive at some general agreement with the Government of the United States, such as should obviate the increasing risk of an appeal to arms. To this end Mr. Erskine was sent out to Washington to arrange a settlement on a basis of mutual concession. Great Britain was willing to admit, and to repair as far as possible, the wrong done by the violent seizure of the *Chesapeake;* but only on condition that the American Government should repudiate the claim of its Commodore to protect British deserters. Furthermore, England demanded the abrogation of the proclamation of 2nd July, 1807, by which American ports had been closed to British ships,

while remaining open to those of France. Unfortunately, Erskine, in his anxiety to arrive at a settlement, yielded all the demands of the American Government without insisting on any of the *quid pro quos* contained in his instructions. On learning what he had done, Canning at once recalled him in disgrace; but the mischief was, unhappily, beyond repair. The playful policy of "twisting the lion's tail," so successfully inaugurated, was continued, until it culminated in the war of 1812.

For the time being, however, the annoyances arising from the aggressive attitude of a young nation as ignorant, as it was intolerant, of the traditional code of international courtesy, were as nothing compared with the vast issues at stake upon the European continent. Alone of continental states Portugal, bound by old treaties with England, still held out against Napoleon's continental system. The Portuguese Government, indeed, in response to a peremptory order issued from Tilsit, ordered the detention of all Englishmen resident in the country, and laid an embargo upon all British property. But these measures had been carried out tardily, in order to allow Englishmen time to sell their property and to leave the country. The delay was, in the eyes of Napoleon, sufficient excuse for carrying out the policy which he had all along had in view: that of the absorp-

tion of Spain and Portugal into his own dominions. On 18th October, 1807, a French army, under Marshal Junot, entered Spain. Less than three months later, King Charles IV., who, with his son Ferdinand, the Prince of the Asturias, had obeyed Napoleon's order to meet him at Bayonne, resigned his crown into the hands of the French Emperor. This was on 5th May. On 15th June Joseph Bonaparte was proclaimed King of Spain.

The establishment of a Bonaparte on the throne of Spain seemed to have set the key-stone in the arch of Napoleon's Empire. The policy of Louis XIV., against which the War of the Spanish Succession had been waged a century before, and which had been for ever barred by the Treaty of Utrecht, appeared to have been carried through, almost without a blow, by the French Emperor. By a stroke of the pen the political barrier of the Pyrenees had been razed, and Spain had become, not so much a kingdom bound to that of France by a family compact, as a vassal state of the French Empire. But in his calculations Napoleon had overlooked one fatal factor. Hitherto his dealings had been exclusively with the dynasties of Germany or Italy, artificial creations of an unpopular principle, and easy to overturn, because infirmly based; in Spain he found himself face to face with a people passionate in its nationalism, to which long centuries of contest

with alien and infidel forces had given the fervour of a religious creed. The Spaniards, deserted by their feeble King, themselves took up arms to defend the kingship—centre and symbol of their national independence — which the degenerate Bourbons had sold for a price. Napoleon, for the first time, found himself confronted by a people in arms.

Canning, ever on the look-out for fresh weapons wherewith to wound the all-devouring ambitions of Napoleon, at once recognised, and determined to take advantage of, the new situation. It was nothing to him that Spain had, in the hour of England's greatest peril, added her fleet to that of France, in the attempt to wrest from her the mastery of the seas. That had been the act, not of the voiceless people of Spain, but of the corrupt minions of the court, whose treason to the national cause was now stinking in the nostrils of all the world. Whatever its past record, said Canning, in a speech delivered on the very day that Joseph Bonaparte was declared King, "any nation that resists the common enemy becomes instantly our ally". Upon this principle the Government was prompt to act. Portugal, the old-time ally of England, was naturally the first object of solicitude. By the Emperor's orders Junot had pressed on through Spain with a view to occupying Portugal before the end of November, 1807; and, on his

near approach, the Portuguese royal family had, on the advice of Great Britain, fled the country and transferred the centre of Government to Brazil. Next day the French entered Lisbon. They were not, however, to remain long in possession. On 1st August Sir Arthur Wellesley landed with an English force at Figueras; on the 21st he won over Junot the battle of Vimiero, and, had he not been superseded on the field of victory, would have completed the ruin of the French army. As it was, the prudence of Sir Harry Burrard and Sir Hugh Dalrymple, his superior officers, led to the conclusion of the Convention of Cintra, by the terms of which the French force, with arms and stores, were to be transferred in British ships to the coast of France.

Into the momentous events which now followed on the continent it is impossible for us to enter in any detail. On the news of the reverse suffered by the French arms in Portugal, Napoleon determined to take the field himself for the purpose of completing the subjugation of the Peninsula. To counteract this the expedition of Sir John Moore into Spain was undertaken; an effort which resulted in the disastrous retreat of the British and in the hardly won victory of Corunna, which allowed the English army to embark in safety. Corunna was fought on 16th January, 1809. The declaration of war by Austria against Napoleon

the expectation of which had already led the Emperor to leave Spain, followed on 9th April. This, together with popular risings in the Tyrol under Andreas Hofer, and in Prussia under Colonel Schill, pointed to the possibility of a fresh coalition against France, and the British Government, discouraged for the time by the unsatisfactory Convention of Cintra and the failure of Sir John Moore's invasion of Spain, once more redoubled its exertions. On 22nd April Sir Arthur Wellesley landed in Portugal to assume the supreme command, and the Peninsular War, which was destined to sap the power of Napoleon, was begun.

The importance of the campaign in the Peninsula was recognised, though not to its full extent, from the outset. That the lesson of Cintra was learned, and Wellesley appointed to the supreme command over the heads of officers whose seniority would have given them the right to the post, was largely, if not mainly, due to the insistence of Canning. He was less successful in persuading his colleagues to concentrate their attack on this most vulnerable spot of Napoleon's defences. The declaration of war by Austria had suggested a diversion in her favour elsewhere; and Lord Castlereagh planned an attack in force on Napoleon's great arsenal at Antwerp. The outcome of the ill-fated Walcheren expedition was due to the incompetence of its leader, Lord Chatham, rather than to any defects

in the scheme itself, which, had it succeeded, would undoubtedly have dealt a serious blow to Napoleon's power. None the less it greatly discredited the Government ; and, incidentally, by revealing an intolerable state of tension within the Cabinet, led up to the crisis which caused its downfall.

Canning had for some little time had cause to complain of the tendency of the War Office to encroach on the sphere of his own department of Foreign Affairs. Contrary to his wish, the war in the Peninsula had been "starved" for the sake of the unfortunate Walcheren venture ; and the Convention of Cintra, which lay even more indisputably within his province, had actually been endorsed by the Cabinet in his absence. He now approached the Duke of Portland with a proposal for the rearrangement of business in such a way as more clearly to define the boundary line between the War Office and that of Foreign Affairs. Failing such a readjustment, he declared that either he or Lord Castlereagh must resign.

The duke, between good nature and indolence, promised and procrastinated. Canning had first broached the matter in April, 1810 ; by June nothing had been done. He now offered his resignation ; but withdrew it on being pressed, notably by several of Castlereagh's friends, to wait till the result of the Walcheren expedition should

be known. After the capture of Flushing he insisted that the present was the most suitable time for carrying through the suggested changes, and now learned for the first time that Lord Castlereagh had never been informed of his demands. He promptly declared that he would continue to hold office only until his successor should be appointed. At the same time Lord Castlereagh, now at last perforce informed, handed in his resignation.

That in this matter Castlereagh had received but scant consideration was only too clear; and the only doubt was as to whose was the door at which the fault lay. To Castlereagh himself it was plain that Canning was responsible; and, immediately after his resignation, he addressed a letter to him, in which he stigmatised his conduct in appearing openly to support him, while secretly intriguing against him, as "a breach of every principle of good faith, both public and private," and demanding "satisfaction". In face of this direct challenge, Canning, according to the social code of the time, had no choice of reply. The challenge was accepted; and, on 21st September, the two statesmen met on Putney Heath. Two shots were exchanged without result; but at the second discharge Canning fell, wounded in the thigh. The wound was not a serious one; and on 11th October he was able to attend the levée, when he

LORD CASTLEREAGH

(SECOND MARQUIS OF LONDONDERRY)

From the portrait by Lawrence in the National Portrait Gallery

tendered his resignation. The Portland Ministry did not long survive the loss of two of its most conspicuous members. Huskisson had resigned at the same time as his friend Canning. Shortly afterwards the Duke of Portland died; and the Administration was broken up. Twelve eventful years were destined to pass before Canning was again to direct the foreign policy of Great Britain.

CHAPTER VI

CANNING AS A POLITICAL FREE-LANCE

Canning and journalism—His poems—Madness of George III.—The Regency question—Murder of Perceval—Lord Liverpool Premier—Canning refuses office—Catholic emancipation—Member for Liverpool—Canning and parliamentary reform—Free Trade—Speech on the prosecution of the war—Embassy to Lisbon—President of the Board of Control.

THE period succeeding the dissolution of the Portland Administration Canning spent in comparative retirement, mainly at Gloucester Lodge, the house between Brompton and Kensington which he had bought from the Princess Sophia in 1807. While keeping a keen eye on the developments of politics, he devoted much of his leisure to literary interests. He had had a considerable share in founding the *Quarterly Review* in 1807; and he was at no time insensible to the great position held by the press in the world of politics, or to the importance of the good-will of writers and artists to the career of a politician. To his diplomatic kindness it was partly due that the

coarse and powerful quill of the caricaturist Gilray was never turned against him, but used to reinforce the onslaught of the *Anti-Jacobin* on the "French" party. In the days when journalism was still under the social ban, Canning had himself condescended for a while to become a journalist; and in his last great speech at Liverpool he proclaimed, in a passage of splendid and characteristic eloquence, the new and mighty part played by a free press in the constitutional system of the country; proclaimed it, oddly enough, as an additional argument against Reform. "What should we think," he said, "of a philosopher, who, in writing, at the present day, a treatise upon naval architecture and the theory of navigation, should omit wholly from his calculation that new and mighty power—new, at least, in the application of its might—which walks the water, like a giant rejoicing in his course;—stemming alike the tempest and the tide;—accelerating intercourse, shortening distances;—creating, as it were, unexpected neighbourhoods and new combinations of social and commercial relation;—and giving to the fickleness of winds and the faithlessness of waves the certainty and steadiness of a highway upon the land? Such a writer, though he might describe a ship correctly; though he might show from what quarters the winds of heaven blow, would be surely an incurious and an idle spectator of the progress of

nautical science, who did not see in the power of STEAM a corrective of all former calculations. So, in political science, he who, speculating on the British Constitution, should content himself with marking the distribution of acknowledged technical powers between the House of Lords, the House of Commons and the Crown, and assigning to each their separate provinces—to the Lords their legislative authority, to the Crown its veto (how often used?), to the House of Commons its power of stopping supplies (how often, in fact, necessary to be resorted to?)—and should think that he had thus described the British Constitution as it acts and as it is influenced in its action; but should omit from his enumeration that mighty power of Public Opinion, embodied in a Free Press, which pervades, and checks, and, perhaps, in the last resort, nearly governs the whole;—such a man would, surely, give but an imperfect view of the government of England as it is now modified, and would greatly underrate the counteracting influences against which that of the executive power has to contend." Not the most exacting journalist could demand a more splendid tribute to the greatness of the "fourth Estate".

The appreciation of journalism is one thing, that of literature is another. In the case of the former Canning could read the signs of the times, but not in that of the latter. With the new licence of the

romantic movement his severe classical taste could have little in common. Romanticism, moreover, whatever its later tendencies, was, or seemed to be, for the moment poisoned with the virus of Jacobinism. None, indeed—unless it were serious-minded Germans—would quarrel with the ridicule which, in the *Anti-Jacobin,* Canning poured in full measure on the exaggerated sentimentalism of the fashionable German drama of the day. As a parody of Schiller's "Robbers" and Goethe's "Stella," "The Rovers" was, and is, "excellent fooling". A more sympathetic critic would, perhaps, have discovered beneath the "storm and stress" of these youthful products of the new age of German literature the signs of a power that promised greater things. But Canning was out of sympathy with the very first principles of romanticism. With Sir Walter Scott, indeed, whose acquaintance he first made at the table of the unhappy Princess of Wales, he was soon on terms of close intimacy. In their political principles they were at one; but Canning clearly had but little appreciation of the peculiar genius of the prophet of Romance; and his advice to Scott, after reading his poems, to "present himself in a Drydenic habit," reveals the gulf fixed between them.

In those few of Canning's own serious poems which have been made public "the Drydenic

habit" is sufficiently displayed, nor, though their sentiment is unexceptionable, can they be accused of the least touch of sentimentality. This is true even of his love poems. In them the human passion, which runs riot in the "romantic" writers, is rigorously subordinated; and the language moves on the same lofty, and perhaps slightly artificial, plane as the sentiments. These qualities are well illustrated in the "Lines addressed to Miss Scott before Marriage":—

And dost Thou fear where stern ambition reigns,
Schooled in the subtle Statesman's selfish art,
Love's jealous pow'r divided rule disdains,
And flies in scorn the abdicated heart?

Think'st Thou to him no tender cares are dear,
No pleasures sooth the calm domestic hour,
Who, slave to Glory, runs his wild career,
Mad in the race for Fame, or strife for Pow'r!

Hush Thy vain fears, howe'er in other climes,
Where blood-stained factions plan the foul intrigue,
Ambition's Vot'ry thrives by craft or crimes,
By bartered Love, and Friendship's broken league!

Not such the gen'rous strife in Britain's cause,
That cause to holiest charities allied,
Where private morals prop the public laws,
And man's best feelings combat on their side.

If e'er this tongue hath practised arts of shame,
Framed specious frauds, or honest thoughts disguised,
With base detraction stained a rival's fame,
Or fawned upon the fool my soul despised;

Then let Thy scorn pronounce the just decree,
Bid me each bold presumptuous wish resign,
Ill would the mean, th' ungenerous arts agree
With candour, faith and purity like Thine!

But if fair fame or honest warmth inspire,
If no inglorious currents lave my Soul,
Think what new zeal my quickened course shall fire,
Thy smile my triumph, and thy praise my goal!

Let thy fond smile, whate'er my fate may be,
Cherish each hope and calm each anxious fear,
Each hope achieved but lifts me nearer Thee,
Or foiled but makes thy cherished Love more dear.

So to proud heights shall fav'ring Fortune lead,
Or drest in frowns her fleeting gifts recall,
Firm in Thy faith the dang'rous path I tread,
Or sheltered in thy arms forget my fall.

So while my off'rings load Ambition's shrine,
Thy hand (nor thou the sacred charge disclaim!)
Thy hallowing hand the increase shall refine,
And Love, which feeds, shall purify the flame.

No one can say that these verses are not wholesome and manly in tone and full of a lofty sentiment. Some of the lines appeal to me also, I confess, as beautiful in themselves. Yet, for all that, it is not the poet, so much as the man of affairs, that is revealed in them. Not even in this intimate moment does the beloved object fill the whole field of the writer's vision. He cannot forget the revolutionary iniquities of France, or "the gen'rous strife in Britain's cause," even in

hymning his mistress; and his chief claim to be worthy of her love is the delightfully insular plea that he belongs to a country "where private morals prop the public laws". But, indeed, we ought not to quarrel with this attitude; for it was just this unwavering belief in the incontestable superiority of Great Britain which made Canning a strong leader in a perilous crisis of the nation.

More beautiful, I think, are the lines written for the tomb of his eldest son, which need no comment.

EPITAPH

GEORGE CHARLES CANNING

Born 25th April, 1801; Died 31st March, 1820

Though short thy span, God's unimpeach'd decrees,
Which made that shorten'd span one long disease,
Yet, merciful in chastening, gave thee scope
For mild, redeeming virtues, faith and hope;
Meek resignation; pious charity;
And, since this world was not the world for thee,
Far from thy path removed, with partial care,
Strife, glory, gain and pleasure's flowery snare,
Bade earth's temptations pass thee harmless by,
And fix'd on heaven thine unreverted eye.

Oh! mark'd from birth, and nurtured for the skies!
In youth, with more than learning's wisdom, wise!
As sainted martyrs, patient to endure!
Simple as unwean'd infancy and pure!
Pure from all stain (save that of human clay,
Which Christ's atoning blood hath wash'd away!)

> By mortal sufferings now no more oppress'd,
> Mount, sinless spirit, to thy destined rest!
> While I—reversed our nature's kindlier doom,
> Pour forth a father's sorrows on thy tomb.

The appearances of Canning, meanwhile, in Parliament, were comparatively rare. The Portland Administration had been succeeded by that of Perceval, in which Lord Wellesley occupied Canning's office of Foreign Secretary, and Lord Liverpool had replaced Castlereagh at the War Office. To this Government Canning gave a general, but independent, support. Wellesley himself, as was natural in Wellington's brother, was in favour of the vigorous prosecution of the war in Spain; and, in three succeeding sessions, Canning strongly supported the policy of lavish expenditure in the Peninsula. On the other hand, he opposed the financial policy of the Ministry in the question of the currency, and on 3rd February, 1812, he supported Lord Morpeth's motion on Catholic emancipation, a reform to which Perceval was fanatically opposed.

In 1810 the position of the Tory Government was threatened by the madness of the old King, which necessitated a Regency. The Prince of Wales had identified himself with the Opposition, and Carlton House had long been regarded almost as the headquarters of the Whigs. Under these circumstances the question of the appointment

and the powers of the Regent became one of party; and the Government brought in a bill which, while offering the Regency to the Prince of Wales, considerably restricted his prerogatives. In this matter Canning held the authority of Parliament to be supreme; and he gave a general support to the restrictions proposed by the Government, not as a matter of right, but, as Pitt had done in 1788, on general grounds of expediency. As a matter of fact, the fears of the Tories were somewhat idle. The Prince's Liberalism had been no more than a pose; and the less than half-hearted support which he had received from his Whig friends, in his opposition to what he considered an invasion of his rights, served as a decent excuse for a change of front which would, in all probability, in any case have followed his accession to sovereign power. His attempt to oust the Perceval Administration, by commissioning Huskisson to form a Ministry, broke down on the latter's refusal to serve unless Canning were given a portfolio; for Canning was a friend of the unfortunate Princess of Wales, and to show sympathy with her was to forfeit the goodwill of her husband.

The Regent, in fact, soon found that he could live on comfortable terms with his courtly Tory advisers; the Perceval Ministry continued in office; and when, in February, 1812, the hope-

lessness of the King's illness was recognised, and the Regency made permanent, the Government no longer thought it necessary to restrict the Regent's authority. The Perceval Administration fell, not owing to any ill-will of the Regent, but to an irresponsible crime. As early as February, indeed, it had been weakened by the resignation of Wellesley, the only real statesman in the Cabinet, on the ground that he was thwarted by his colleagues in his policy of pressing the war in the Peninsula; and before his place could be filled, it came to an end with the assassination of the Prime Minister in the lobby of the House of Commons by the madman Bellingham on 11th May.

In response to a motion of the House of Commons imploring him to appoint a strong Government, the Regent instructed Wellesley to attempt to form a coalition Ministry. The attempt failed, partly owing to the doctrinaire objections of the Whigs to the form in which they had been approached, partly to irreconcilable differences in the matter of the Catholic claims. It became necessary to fall back upon the old set; and Lord Liverpool was entrusted with the task of reconstructing the Government. In his desire to strengthen it, he approached both Wellesley and Canning. But Wellesley refused to join a Government pledged in advance against the consideration of the Catholic claims. Canning also refused; but,

though he shared Wellesley's views, not for the same reason. Castlereagh, who had already been installed in the Foreign Office, offered to resign this in Canning's favour, while retaining the leadership of the House of Commons. Canning, however, was persuaded, not only that he had a right to the leadership, but that, without it, he would be unable to conduct the foreign policy of the country effectively; and he refused to serve unless the leadership were associated with the Foreign Office. His terms were rejected; and Castlereagh was installed in office for the remainder of his life. Canning's attitude in this matter proved, in fact, far more momentous than he himself expected; and he lived bitterly to regret it. For fifteen years he was excluded from any decisive influence in moulding the international destinies of England, and this during a period when, as he himself said, "two years at the Foreign Office would have been worth ten years of life".

Canning's exclusion from the Government increased in some measure his influence in moulding public opinion in the country. His tongue was no longer tied by obligations to his party chiefs; and, while giving a general support to the Government, he felt himself at liberty to "blame with freedom" whatever he thought amiss in the Administration. Above all, on the great and burning question of

INTERIOR OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS IN 1812

Catholic emancipation he once more prepared to speak his mind. Hitherto he had kept silence out of respect for the feelings of the old King. But the "living reign" of George III. was now at an end; and there was less reason to consult the prejudices of the Prince Regent. The growing tension in Ireland, moreover, clamoured ever louder for the practical solution of a question which had already been solved in principle by the repeal of the penal code. On 22nd June, 1812, accordingly, Canning moved a resolution binding the House of Commons "early in the next session of Parliament to take into consideration the laws affecting Roman Catholics, with a view to a final and conciliatory adjustment". Emancipation was not destined to be carried by Canning, nor in his day; but the voting on this occasion was significant of the trend of opinion. The motion, which Canning supported on grounds both of justice and expediency, was carried by a majority of 129.

At the close of the session of 1812 Canning was invited to contest Liverpool, a constituency which he was destined to represent four times in Parliament. The first election contest, in which his most formidable opponent was Brougham, is mainly memorable for the series of speeches in which he more clearly defined his general political attitude. This marked, in fact, a stage in the transition between traditional Toryism and modern Conser-

vatism. He stated unequivocally his intention to resist any tampering with the existing balance of the Constitution. The Crown, the two Houses of Parliament and the Protestant establishment were the four corner-stones of the firm foundation of British liberty; and, amid the universal downfall, the freedom so based had alone survived. Why then press for a reform which would only spell revolution? Were the House of Commons made representative of the people's will, the Crown would not long survive, and still less the House of Lords; for "by what assumption could three or four hundred proprietors set themselves against the national will?" "Of popular representation," he said, "I think we have enough for every purpose of jealous, steady, corrective, efficient control over the acts of that monarchical power which, for the safety and the peace of the community, is lodged in one sacred family, and descendible from sire to son." As for the anomalies of the unreformed Parliament, these were of little importance so long as the system worked well; and that it had on the whole worked well Canning was persuaded. "I would have," he said, "in the House of Commons a great variety of interests, and I would have them find their way there by a great variety of rights of election. . . . As to the close boroughs, I know that through them have found their way into the House of Commons men whose talents have been an honour to their

kind. I cannot think that system altogether vicious which has produced such fruits." This forecast reads strangely enough to those who have had fifty years' experience of the conservative instincts of the British democracy. It was less extravagant at a time when the country was seething with discontent, the King a madman, and the Regent scandalous and unpopular.

But if, in the matter of parliamentary reform, Canning was in opposition to the more progressive spirit of his age, in other questions he was equally at odds with the extreme Tory opinions represented by a majority of the Cabinet. His attitude on Catholic emancipation has already been described, as well as the motives by which it was determined. Even more distinctively Liberal were the views which, as the representative of a great trading constituency, he was gradually impelled to adopt on the abrogation of the existing restrictions on the free development of commerce. Typical of this leaning toward the principles of free trade had been his attitude in the debates on the renewal of the East India Company's charter ; and it was in part owing to his advocacy that the Company's monopoly was modified and India thrown open to all British traders. But if, in these matters, he was in opposition to a strong section of the Government, in the most important issue before the country—the prosecution of the war—he was heartily at one

with the party in power. Twice during the year 1813 he spoke in Parliament on this subject. The first speech, that of 7th July, was on the vote of thanks to Lord Wellington for the victories in Spain; the second was on a vote of £3,000,000 for the expenses of the war. Both speeches were remarkable examples of his oratory at its best—and at its worst. As word-pictures his description of the career of Napoleon, and of the effects of his final downfall, was superb. His comparison of the receding fortunes of the French Emperor with the subsidence of a mighty flood "electrified the House". "The mighty deluge by which the continent had been overwhelmed," he cried, "began to subside. The limits of nations were again visible, and the spires and turrets of ancient establishments began to reappear above the subsiding wave." As a rhetorical flight, or even as poetry, this was fine; nor was it untrue from the point of view of discerning statesmanship. Equally splendid, but infinitely less just and less intelligent, was the picture drawn, in the later speech, of Napoleon and his work. He compared the Emperor to that sinister Indian deity whose triumphal car passes over the bodies of prostrate victims. And in the author of the Code Napoléon who, whatever his colossal faults, had at least brought to myriads of the human race their first experience of enlightened administration, and

whose Empire, illustrated by a thousand monuments of art or of engineering enterprise, was founded mainly upon the ruins of obsolete tyrannies — in Napoleon Canning could see only a monster, whose guiding principle was "hostility to literature, to light and life," and whose object was "to extinguish patriotism, and to confound allegiance—to darken as well as to enslave—to roll back the tide of civilisation—to barbarise as well as to desolate mankind".

It would be interesting, but idle, to speculate as to what part Canning would have played in the resettlement of those portions of Europe left exposed by the subsidence of the Napoleonic flood, had he, and not Castlereagh, represented the voice of England in the Congress of Vienna. Holding as he did strong opinions as to the rights of nations, he would scarcely have acquiesced quietly in an arrangement from the foundations of which the factor of nationality was all but absolutely excluded; and his masterful temper would probably have introduced another, and possibly fatal, element of discord into the none too cordial harmony of the Powers. On the whole, it is probably fortunate for England and for Europe that, at that time, the control of foreign affairs was in the hands of the more conciliatory Castlereagh. Canning's opportunity of usefulness was to come later, when the European Alliance had done its

work in tiding the world over a perilous crisis and threatened to become a tyranny more mischievous than that which it had overthrown. For the present the world needed peace; and this the Emperor Alexander's dream of a confederated Europe, in which for the moment Castlereagh shared, tended to secure.

As it was, Canning had no voice in the great discussions of the years 1814 and 1815. Early in the former year he determined to go abroad for the benefit of his son's health; and very opportunely the post of special ambassador to Lisbon was offered to him and accepted. The royal family of Portugal were about to return from their exile in the Brazils; and, in view of the additional expenses likely to be incurred on so auspicious an occasion, the salary attached to the embassy was raised to £14,400. This, together with the fact that Canning had agreed to serve under Castlereagh, after refusing to serve in the Cabinet with him, caused his enemies to blaspheme; and, in 1817, after his return to the Government, of which he had become a member, he was attacked in the House of Commons for what was stigmatised as a piece of gross jobbery; since events had proved, what the Government was accused of knowing all the time, that the Portuguese royal family had no immediate intention of returning. This attack Canning repelled in a

brilliant speech, in which he refused to dissociate himself from the Government, declaring that, in spite of the efforts of the mover and seconder of the motion to leave his name out of the count, they had in reality attacked him for "corruptly receiving what had been corruptly given": a charge which he proceeded to refute.

At Lisbon he remained for seventeen months, a period covering the Congress of Vienna, the return of Napoleon from Elba, and the interlude of the Hundred Days. On his return, in 1816, he was offered the Presidency of the Board of Control, an office equivalent to the present Secretaryship of State for India. There was no longer any reason for his remaining outside the Cabinet. The war was over; and in matters of domestic policy—notably on the great question of Reform—he was in hearty sympathy with the Government. He therefore accepted office; and remained a member of the Liverpool Government until, on 12th December, 1820, he resigned once more, for reasons which will be discussed later.

CHAPTER VII

AFTER THE PEACE

Castlereagh and the European Alliance—Condition of England — Canning and democracy — The Six Acts—Personal incidents—Death of George III.—Queen Caroline — Resignation of Canning — Offer of the Governor-Generalship of India—Suicide of Londonderry—Canning returns to the Foreign Office.

DURING the next four years Canning had but little direct influence on the foreign policy of the Government, and this was confined to those questions which, from time to time, were submitted by Castlereagh to the Cabinet. It is necessary, however, to the understanding of Canning's policy when he again took up the reins of foreign affairs, that we should grasp the principles which actuated the Government in their relations with the Powers of the continent during this period. These were determined mainly by the desire to preserve peace, which they conceived to be threatened by two things: the revolutionary spirit and Russian ambition; and against both these it was their policy to erect barriers. This being so, a

cordial co-operation in the "concert" established by the Treaty of the Quadruple Alliance of 18th November, 1815, was the obvious course to pursue; for this treaty not only provided for common action against any revolutionary peril to the peace of Europe, but incidentally, by establishing a sort of international board of control of the Great Powers, in which each had an equal voice, it made the realisation of that European dictatorship at which the Emperor Alexander was supposed to be aiming impossible. Had the conferences of the Powers been based, as Alexander desired, on the principles of the Holy Alliance, every prince, great or small, who had signed that treaty would have been entitled to a voice in them, and in such assemblies the chance of Russia's obtaining a preponderating influence would have been much greater. But with the Holy Alliance the other Powers, realising this, would, after the first platonic expressions of admiration for the lofty principles embodied in it, have nothing to do. They preferred the more certain balance of the narrower league; and their energies were, at the outset, largely directed to keeping the Russian Emperor within its bounds.

In spite, however, of the doubts inspired by Alexander's enigmatic character, there was something in the exalted idealism of his ostensible aims which was bound to appeal to the imagination of statesmen who, in the long struggle with

Napoleon, had grown accustomed to consider the common interests of Europe as one at least of the ends of statecraft. Castlereagh may be forgiven if, for a while, he lost sight of the "rights of nations" through being dazzled by the vision of the "Confederation of Europe". For a moment, at Aix-la-Chapelle, in 1818, the vision seemed to him to have been all but realised, the "cobwebs of diplomacy" to have been swept away, and Europe to have received something of the consistency of a single State. Yet, for all his enthusiasm for this organised amity of the Powers, he soon recognised its limits; and though to the last his sympathy with the "continental system" continued, he never lost sight of the essential interests of England, and protested against those pretensions of the reactionary majority of the Alliance by which these seemed to be threatened. In 1817, to the Tsar's suggestion for a general disarmament, he had replied, with admirable wit, that in this respect Russia might show "a salutary example". In 1819 he protested in a circular letter to the courts against the claim, formulated in the famous Protocol of Troppau, of the right of the Alliance to regulate, not only the external relations, but the internal constitutions of States, as threatening the very liberties of Great Britain, based as these were on the Revolution of 1688.

It has been usual to ascribe to Canning's presence

in the Cabinet the attitude of opposition gradually taken up by the Government to the dictatorial powers which, under the influence of Metternich, the Grand Alliance was assuming in Europe. That he was fundamentally opposed to any plan for subordinating what seemed to him the just liberties of nations is true enough ; but this view was shared, though in an unequal degree, by Castlereagh himself. The latter protested against the repressive policy of the Carlsbad decrees, and pointed out to Metternich that it was not desirable to stir up the peoples against the Governments ; and in spite of his general sympathy with the lofty ideals of the Emperor Alexander, he made it perfectly plain that he recognised the limitations of their practical application. "The system" of the Tsar, he declared, "tended to a perfection not applicable to this age nor to mankind ; it was but 'a beautiful phantom which England cannot pursue,' for all speculative policy is outside the range of her faculties."

The mere fact that Canning continued for four years a member of the Government which, according to the orators of the Opposition, was engaged in bartering away the securities of British liberty at home and abroad, showed that he was in agreement with the main line of their policy. This was most certainly the case with regard to domestic affairs. These were years of economic

and political crisis in England. The conclusion of peace, by putting an end to the abnormal conditions which had lasted so long as to have become a part of the habit of the people, had thrown the markets out of gear. The economic revolution, caused by the introduction of labour-saving machinery, added to the confusion and the distress, which were again enhanced by the famine price of bread, due to the Corn Laws. That under these circumstances discontent was widespread and loudly expressed is not surprising. The voiceless misery of the people found vent in acts of violence. In the country starving mobs of labourers, in the towns starving mobs of artisans, plundered and burned. And when, out of the chaos of passions, a united opinion began to take shape, it assumed the form of a passionate demand for political reform, as the necessary first step towards the redress of intolerable grievances. Canning was not blind to the reality of the crisis, nor to the suffering of which it was the cause; but he did not believe in parliamentary reform as its cure. It was at this period that the most strenuous of his speeches against what he regarded as a revolutionary propaganda were made. To those who argued that Parliament should represent the will of the people he replied, that government was not a matter of will, but of reason; and that an unbridled democracy was as likely to be unreasonable

as an unbridled despotism. While, therefore, on the one hand he held it to be the duty of the existing governing class to rule in accordance with the dictates of sound reason, and to meet the crying needs of the times with "the mildest and most liberal legislation," he gave his unqualified support to the Government in their policy of suppressing the unruly agitation in favour of Reform. On 3rd February, 1817, a message of the Prince Regent drew the attention of Parliament to the state of the country, and bills were introduced for the suppressing of seditious meetings and for the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act. The prominent part taken by Canning in the debate on these measures proclaimed to all the world his share in the unpopular policy of the Government; and when, in May, 1818, a bill of indemnity to cover the acts of the Administration during the suspension of Habeas Corpus was introduced, the caustic wit with which he parried the assaults of the Opposition roused bitter resentment, and he was accused in an anonymous pamphlet of "jesting with the misery of the people". This charge, as injurious as it was unjust, Canning was not prepared to suffer in silence. To the author of "A Letter to the Right Hon. George Canning," he wrote under cover of Mr. Ridgway, the publisher, "for the purpose of expressing to you my opinion that —you are a liar and a slanderer, and want courage

only to be an assassin". The gage thus thrown down was not taken up. The anonymous author who, we are pleased to know, on the authority of Mr. Therry, lived to alter his opinion and to pronounce more than one "brilliant eulogy on the calumniated minister," preferred the inglorious safety of obscurity to the conspicuous risks of Putney Heath; and Canning was spared the experience of a second duel.

Twice more, indeed, had Canning the choice between risking his honour or his life. In the first case an offensive attack upon him, attributed by the *Times* to Hume, and which seemed to stand in need of "explanations," was fathered upon the indiscretion of a reporter, for which the unhappy wight was duly reprimanded at the bar of the House. The second occasion was somewhat more serious, but ended in an equally satisfactory manner. Sir Francis Burdett, from his retreat in the Marshalsea, where he was undergoing imprisonment for a political libel, wrote on 4th April, 1821, to the chairman of a Reform dinner, "that Mr. Canning, I mention him as the champion of the party, a part for the whole, should defend to the utmost a system, by the hocus-pocus tricks of which he and his family get so much public money, can cause neither in me, nor in any man, suspicion or anger—

"For 'tis their duty all the learned think
To espouse the cause by which they eat and drink".

This certainly needed an "explanation"; and as soon as Burdett was released from custody Canning wrote to him to demand one. The reply was prompt and satisfactory. The writer disclaimed any intention of passing any criticism more than all public men who benefit from the system which they advocate are fairly and necessarily subject to; he had avoided making any allusion to Canning's personal character, and certainly had never had any intention of doing so. This explanation was adjudged satisfactory; and the incident closed.

These personal incidents, unimportant perhaps in themselves, are valuable as illustrating the temper of the times and the characters of those who played a part in them. On the whole, in spite of the bitterness with which he was assailed, the disinterestedness of Canning's attitude was sufficiently acknowledged by all parties. He had proclaimed himself the protagonist of unpopular causes: of Catholic emancipation on the one hand, of opposition to Reform on the other; yet the electors of a great constituency still continued to give him their confidence. Even when, in 1819, he lent the weight of his eloquence to help the passing of the hated "Six Acts," the obvious honesty of his motives still served to sus-

tain his popularity; and when at last, in 1822, on taking office as Foreign Secretary, he resigned his seat at Liverpool, in favour of a less exacting constituency, men of all shades of opinion combined to overwhelm him with expressions of regret and esteem.

The passing of the Six Acts marked the high tide of the Government's policy of repression. But, in spite of this suspension of the most cherished constitutional guarantees of personal liberty, the unrest and the discontent which produced it continued to grow. A new factor of peril was added when, in January, 1820, George III. died. Some sentiment of affection and of loyalty had gathered round the pathetic figure of the old King, whose name had so long been associated with all the glories and the sufferings of the country. The new King was hated and despised; and when it was learned that, in spite of all efforts made to prevent it, his ill-used wife—who had lately been living abroad—was about to return home to claim her rights as Queen, all the forces of disaffection in the country prepared to gather in support of her cause.

The position was one of singular difficulty and danger; and between the obstinate resentment of the King against his wife, and the clamour of the public in her favour, Ministers were in a perilous plight. As long as the Queen remained abroad

the question was comparatively simple; and the Ministry succeeded in persuading the King to agree to an arrangement by which an annuity of £50,000 should be paid to her so long as she should not return to England. Unfortunately for everybody concerned, the Queen allowed herself to be persuaded, against the counsel of her legal advisers, to return and brave the charges laid against her. On 20th June, 1829, amid the acclamations of an enormous crowd, she made her entry into London, and took up her residence at the house of Alderman Wood, who had been mainly instrumental in bringing her over. This at once altered the entire situation. The Cabinet had persuaded the King of the impolicy, from the point of view of the public morals and interest, of introducing a divorce bill into the House of Lords. But the Queen's public appeal had made compromise impossible; popular opinion in her favour was violently excited; and the somewhat ungenerous and very short-sighted attitude of the Government in refusing, before she had been proved guilty, to recognise her status so far even as to provide her with a lodging in one of the royal palaces, made the public revelation of the whole sordid scandal necessary for their own justification.

In this matter Canning's position was one of exceeding delicacy. He did not doubt the essential truth of the charges against the Queen;

but he had, in earlier days, been on terms of friendly intimacy with her; and he was unable to pass a severe judgment upon her, in view of the provocations and misery of her position. He had agreed to the original proposals of the Government as to the conditional annuity, and also to the exclusion of her name from the Liturgy. But had any *penal* process been in contemplation, he declared that "the person to be tried would not, without injustice, have been divested, before the trial, of any of the privileges of her present position". A penal process had now become inevitable; and, on 17th August, the trial of the Queen before the House of Lords on a charge of adultery, with a view to a divorce, began. With the proceedings connected with the trial Canning had nothing to do. He had declared vehemently at the outset that he would "never place himself in the situation of accuser" towards the Queen; and he took the earliest opportunity of placing his position very frankly before the King himself, offering to resign his position in the Cabinet should his Majesty desire him to do so. His interview with the King, which does credit to both, took place on 25th June. George IV., who was capable at times of acting up to his self-assumed part of "first gentleman of Europe," appreciated Canning's motives for desiring not to take part in criminal proceedings

against a person to whom he had stood in a confidential relation, praised him for his manly, honourable and gentleman-like conduct, and begged him not to resign; since, as far as he himself was concerned, Canning should take any attitude in the case he might choose.

Under these circumstances Canning decided to remain in the Government; and, in order to avoid even an appearance of opposing their policy in Parliament, he went abroad, and stayed away until after the conclusion of the trial. This, meanwhile, had taken a course neither wholly satisfactory, nor wholly unsatisfactory, from the Government's point of view. The revelations made in the course of the trial had in a large measure explained and justified the attitude of Ministers, which had seemed to the uninstructed public dictated by subservience to the royal will. On the other hand, the bill passed the Lords by a bare majority of seven—too narrow a margin to justify the Government in carrying it farther. The question was thus left more or less unsettled; and when, in December, Canning returned to London, he announced that there being no immediate prospect of the adjustment of the Queen's affairs, his position as a Minister in the House of Commons would be full of difficulty and inconvenience both to himself and the Government. He, therefore, once more tendered his resignation; which was accepted.

Some controversy has arisen as to whether the ostensible reasons were also the real reasons of Canning's retirement. Mr. Stapleton has pointed out, in his Introduction to the *Correspondence*, that Canning's position in the Cabinet was not such as to have compelled him to open his lips in Parliament on the Queen's affairs; that the generous attitude of the King, admitted by Canning himself, precluded any chance of serious misunderstanding in the most exalted quarters; and, lastly, that even after the Queen's death, which occurred in August, 1821, he deprecated Liverpool's efforts to have him readmitted into the Government. The accumulated evidence, indeed, seems to prove that his reasons for retiring from the Government lay deeper than a mere personal attitude on what was, after all, a minor point of policy. The outcome of the trial had, of course, been a blow to the King's self-love; and he felt much resentment at the attitude of Canning's friends among the peers which had contributed to it. But this would hardly have served to keep Canning out of the Cabinet had he really desired to re-enter it. On the other hand, it formed an excellent excuse for holding aloof, if he wished to do so, without giving his true reasons. That he was increasingly out of sympathy with the general policy of Castlereagh in foreign affairs is plain from his language when he himself, in 1822, succeeded to the Foreign Office. To his friend, Charles Bagot, he wrote, on 5th November, 1822:

GEORGE CANNING

From an engraving by Wm. Say after the portrait by Lawrence

"You know my politics well enough to know what I mean, when I say that for *Europe* I shall be desirous *now* and *then* to read *England*," a sentence which certainly implies that, in his opinion, Castlereagh had too often read *Europe* where he should have read *England*. Evidently he was ill content with the somewhat equivocal part played by this country at the Congresses of Troppau and Laybach. England, it is true, had protested against the monstrous claims of the Troppau Protocol; but her protests had been practically ignored; and to his masterful temper the mere suspicion was intolerable that Great Britain was being dragged impotently at the chariot wheels of the "Holy Alliance". Yet to have assumed openly at this juncture the attitude which he took up when he came into power would have been to break, not only with his colleagues in the Government, but with his party at large; and this would have meant resigning for ever all chance of giving his policy practical effect. The affair of the Queen gave him an opportunity of severing his connection with the Government, without offence either to his colleagues or to his party. At the same time, whether this explanation of his attitude be correct or no, there can be no suspicion that he hoped to return to the Government as master within any measurable time. Yet, not many months were to pass before he reaped the reward of his reticence, and was once more

in effective control of the foreign policy of the country.

From the middle of 1821 until the beginning of 1822 Canning was in Paris; a visit mainly memorable for the close friendship which he formed with Chateaubriand, whom Canning admired both as a man and as a master of style. After his return to England he continued in intimate correspondence with the French statesman, to whose opinion in matters of taste he was so sensitive, that we are told he would sit up all night polishing the style of the despatches intended for his eye. During his stay in Paris his political activity was necessarily slight. Once, however, in 1821, he came over to speak in the House in favour of Catholic emancipation; and in the following year he again exhibited the double tendency of his mind in politics, by supporting a bill for the removal of the disabilities of Roman Catholic peers on the one hand, and opposing Lord John Russell's motion for Reform on the other.

Meanwhile, however, an offer had been made to him which threatened to withdraw him from the stage of English politics altogether. In January, 1822, the Court of Directors of the East India Company offered him the Governor-Generalship of India, which the Marquis of Hastings was about to resign. In this matter Canning at first took up an attitude of some reserve. The prospect of ruling

the Indian Empire appealed to his imagination and to his ambition; while the knowledge of Indian affairs, which he had gained during his four years' Presidency of the Board of Control, gave him confidence in his power adequately to fill the most splendid position open to a British subject. On the other hand, to go to India meant practically closing for ever the avenues to the realisation of his lifelong ambition: the attainment of supreme power at home. This latter argument, indeed, carried at the time little weight; for the avenues seemed already closed. Apart from the ill-will of the King, on which he still laid special stress, it would have been impossible for him to join the Government, except in such a capacity as should give him a decisive voice in directing its foreign policy. But Castlereagh's ten years' occupation of the Foreign Office had given him a prescriptive right to represent the interests of the country abroad; in age Canning had only a few months the advantage of him; and it seemed, therefore, that in the order of nature there would be no opening for him in the only office which he really coveted. The fact that the post had been pressed upon him before a vacancy had actually occurred gave him an excuse for carefully weighing all the arguments for and against its acceptance. In the end the former prevailed; and he made all his preparations for leaving England. These had been practically

completed when the news reached him that Lord Londonderry (Castlereagh), who was on the eve of leaving for the Conference about to assemble at Vienna, had, in a moment of insane depression, committed suicide (12th August, 1822).

Canning was in the North when the news reached him of the tragedy which, with such terrible opportuneness, had cleared his path to power in England. Its significance he realised at once. In spite of the King's dislike, in spite of the hatred of powerful members of the Government for his principles and his policy, he knew that he would be invited to take office. But he was determined, if he were forced to give up India, only to join the Ministry on his own terms. It should be all, or nothing. He was, in fact, in a position to have his will. With the possible exception of Peel, whose parliamentary experience was not as yet great enough to justify the succession of the Foreign Office passing to him, there was no supporter of the Government comparable to Canning in reputation or intellect. Lord Liverpool, moreover, was determined that Canning should have the Foreign Office and a free hand to carry out his ideas. In face of this attitude of the Prime Minister, the King, with a sufficiently good grace, allowed his objections to be overruled; and the Foreign Office, the only subordinate office which Canning had declared he *must* accept, were it

offered to him, was placed at his disposal. Until the affair was absolutely settled, Canning had given no hint in public of any impending change in his plans. On 30th August he was entertained at a great banquet at Liverpool, and in a farewell speech to his constituents he reviewed the part which, with their support, he had played in politics. At the same time an address, signed by members of all parties and opinions, bore witness to the impression which his character had made upon the great community which he had so long represented. He was not destined to stand for Liverpool again ; but neither was he about to leave England. On 11th September he was offered, and accepted, the seals of the Foreign Office.

CHAPTER VIII

THE AFFAIRS OF SPAIN AND PORTUGAL

Congress of Verona—Canning and the European Alliance—The doctrine of Non-intervention—Ferdinand VII. and the Spanish Liberals—Attitude of France—England and the Spanish colonies—French invasion of Spain—Troubles in Portugal—Intervention of Great Britain—Canning and the Monroe doctrine—Recognition of the South American Republics—Speech on the British intervention in Portugal.

"TEN years," wrote Canning to a friend who had congratulated him on his accession to office, "have made a world of difference, and have prepared a very different sort of 'world to bustle in,' from that we should have found in 1812. For fame, it is 'a squeezed orange,' but for public good, there is something to do, and I will try, but it must be cautiously, to do it." There was, in fact, no lack of important questions to claim his attention. With Russia there was a controversy as to rights in the Bering Sea, foreshadowing the world-issues of later diplomacy. The insurrection which, in the spring of 1821, had broken out in Greece, was rapidly developing into a situation

which threatened to open up the whole perilous Eastern question. Most instantly important of all, the affairs of Spain, and the attitude of legitimist France toward the infectious revolutionary unrest south of the Pyrenees, promised a complication highly dangerous to the peace of Europe and the interests of Great Britain.

It was for the purpose mainly of discussing this latter question that the Congress of the Powers had been summoned to Verona in September, 1822, the very month of Canning's entry into office. In this matter the initiative had been taken by M. de Montmorency, the French Minister of War, an enthusiast for the "European system," and anxious to obtain from the high council of the Powers a mandate for France to interfere in Spain, similar to that which had authorised Austria to "restore order" in Naples and in Piedmont. A pretension so perilous to the traditional policy of Great Britain toward the Peninsula could not possibly have been admitted even by Castlereagh; and, as a matter of fact, England would, even had he lived, have been unrepresented at the Congress, but for the strongly expressed opinion of the King —ever in favour of upholding the cause of "morality" in Europe—and for the belief that the Eastern question would also be discussed.

At the time of his death Lord Londonderry had been on the eve of setting out for the conferences

arranged at Vienna, which were to be preliminary to the great gathering at Verona. The news of his death was a great blow to Metternich, who, in spite of recent differences, felt that Castlereagh had sympathised with the main lines of his policy in a way that could not be expected of his successor. But though his views of Metternich and his "system" were sufficiently notorious, Canning was too cautious a statesman to break hastily with a policy which, indeed, he saw needed accentuating in a certain direction rather than any fundamental alteration. The Duke of Wellington, then, was sent to Verona in Lord Londonderry's place, with instructions to limit his part in the Congress to one of observation and, if necessary, of protest. In entrusting this mission to Wellington, the most "European" of British statesmen, Canning sufficiently advertised the fact that, however "insular" his policy might seem, he had no intention of repudiating the obligations which Great Britain had incurred by her adhesion to the Grand Alliance.

Before proceeding to examine his policy in the Spanish question, it will be well to determine what was Canning's general principle in guiding the foreign affairs of England. Happily, he has himself so clearly defined this, that we cannot do better than restate it in his own words. In his speech of 30th August, 1822, at Liverpool

—already alluded to—he referred to the great struggle between monarchy and democracy raging abroad. In this warfare, England, firm on her basis of compromise, needed not "to be a partisan on either side, but, for the sake of both, a model, and ultimately perhaps an umpire"; and in a letter of 16th September, 1823, to Wellesley he wrote that he thought "it unadvisable to force into conflict the abstract principles of monarchy and democracy". The function of England, in fact, so far as her obligations to Europe were concerned, was to hold the balance between extreme principles: a function for which her Constitution pre-eminently fitted her. But, for the fulfilment of this function, England had been impotent because she had been entangled in the meshes of a system which hampered her free action. In the atmosphere of the Alliance her initiative had been stifled, because the whole spirit of continental statesmanship was alien to her genius. Castlereagh, for all his general sympathy with Metternich's views, had more than once pointed out to him that British policy must depend ultimately upon the temper of the British Parliament; but the result had been little more than to lead the Austrian statesman to draw a distinction between the "free" autocratic Powers and those that were "limited" by a Constitution—to the disparagement of the latter. The protests of England against the dictatorial claims

of the Alliance came to be regarded as no more than sops thrown to public opinion, and, as far as the Allies themselves were concerned, were—to use Canning's phrase—"mingled with the air". But if there had been any doubt as to the genuineness of Castlereagh's attitude in this matter, there could be none as to that of Canning. "Our influence," he said, "if it is to be maintained abroad, must be secure in the sources of strength at home: and the sources of that strength are the sympathy between the people and the Government; in the union of the public sentiment with the public counsels; in the reciprocal confidence and co-operation of the House of Commons and the Crown." This principle, so impossible for a statesman of Metternich's temper to understand, excluded any possibility of Great Britain allowing the claim of the Alliance, defined in the Troppau Protocol, to intervene, for the supposed benefit of Europe, in the internal affairs of independent States; for this claim once acknowledged would have justified the Powers in intervening to suppress popular movements in England itself.

The declamations of Opposition orators about "Cossacks encamped in Hyde Park" were, in fact, not altogether words and wind. Already Metternich was complaining of the tone of speeches in Parliament and the popular support given to "revolutionary agitation"; while, in

France, the *Étoile*, the organ of the "Ultras," was calling attention to Ireland, and declaring that an insurrection there would embroil England, and so prove a menace to France and to all Europe. "Naples, Piedmont, Spain, Ireland!" wrote Canning, "who shall draw the line, if the principle of 'European question' be once admitted?" In the face of this "areopagite" attitude of foreign opinion, indeed, his language was quite unambiguous. "The pretensions of Prince Metternich," he wrote, "in respect of this country, appear to me to be perfectly unreasonable; they must be founded upon some strange misconception of our obligations, our interests and our feelings . . . England is under no obligation to interfere, or to assist in interfering, in the internal concerns of independent nations. *The specific engagement to interfere in France is an exception so studiously particularised as to prove the rule.* The rule I take to be, that our engagements have reference wholly to the state of territorial possession settled at the peace; to the state of affairs between nation and nation; not (with the single exception above stated) to the affairs of any nation within itself. *I thought the public declarations of my predecessors had set this question completely at rest.*" "The pervading principles" of the Alliance, he wrote again, in 1825, to the Russian ambassador, "are those established by the treaties of Vienna; *viz.*, the preservation of the general peace and the

maintenance against all ambition and encroachment of the existing territorial distribution of Europe."

In taking up this attitude, then, Canning, according to his own statement, was but continuing the policy of his predecessor in office. But while Castlereagh, for all his careful stewardship of British interests, had to the last been more or less dazzled by the vision of the Confederation of Europe, Canning reverted with conviction, and even with enthusiasm, to the purely national principle. "Our business is to preserve the peace of the world, and therefore the independence of the several nations that compose it. In resisting the Revolution in all its stages, we resisted the spirit of *change* to be sure, but we resisted also the spirit of *foreign domination.*" He greeted with enthusiasm the new-old spirit which Villèle brought into the policy of France. "Villèle," he said, "is a Minister of thirty years ago—no revolutionary scoundrel: but constitutionally hating England, as Choiseul and Vergennes used to hate us—and so things are getting back to a wholesome state again. *Every nation for itself, and God for us all.* Only bid your Emperor (Alexander I.) be quiet; for the time for Areopagus, and the like of that, is gone by." In this spirit, then, it was that Canning prepared to deal with the crisis arising from the affairs of Spain.

The trouble had begun in 1820, in which year a

successful revolution had forced upon the unwilling King, Ferdinand VII., the impossible Constitution of 1812, which he had accepted, only immediately to repudiate it, on his restoration in 1814. For two years Spain had remained the scene of continued disorder, due partly to the opposition of the peasantry and of the clerical party to a Government which, in the true doctrinaire spirit, rode rough-shod over their prejudices, partly to the hatred of the provinces for a centralised system which threatened to rob them of the last vestiges of their traditional liberties; while the King, deprived of all power, was made the mouthpiece of a policy he loathed. At the outset the Emperor Alexander had offered to march 100,000 Russians through Southern Europe to the rescue of oppressed royalty in Spain; but to Metternich this drastic remedy seemed worse than the disease, and he had managed to persuade the Tsar that the "material sickness" of Spain could not prove dangerous to Europe, whose illness was "moral," and that, isolated by the Pyrenees, it might safely be left to itself. But though Metternich might view with equanimity the raging of a pestilence so remote from his own doors, it was otherwise with the Government of France. In the spring of 1821 the ultra-royalists had come into office, under the able leadership of Villèle; and to these the condition of Spain seemed increasingly

intolerable, a menace to the stability of the monarchy in France, an insult to the whole House of Bourbon in the person of King Ferdinand. An outbreak of yellow fever in the Peninsula gave them an excuse for taking some action; and, under pretence of establishing a sanitary cordon, a vast army of observation was concentrated along the Spanish frontier. Farther than this, however, even had opinion within the Ministry as to further policy been absolutely united, they dared not go without consulting the Powers of the Alliance; and it was primarily for taking the sense of Europe on this question that the Congress had been summoned to meet at Verona.

When, in October, the Congress assembled, Montmorency, the French plenipotentiary, laid before it the question whether, in the event of France being forced to declare war on Spain, she would be able to reckon on the moral and material support of the Allies. To this question Russia, Austria and Prussia returned favourable replies; but Wellington, acting on his instructions, made so vigorous a protest, that Montmorency dared not sign a definitive treaty with them. By way of gaining time it was now suggested that the Allied Powers should try the effect of presenting identical notes at Madrid, calling on the Spanish Government to mend its ways. Again England protested, declaring her intention, not only of not

holding a common language with the Allies, but of making no communication to the Spanish Government whatever on the subject of its relations with its own country. The other Powers persisting, Wellington was instructed to withdraw from the conferences altogether.

The situation was now highly curious as well as critical. While Canning was championing the liberty of Spain in Europe, he was in angry controversy with the Spanish Government as to its high-handed interference with British trade in South American waters; for Spain was, in fact, as he humorously summed up the situation, "holding out her European hand for charity, and with her American one picking our pockets". Under the old law of Spain intercourse with the Spanish colonies had been confined to Spanish traders; but during the war the colonies had revolted from the mother-country, and a lucrative trade had sprung up between them and Great Britain. All efforts of the restored monarchy in Spain to bring back the colonies to their allegiance had failed; but, none the less, the Spanish Government still claimed the right to prevent any foreign country trading with them; and, acting on instructions from Madrid, Spanish warships had laid violent hands on British vessels. Moreover, the unsettlement caused by a long and inconclusive state of war had led to the establishment of flourishing

communities of pirates in the Spanish West Indies; so that British trade with South America had to run the gauntlet of ferocious sea-robbers on the one side, and Spanish men-of-war on the other. This was a condition of things which the British Government could not lightly tolerate; and, since all remonstrances at Madrid proved useless, it was at length decided to take action. On 18th October, 1822, the British ambassador at Madrid was instructed to demand "instant atonement" for the seizure of the *Lord Collingwood*, which had been condemned for trading with "the rebels of Buenos Ayres"; at the same time it was announced that reprisals would be made for every attack on British shipping; while, since Spain seemed unable, or unwilling, to rid the high seas of pirates, a British force was ordered to disembark in Cuba for the purpose of exterminating the pirate nests. At the same time the Spanish Government was informed that this latter act was not to be considered "unfriendly".

Meanwhile, the Allies at Verona had not advanced beyond the somewhat tentative expedient of the "identical notes". Corporate action had been again suggested; but this, in view of the Emperor Alexander's generous offer, once more renewed, to save the French troops from possible infection in the revolutionary atmosphere of Spain, by marching a reliable Russian army over the Pyrenees, had

seemed to Metternich, under the circumstances, too perilous an expedient; and the project dropped. The ambassadors of the three autocratic Powers, indeed, solemnly delivered their identical lectures to the Spanish Government; and, these having no effect, as solemnly withdrew from Madrid. But the fate of Spain, in fact, hung upon the determination of the French Government; and within the French Government opinion was divided. To Montmorency intervention in Spain was a matter of principle, to be determined by consideration of the interests of Europe. To Villèle it was an affair of policy, to be settled in accordance with the interests of France. His aim was to restore French influence at Madrid, and ultimately, perhaps, by helping Spain to recover her colonies, to win for France solid commercial advantages; and these ends he hoped to attain by peaceful means. His views had the support of the King and of the majority of his colleagues; and Montmorency, foreseeing the wreck of his policy, resigned. The act was too precipitate. To mark the moderation of France, indeed, in contrast with the offensive admonitions of the three autocratic Powers, the French ambassador had been instructed to hold back for a while the identical note with which he had been entrusted; and when it was presented, the bitter medicament was disguised in a conserve of friendly assurances designed to make it more

palatable. It none the less, however, failed of its effect. The French Government had, in fact, advanced too far on the path of war to draw back with impunity. The insults of the Spanish press had wrought to fury more than the royalist opinion of France ; and, above all, the Government feared the effect of withdrawing from the frontier the great army which, for weeks past, had been fed on hopes of glory. Villèle was forced to yield to the clamour ; and on 23rd January, 1823, Louis XVIII. announced to the Chambers, in a speech from the throne, that he had withdrawn his ambassador from Madrid, and that 100,000 Frenchmen were about to march, "invoking the God of St. Louis, for the sake of preserving the throne of Spain for a descendant of Henry IV., and of reconciling that fine kingdom with Europe". "Let Ferdinand VII.," he said, "be free to give to his peoples institutions which they cannot hold but from him!"

Throughout this entanglement Canning had exerted himself to the uttermost to persuade the contending parties to accept the mediation of England. War, he declared, must end either in the fall of the Bourbon monarchy in France, or of the Constitution in Spain. Wellington was commissioned to plead, as Duke of Ciudad Rodrigo, with the Spanish Government, in order to persuade it to modify its Constitution sufficiently to buy off the resentment of France. The French

Government was warned against the danger to the monarchy from entangling themselves in a new Peninsular War. Neither Spain nor France would listen. On the other hand, the French speech from the throne seemed a direct challenge to Great Britain; and Canning vigorously protested against it. England had in 1688, once for all, rejected the doctrine that popular rights are the gift of the Crown; and Canning repudiated the publicly announced claim of France to make her own example in this respect a rule for foreign nations, and, still more emphatically, her pretension to enforce this claim in virtue of the relationship between the ruling dynasties of the two kingdoms. France was reminded that the terms of the Treaty of Utrecht had not yet fallen obsolete; and, by way of enforcing this argument, the clause in the King's speech announcing the neutrality of Great Britain in the coming war was at the last moment omitted.

In spite of this bellicose hint, however, Canning had no intention of pressing his opposition to the designs of France to the supreme issue. In Parliament loud voices were raised in favour of flying to the assistance of a free country in jeopardy, others in favour of helping by arms to sustain the threatened balance of power. Neither argument seemed to Canning to carry much weight. In his politics there was little room for sentiment; and

he quoted against the Opposition a sentence from a speech delivered by one of their own leaders, Lord Grey, in 1810 : "That generous magnanimity and high-minded disinterestedness which justly immortalise the hero, cannot and ought not to be considered justifiable motives of political action; because nations cannot afford to be chivalrous and romantic". As for the balance of power, he pointed out that the France of 1823 was not that of 1808 ; and that Spain, stripped of her colonies, was no longer the world-power which she had been in the days of Louis XIV. Any advantage that France might obtain by occupying the Peninsula could, as a last resort, be counterbalanced by Great Britain recognising the independence of the Spanish American colonies.

It was not long before Canning was called upon to give effect to the policy he had thus foreshadowed. The Duc d'Angoulême, at the head of 95,000 men, crossed the Bidassoa on 7th April, 1823. Within six weeks the resistance of Liberal Spain was crushed ; and on 20th March Ferdinand was free to repudiate once more all his oaths, and to enter again on the unfettered abuse of absolute power. The triumph of the reaction in Spain, moreover, affected also the neighbouring kingdom of Portugal, in which the interests of Great Britain were even more intimately concerned. The special mission of Canning to Lisbon in 1816 had been for

the purpose of welcoming the King on his return from Brazil. The King, however, had not returned, and had appointed Marshal Beresford Regent during his absence. This arrangement had displeased the Portuguese, who had some reason to think that their interests were being subordinated to those of England and of Brazil; and, in 1820, fired by the example of Spain, they rose in insurrection, deposed the Regent in his absence, and proclaimed the Spanish Constitution of 1812. Invited by the provisional Government, John VI. now hurried back from Brazil, and, in spite of the protests of his Queen Carlotta and of his second son Dom Miguel, accepted the Constitution. His eldest son, Dom Pedro, was left as Regent in Brazil, with instructions to assume the crown of that country, should circumstances render it advisable, in order to preserve it to the House of Braganza. This contingency occurred in 1822, when, on 12th October, the Junta at Rio proclaimed the independence of Brazil, and Pedro assumed the title of Constitutional Emperor.

Meanwhile, at Lisbon, a war of intrigue had been going on, the party in opposition to the King and to the constitutional Government being headed by Dom Miguel. The situation was, moreover, complicated by the strife of parties assuming a quasi-international character; for the Liberals leaned to the English Alliance, and received the

moral support of Great Britain; while the French ambassador, M. de Neuville, in the hope of ousting the influence of England in favour of that of France, had long been intriguing in the interests of Dom Miguel and his faction. When, therefore, in 1822, Dom Miguel, encouraged by the absolutist triumph in Spain, by a successful *coup d'état* suppressed the Constitution, this was rightly regarded as a serious blow to English influence in Portugal, and a menace to her trade interests.

The downfall of the Constitution had, at the outset, been joyfully welcomed by the Portuguese, who, like the Athenians of old, ever desired to hear or see some new thing. But they soon wearied of Miguel's mediæval methods of government; and, in response to their clamour, the easy-going King appointed a Commission, under the "Anglophile" M. de Palmella, to draw up a new Constitution. Against this concession to revolutionary agitation the ambassadors of the three autocratic Powers protested, and the "Apostolicals" raged; till Palmella, fearing a fresh resort to violence, appealed to Great Britain to despatch a force to help the Government establish the Constitution.

For Canning the situation was a singularly awkward one. To refrain from sending help would be to risk, not only the oversetting of the Constitution, but the permanent eclipse of

British influence in Lisbon. To send help would be to give the lie to all his protests against "intervention"—would be, in fact, no more than an imitation, in a reverse sense, of the action of Austria in Naples and Piedmont. He refused, then, to guarantee the Constitution of Portugal against internal troubles, as he had refused to help in saving that of Spain. Yet both British interests and British honour forbade that England should stand aside under the actual circumstances. The relations between the two countries had long been extremely intimate; and, under the old treaties of 1661 and 1763, the validity of which had been reaffirmed in 1815 at Vienna, Great Britain had undertaken, in return for commercial advantages, the special duty of protecting Portugal against foreign aggression. Canning, then, so far strained the doctrine of Non-intervention as to send a British squadron to the Tagus, to act as a "moral support" to the Government; and when it became increasingly apparent that France was using the reactionary zeal of the autocratic Powers for her own ends—to oust British influence from Lisbon—and had joined with them in violent threats against the Constitution, he declared that Great Britain would resist by force of arms any attempt of the Powers to intervene in Portugal. "This policy, at once vigorous and restrained, was in the long run successful. When, in April,

1824, the conflict within the Portuguese Government culminated once more in a "pronunciamento" of Dom Miguel, the King and the Liberal Ministers found a refuge on board the British warships, and the "moral support" of the English admiral sufficed to frighten the successful conspirator into submission and exile. For a while, indeed, even after this temporary collapse of Miguel's schemes, the struggle between France and England in Lisbon continued; for even the Liberal leaders were offended at Canning's attitude towards the independence of Brazil. But in the end the continued hostility of the autocratic Powers towards the Constitution destroyed the influence at Lisbon of De Neuville, who had identified himself with their views. Meanwhile, on Canning's initiative, a conference of the representatives of England, Austria, Portugal and Brazil, in July, 1825, assembled in London, to define the relations between Brazil and the mother-country. During its session it was discovered that M. de Subserra, the anti-British Portuguese Prime Minister, was endeavouring to effect a separate settlement with Brazil. Canning at once demanded, and obtained, his dismissal; De Neuville was shortly afterwards recalled, and the victory of British diplomacy was complete.

The independence of Brazil, which was formally

acknowledged by the recognition by the King of Portugal, on 29th August, 1825, of the Emperor Pedro's title, had already been practically recognised by the signature, in July, 1824, of a commercial treaty between Brazil and Great Britain. This recognition, in logic, involved that of the Spanish South American colonies, which had long ceased to have any *de facto* dependence upon Spain. This Canning allowed; but he none the less proceeded in the matter with characteristic caution. He studied the question, as usual, primarily from the point of view of British interests; and these might easily have been jeopardised by hasty action. That any recognition of republics beyond the Atlantic would still further offend the autocratic Powers exercised him little; the less so since, in the event of trouble arising in that quarter, he could reckon on the sympathy of the United States. The claim of the Alliance to interfere in the quarrel between Spain and her colonies had been repudiated by Castlereagh at Aix-la-Chapelle; but it had been none the less once and again revived, and it was this that primarily led to the enunciation of the famous "Monroe doctrine" of "America for the Americans," first proclaimed in the message of President Monroe to the Senate on 2nd December, 1824. Against the extreme claims announced in this, indeed, Canning, in the name of the British Gov-

ernment, had protested. For the United States to pretend to a lien on all the unoccupied territories of the American continent, and to a right to exclude all European Powers, including Great Britain, from colonising them, could be justified, in his opinion, neither by international law, nor by the actual balance of power in America. In the difficult "Oregon question," too, involving the rights of Great Britain and the United States to the north-western sea-board of America, Canning was inclined to resist the demands of the American Government; and he pointed out to Lord Liverpool, to whom the whole matter seemed of little importance, how valuable to the future trade with China the English possessions on the Pacific coast were likely to become. But though, as between Great Britain and her revolted daughter, the Monroe doctrine was calculated to breed trouble, it was exceedingly useful in forwarding Canning's policy in the matter of the Spanish colonies; for the attitude of the United States once made plain, all thought of European intervention in America was at an end.

On this point, indeed, Canning had come to a complete understanding with Mr. Rush, the American Minister in London, and to his influence the policy of the United States in the matter may be partly ascribed. But there were other considerations involved. In the first place, the revolted

colonies were only gradually settling down; and until they had acquired some form of stable government it would be worse than useless to enter into relations with them. Moreover, under pressure of the danger from France the constitutional Government of Spain had conceded the demands of England in the matter of the right to trade with her American possessions; and, so long as the Spanish King should be content to maintain the treaties signed by him while still in the hated bonds of the Constitution, it would have been needless, from the point of view of British interests, to offend the susceptibilities of Spain by any formal acknowledgment of what was for all practical purposes already recognised.

The whole question was ultimately determined by the position of the French in the Peninsula. Canning had not thought it necessary to resist the French invasion of Spain, because Spain was no longer the "Empire on which the sun never set," no longer a menace to the world-power of Great Britain. Had France been content, or able, to withdraw, after setting up once more the absolutism of the Bourbon monarchy, British interests would not have been seriously threatened. But France had not withdrawn, and showed no immediate disposition to do so. And so long as she remained in Spain, the danger was ever present that she would, in her own interests, help the

Spanish monarchy to reconquer its colonial Empire. It was to obviate this peril that Canning decided to recognise the independence of the South American States. Columbia and Mexico, the first to establish a settled government, were recognised in December, 1824. The recognition of the others followed, from time to time, as the Government was assured that they were in a position to maintain their engagements with Great Britain. Canning, in the famous speech of 16th December, 1826, defended and explained this policy. "If France occupied Spain," he said, "was it necessary, in order to avoid the consequences of that occupation, that we should blockade Cadiz? No. I looked another way—I sought materials of compensation in another hemisphere. Contemplating Spain, such as our ancestors had known her, I resolved that if France had Spain, it should not be Spain '*with the Indies*'. I called the New World into existence, to redress the balance of the Old."

The recognition of the South American States, though in some sort the climax, was by no means the end of the conflict between French and British interests in the Peninsula. The death of King John VI. reunited the crowns of Portugal and Brazil once more, in the person of the Emperor Pedro; and the whole question, which had been temporarily settled by the declaration of Brazilian independence, threatened once more to be re-

opened. To meet this danger Canning instructed Lord Ponsonby, who was about to start to take up his duties as British Minister at Buenos Ayres, to break his journey at Rio and to suggest to the Emperor that he should abdicate the throne of Portugal in favour of his daughter, Donna Maria la Gloria, and reconcile the opposing factions in the kingdom by marrying the latter to her uncle, Dom Miguel. This course was actually followed; but, before resigning the crown, Pedro issued a charter establishing a Liberal Constitution in the kingdom. The document embodying this was carried to Portugal, without instructions from the British Government, by Sir Charles Stuart, who had been on a diplomatic mission on behalf of the Portuguese Government to Rio. Canning at once saw the misunderstandings and troubles which, as a matter of fact, actually accrued from this apparently innocuous proceeding. Apart from the fact that it would appear to foreign countries like an act of that very intervention which Canning had all along repudiated, it was peculiarly obnoxious to France, which, having just suppressed the "revolution" in Spain, could not view with equanimity the establishment, under the ægis of a foreign Power, of a Liberal Constitution in the neighbouring kingdom. Austria, too, which had throughout acted in harmony with Great Britain in the Brazilian question, would be offended by

an act so offensive to Dom Miguel, whom, since the failure of his last *coup d'état*, she had been keeping out of mischief at Vienna. Lastly, Miguel himself, the very incarnation of absolutism, would never honestly accept an instrument by which his powers would be so seriously limited. Canning, moreover, who was the soul of honour, resented the air of underhand intrigue which the whole affair would wear in the eyes of the world. Yet, the Constitution having been proclaimed, nothing remained, in his opinion, but to make the best of the situation. He endeavoured, by a frank explanation, to soothe the suspicious temper of the Powers, and, while disclaiming any intention on the part of England to interfere in the internal concerns of Portugal, begged them to accept the *fait accompli*, rather than to plunge Portugal again into the miseries of civil strife by encouraging the irreconcilable temper of Miguel.

Canning's fears were justified by the event. Miguel, indeed, took the oath of fealty at Vienna; but his partisans in Portugal rose against the constitutional *régime;* bands of "Apostolicals," openly armed and organised with the connivance of the Spanish Government, crossed the frontier from Spain to their aid; and the Portuguese Government, hard pressed and unable to depend on the loyalty or the discipline of the army, appealed to Great Britain for help. On 17th December,

1826, the first British contingent sailed for Lisbon.

The expedition to Portugal Canning defended, in his speech of 12th December, 1826, on the ground of ancient treaties by which Great Britain was bound to defend that country in case of hostile attack from outside. The attitude of the Spanish Government, and its open encouragement of the armed bands which crossed the frontiers of Spain, constituted in his opinion such a foreign attack. In a letter of 4th February, 1827, to Lord Liverpool, he not only clearly defined the objects of the expedition, but also suggested an improvement in the general situation which might result from it. The objects were "first, to repel foreign aggression, and to put down (or enable the Government of Portugal to put down) the internal disturbances which had grown out of it. Secondly, to obtain from Spain atonement for the past, by the establishment of direct political relations with Portugal; and security for the future, by satisfactory assurances and engagements. Thirdly, to watch over the full performance of such engagements and assurances."

The improvement in the general situation would accrue from the opportunity the presence of the British troops in Portugal would give for coming to a friendly agreement with France as to the evacuation of Spain. The presence of the

French troops in Spain was a constant menace to the security of European peace; Villèle himself was anxious to withdraw in any way consistent with the honour and the interests of France; and he might be helped out of a difficult position by making the recall of the British troops from Portugal unostentatiously reciprocal upon the retirement of the French army from Spain.

The whole letter in which these views are expressed is interesting as showing the clear grasp of Canning on a very difficult and complicated situation. Unhappily his firmness and moderation were not destined to unravel the tangled knot. Dom Miguel took the oaths as Regent of Portugal on 29th February, 1827; and in the following April the British troops were withdrawn. Canning did not live to see the final evacuation of Spain by the French, and only survived long enough to witness the fulfilment of his own forebodings in Miguel's usurpation of the throne and the overthrow of the ill-fated Constitution.

CHAPTER IX

THE WAR OF GREEK INDEPENDENCE

The "Eastern question" and the Continental Alliance—Insurrection in Greece—Metternich and Alexander I.—Canning and the Greek question—The Flag of Greece recognised—Intervention of Mehemet Ali—Death of Alexander I.—Mission of Wellington to St. Petersburg—The "Protocol of St. Petersburg"—Canning and Nicholas I.—Appeal of the Greeks to Great Britain — Conference of London — The Treaty of London.

"THE issue of Verona," wrote Canning on 3rd January, 1823, "has split the one and indivisible Alliance into three parts as distinct as the Constitutions of England, France and Muscovy." This was, in his view, a consummation devoutly to be wished; and he declared, with a note of exultation, that England would henceforward "revolve in her own orbit". Of this disquieting fact continental statesmen were early, and uneasily, conscious. "M. Canning," reported Prince Lieven from London to his master the Tsar, "is more insular than European;" and Metternich,

with an unconscious modification of Canning's astronomical metaphor, spoke of him as a "malevolent meteor" hurled by Providence upon England and upon Europe.

Yet Canning's breach with the "European system" only hastened a dissolution which was, sooner or later, inevitable. Verona had revealed the rift in the lute; but the music would have been silenced there and then, had Metternich not succeeded in withdrawing from the debates of the Congress a subject far more delicate than that of Spain—that which became known from this time as the Eastern question. It was, indeed, shrewdly suspected even then that Metternich's zeal for crushing the Revolution in Western Europe was largely inspired by his anxiety to distract the mind of the Russian autocrat from the affairs of the East. So long as he could hold Alexander under the spell of the Holy Alliance and fix his wandering imagination on his vision of himself as the peace-maker of Europe, there was the less risk the Emperor turning again to a purely Russian policy and—what Austria above all things dreaded—attempting to realise the dream of Peter the Great and of Catherine: that of the Orthodox Empire of the East re-established, under the Russian Tsars, on the banks of the Bosphorus.

This fear of a renewed Russian attack on Turkey, which had more or less exercised the minds of the

other Powers ever since they had noted with misgiving the conscious exclusion of the Sultan from Alexander's Holy League, received fresh point when the news reached the Congress at Laybach that a Greek insurrection had broken out in the Danubian principalities, and that the leader of this insurrection, Prince Hypsilanti, was a general in the Russian service. Metternich, indeed, succeeded in persuading the Tsar to disavow all sympathy with the movement; which, in consequence, speedily collapsed. A fresh, and far more serious, rising, however, immediately afterwards broke out in the Morea, and spread with great rapidity throughout the mainland and islands of Greece. The war from the first assumed a religious character and one of singular ferocity on both sides. Wholesale atrocities on the part of the insurgents were met by even more wholesale cruelties on the other side; and these culminated, on the eve of Easter, 1821, in the official murder of the Orthodox Patriarch at Constantinople. Again it seemed as though a Russian movement against Turkey was inevitable. The sentiment of the Russian people had been from the first with their co-religionists; the martyrdom of the head of the Orthodox Church raised their excitement to fever heat. Had Alexander been in Russia he would probably have been swept away in the fierce tide of resentment, and war would at once have

resulted. But Metternich was at his elbow to persuade him once more to subordinate the feelings of Russia to the interests of Europe; and, though diplomatic relations between Russia and the Ottoman Empire were broken off, the Greeks were left to fight their battles alone. When, in 1822, the Hellenic provisional Government sent envoys to Verona, to solicit aid of the Tsar, they were turned back upon the road by a message that they would not be received.

Such was the general situation when Canning came into office. On the question at large he was, at the outset, in agreement with Metternich. Both Great Britain and Austria were committed to the policy of preserving Turkey as a bulwark against Russian ambition; both were equally interested in preventing Russia from taking up arms as the champion of Greece. For all his ill opinion of Metternich and his methods, Canning acknowledged the value of the clever diplomacy by which he had succeeded in postponing an issue fraught with peril to the world's peace; and though he lacked Metternich's cynicism, he to all intents and purposes shared his opinion that the conflagration in Turkey would be best left to burn itself out "beyond the borders of civilisation". Metternich believed, wrongly as the issue proved, in the rapid victory of the Turks; and this was a result which Canning, as a statesman, would have

done nothing to prevent, had it appeared the readiest road to a settlement; but when the stubborn spirit of the insurgents made this solution impossible, he was glad that an intervention, dictated in the first instance by the interests of England, made also for those of Hellas.

Nothing is more striking, or more characteristic, than Canning's whole attitude in the Greek question. By nature and by education his sympathies were with Greece, then even more than now the land of undefiled classic memories. Yet though the air was full of voices urging him to go to the assistance of the noble descendants of Plato and of Pericles, he kept the even balance of his judgment. "I have never understood," he said, "why this particular war, of all others, is selected as the one that *must* be put an end to, at whatever cost. I am of quite another opinion; I think that the cost may be much greater than the mischief." If, then, Canning's portrait has its place at Athens among the liberators of Hellas, this is no more than a memorial of the fact that his policy, though dictated from first to last by consideration for British interests, involved ultimately the emancipation of Greece.

So long as the effects of the war were confined within the limits of the Turkish dominions, Canning had a double motive for leaving it to itself; for any intervention would not only have opened

up the whole Eastern question, with all its incalculable and perilous issues, but would have been a violation of those international principles of which he had made himself the most conspicuous champion. In his view Great Britain was "bound in political justice to respect, in the case of Turkey, that national independence which, in case of civil commotion, she would look to have respected in her own". In this he was but following the precedent set, early in 1822, by Lord Londonderry, who had refused to join with Russia in demanding from the Porte a guarantee for better government in the Christian provinces, as this would be to recognise the right of Russia to intervene in the internals concerns of Turkey. From this point of view, indeed, British statesmen were in a much better position than Metternich for resisting the warlike impulses of the Russian Emperor. The latter was hard pressed for arguments when Alexander proposed to march into Turkey, as Austria had marched into Naples, and to fight, not for himself, but—true to his vow to the European Federation—for *all*. Londonderry, and after him Canning, were in no such dilemma. Whatever their view as to the just grievances of Russia in respect of the violation by the Porte of specific treaty rights, the principle of "non-intervention" gave them a firm standing ground in resisting Alexander's claim for a free mandate to settle

the affairs of the East in the vague interests of the general good; which would have meant, in effect, the interests of Russia.

Canning fully realised, and exulted in, the advantage which in this situation Great Britain derived from her isolation. "Let Allied Europe meet again," he wrote, "and by analogy and implication not to be resisted, let the neighbouring Power be deputed to set these convulsions at rest." France and, for the matter of that, Austria must resist a Congress, if they did not wish to see Russia marching on Constantinople. "We," he added, "could protest in any case."

More immediately perilous to peace, however, than Alexander's demand for a European mandate to go on crusade, was the stubborn refusal of the Ottoman Government to redress the just grievances of Russia. Greek ships sailing under the Russian flag had been seized in the Bosphorus; and, apart from the cruelties exercised in Turkey generally over that Christian population which the Tsar claimed to protect, the Porte, in violation of specific treaty engagements, still maintained an armed force in the Danubian principalities, for the alleged purpose of keeping order. Canning realised that, until these questions were settled, diplomatic relations between Russia and Turkey could not be resumed, and that the risk of war would continue. He therefore instructed Lord

Strangford, the British ambassador at Constantinople, on the one hand to press the Porte to concede the just demands of Russia, on the other hand, by showing greater moderation towards the rebels, to disarm the anger of the great Orthodox Power. The efforts of Lord Strangford, seconded by those of the Austrian internuncio, were in the end successful in persuading the Divan to yield the more important points in dispute with Russia—the evacuation of the principalities and the rights of the Russian flag in the Bosphorus. But owing to the stubborn pride of the Porte, the negotiations had been so long dragged on, that when they were at last concluded the situation had so changed that the concessions were no longer adequate to the end aimed at.

The origin of this change was the recognition, on 25th March, 1823, by the British Government of the Greeks as belligerents. This measure, like all Canning's policy, was dictated primarily by the interests of England. The Greek warships, mostly armed brigs privately fitted out, had degenerated into pirates, and preyed upon the commerce of all nations; trade in the Archipelago was practically at a stand-still; and the Ottoman Government, which was nominally responsible for this state of things, had quite lost control of the seas. Apart from the danger that it was open to any Power to use its grievances in this respect as a pretext

for armed intervention against the Porte, the situation itself was day by day growing increasingly intolerable; and Canning announced that some action was necessary. "The recognition of the belligerent rights of the Greeks," he said, "was necessitated by the impossibility of treating as pirates a population of a million souls, and of bringing within the bounds of civilised war a contest which had been marked at the outset, on both sides, by disgusting barbarities;"—for, the flag of Greece once recognised, the Greek provisional Government could be made responsible for the outrages committed in its name.

Whatever the necessities which had justified this move, to the other Powers it was a clear proof of the "selfish" ambitions of Great Britain in the East. To Alexander, it seemed that she was about to take advantage of his obligations to the Holy Alliance, to steal a march upon Russia, and to pose as the sole protector of the Greeks. To forestall any such isolated action, he once more mooted the subject of a joint intervention of the Allies. So far as concerned the Eastern question, however, the Grand Alliance had ceased to have any cohesion. Whatever the common ground of the majority of the Powers may have been at an earlier stage, the action of England in recognising the Greek flag had made a new basis of negotiation inevitable; for the insurgents could no longer

be regarded merely as commonplace rebels against legitimate authority. The reactionary Powers were, in fact, on the horns of a dilemma. The stubborn resistance of the Greeks had stultified Metternich's policy of isolating the war, which Canning had now brought "within the pale of civilisation". That the Powers must ultimately intervene in the interests of Europe was now certain; but as to the method and the object of this intervention, opinion was hopelessly in the dark. To help the Turks crush the Greeks was obviously impossible, even had the Emperor Alexander been personally opposed to the sentiment of his people. To take the part of the insurgents would be to give the lie to every principle which had hitherto inspired the actions and the utterances of the concert. To Canning the situation afforded exquisite entertainment; and he watched with insular complacency the statesmen of the Alliance floundering in a diplomatic bog from which there was no apparent escape.

To the Emperor Alexander the position was less amusing; and for a while it seemed as though he were about to desert the dream of confederated Europe in favour of the traditional policy of the Tsars. The war party at St. Petersburg, which had languished since the dismissal, in 1822, of the Greek Minister Count Capodistrias, once more gained the ascendency; and had the intractable

temper of the Porte continued, Alexander would probably have placed himself at the head of an Orthodox crusade. The concession of the main points at issue by Turkey disarmed his wrath; but, in sending an agent to Constantinople to watch over the carrying out of the terms of the new treaties, he explained that full diplomatic relations would only be resumed in response to further concessions. What these concessions were to be was soon revealed. In October, 1823, the Tsar had discussed the whole situation with the Emperor Francis at Czernovitz, and had suggested to him, informally, that a conference of the Powers should be summoned to St. Petersburg, to arrange for a joint intervention on the basis of the erection of Greece and the islands of the Archipelago into three principalities, under Ottoman suzerainty, and guaranteed by the European Alliance. The suggestion was formally repeated in a Russian circular of January, 1824, in which it was pointed out that "the efforts of the Imperial Government to bring about a collective intervention were the best proof of its disinterestedness". Neither Canning nor Metternich shared this view. The latter was alarmed at the prospect of the establishment in the south of the Balkan Peninsula of a semi-independent State on the model of the Danubian principalities, which it was assumed would be subject to the preponderating influence of Russia.

Better than such a solution, from the Austrian point of view, would be the erection of Greece into a State absolutely independent and sovereign; and, by way of countermove to the Tsar's proposals, he suggested this expedient to the startled Powers. As for Canning, apart from his general dislike for conferences and concerts, he suspected that the present one was a mere device for hampering the free initiative of Great Britain; and he had no intention of taking part in it only to act as a buffer between the colliding interests of Russia and Austria. "Austria," he said, "is for putting down the insurrection. Russia is for not setting it up. Ours Metternich supposes is for setting it up. This, he supposes, would drive Russia into a middle position between Austria and us; and then, with the aid of Spanish America and the conflicting maritime interests of Russia and Greece, he could gradually win over Alexander to his views." There was, besides, another reason for Canning's objection to taking part in the meeting. European intervention, short of a demonstration of force which he was not prepared to allow, could only be effective if both belligerents were prepared to accept the arbitrament of the Powers. But the Ottoman Government had protested vigorously against the pretension of the Allies to dictate to it; and the Greek insurgents had no less vigorously rejected all idea of resting content with the

terms outlined in the Tsar's note. Under these circumstances he decided that Great Britain should take no part in the discussion of the conference on the Russian circular. Upon this, Alexander, in a pique, declared all negotiations on the subject between Russia and England closed.

The situation was once more modified by new and alarming developments in Greece. Sultan Mahmoud, at last convinced that his own forces were unable to cope with the insurrection, had bent his pride to ask help of his powerful vassal Mehemet Ali of Egypt, who placed at his disposal an army and a fleet disciplined on the European model. In February, 1825, Ibrahim Pasha landed with a considerable force in the Morea; the Greek guerilla warriors, unaccustomed to face regular troops, were everywhere scattered; and it seemed as though the Egyptian conqueror would soon be free to carry out the plan attributed to him of rooting out the whole Christian population of Greece, and resettling the country with Mohammedan negroes and fellaheen. It was under these circumstances that Canning decided to reopen negotiations with the Russian Government; and, in the summer of 1825, his cousin, Stratford Canning, the newly appointed ambassador to St. Petersburg, was authorised to propose to the Tsar a joint intervention of the Powers, still, however, with the old stipulation that Turkey should not be

coerced. Russia, however, showed no disposition to favour an intervention which, in the absence of force, would be without effect. On 18th August, in fact, Alexander announced that he intended to take the matter into his own hands, and started for the south of Russia, where an immense army had been concentrated. Canning believed that, "in a temper of gloomy abstraction," and deceived by Metternich, the Tsar had resolved on war; and the fear that Russia was about to act alone forced him on. He now opened negotiations with Prince Lieven, the Russian ambassador in England, on the basis of a separate understanding between Great Britain and Russia. The "disloyalty" of Austria, the unreliability of France, the insignificance of Prussia, he urged, made them undesirable allies; but for an understanding between Russia and England "the doors were open". "The time has come to act," wrote Lieven; "M. Canning and I are on the path of confidences."

The unexpected death of Alexander I. in December, 1825, interrupted the negotiations, and at the same time intensified the strain of the situation. In place of the imperial dreamer, worn out before his time, there was now seated on the throne of Russia a young, vigorous and ambitious autocrat, inspired with an overwhelming sense of his divine mission as the ruler and representative of Holy Russia, and endowed by nature

with an iron will. A great army, which it needed only his word to set in motion over the frontiers, was concentrated in the South; and, as an additional inducement to him to declare war, the military rising at Moscow, which it had been the first act of his reign to suppress, pointed to the expediency of restoring the *morale* of the troops by employing them abroad. To preserve the Ottoman Empire from what seemed imminent downfall, Canning determined to renew, at the earliest possible moment, the negotiations, which had been interrupted by the death of Alexander, with a view to arriving at a "confidential concert" between the two Governments, and thus to forestall any isolated action of Russia. One of the obstacles to this course no longer existed. He had refused to share in the Conference of St. Petersburg partly because the Greek insurgents had refused to be bound by its decisions. But, meanwhile, Ibrahim's discipline had reduced them to a more chastened mood. In a conference between the Greek leaders and Stratford Canning, held in January, 1826, in the island of Perivolakia, the former had agreed to accept a settlement based on the earlier proposals of the Emperor Alexander. Canning had by no means modified his objections to conferences; but the situation seemed now ripe for a business-like discussion between the two parties most directly interested, and he now proposed to

Prince Lieven that the two Powers most intimately concerned, Russia and Great Britain, should open negotiations with a view to their joint intervention in the Greek question upon a new basis.

In February, 1826, the Duke of Wellington was sent as special envoy to St. Petersburg, to congratulate the Emperor on his accession and to endeavour to arrange with him some basis of joint action in the East. The mission, and still more the agent to whom it was entrusted, marked how greatly, in Canning's view, the situation in Europe had altered. "The Duke of Wellington," he wrote to Lord Granville, "would not have done for any purpose of mine a twelvemonth ago. No more would confidence in Russia. But now—the ultra system being dissolved, by the carrying of every point which they opposed—the elements of that system have become usable for good purposes. I hope to save Greece through the agency of the Russian name upon the fears of Turkey, without a war."

The outcome of Wellington's mission was the signature by Great Britain and Russia, on 4th April, of the Protocol of St. Petersburg, by which England was empowered to offer to the Porte a settlement of the Greek question, based on the terms agreed upon at Perivolakia, Russia promising her co-operation "in any case". By Article III. of the protocol it was agreed that, in the event of

the Ottoman Government rejecting the proffered mediation, the signatory States should take the earliest opportunity, either separately or in common, of establishing a reconciliation on the basis of the protocol.

The "confidential concert" established by this instrument was from the first of a somewhat delicate constitution. Both Wellington and Canning had been puzzled, during the negotiations, by the attitude of the Tsar, divided as he was between hatred of Turkey and conscientious dislike of "rebels". Their remonstrances had not succeeded in preventing the Russian Government from despatching an ultimatum to the Porte on its own account while Wellington was still at St. Petersburg; and, in view of this, the intrusion of fresh demands under the protocol, while the Porte was still considering those already laid before it, increased, instead of diminishing, the risks of war. War, indeed, did not result; for Sultan Mahmoud, though very much in the mood, was not in a position, to fight. On 7th October, by the Convention of Akkermann, the specific grievances of Russia were redressed, and diplomatic relations were once more resumed between Tsar and Sultan. But meanwhile Russia and England had relapsed into a mood of mutual suspicion. Russia commented on the fact that Great Britain seemed in no hurry to give effect to the protocol of 4th April; Great

Britain complained that Russia had tried to force her hand by a premature revelation of its contents to the other Powers. Canning, in fact, wished to keep the protocol in reserve, in case the Porte were finally to reject the separate mediation of England; and Russia began to suspect that his object throughout had been no more than to postpone the evil day of a Russian armed intervention. In July Prince Lieven was instructed to press the British Government as to its intentions, in view of the notorious intention of Ibrahim to depopulate the Morea, and the necessity for taking some action. The response seemed in some sort to justify the Russian suspicions. Wellington denied that the intention to depopulate the Morea had been proved; he declared that the object of the protocol was purely "pacific," aiming at most at an eventual intervention of a concert of the Powers, and that Great Britain had consistently resisted the idea of forcing a mediation upon the Porte. If this was to be the final word of the British Government, the protocol seemed to Russia not worth the paper on which it was written. She had learned, from long experience of orientals, the exact value of "pacific" protests against Ottoman policy.

Before long, however, the situation was once more sensibly modified. Of the other European Powers Austria and Prussia were, indeed, still obdurately averse from any interference in aid of

rebels against legitimate authority; but Charles X. of France at length allowed his religious feelings to overcome his horror of revolution, and declared himself ready to join in any measures for succouring the oppressed Christians of the East. More important still, the Greeks in their despair had at last made a formal appeal to Great Britain for her mediation. Canning now felt that he could consistently and safely take a further step towards the solution of the question. England, in his opinion, could now intervene, because "intervention had been asked for by one of the parties; and did not grow out of the self-constituted right of any Power, or combination of Powers, to dictate to both of the belligerent parties". On 4th September, 1826, then, he addressed a note to the Russian Government in which he declared that "the sentiments of humanity and the interests of commerce" should lead the two Powers to insist on the Sultan's accepting their mediation; that the united force of Great Britain and Russia should be used to persuade the Porte to accept the terms of the Protocol of St. Petersburg; and that, in the event of its refusing to do so, the two Powers should withdraw their representatives from Constantinople, establish consulates in Greece, and perhaps go so far as to recognise the independence of the Morea and the Greek islands. These suggestions the Tsar declared himself in general pre-

pared to accept as a basis of common action. He proposed, however, that, instead of at once breaking off diplomatic relations, an armistice should be insisted on, in order to save the Greeks from destruction, and that, in the event of this being refused, the ambassadors of the Powers should be withdrawn from Constantinople. Prince Lieven was at the same time directed to point out to Canning that the best way of enforcing the armistice was that suggested by himself, namely, to isolate Ibrahim in the Morea by cutting him off from his base of supplies in Egypt. This could be done by a reunion of the fleets of all the Powers sharing in the pacification of Greece.

Early in 1827 conferences were opened at London with the object of securing some sort of working agreement between all the Powers interested in the Eastern question. But their sole effect was once more to emphasise the irreconcilable differences within the Alliance. Austria and Prussia protested against the proposed intervention "to serve revolutionary ends," and withdrew; and France thereupon proposed that the protocol should be converted into a formal treaty. To this Russia agreed, on condition that the ultimate appeal should be to force. "We are invited," wrote Count Nesselrode, "to sanction a principle. We invite to the recognition of its consequences." Canning had already discussed this question with

Baron de Damas during his visit to Paris in October, 1826. At that time he was prepared so far to humour the desire of the French Government for some initiative in the counsels of the concert, as to consent of the protocol being made into a treaty; but when the French Minister proceeded to suggest that its terms should be forced, if necessary, upon the Porte, he had replied that such a proposal, "if adopted, must not be laid down beforehand, but grow out of the measures now in hand". Since this conversation nothing had occurred to change his opinion as to the coercion of Turkey; in reply to Count Nesselrode he objected to making the rejection of the proffered mediation by the Porte a "casus belli"; and it was only after the irreconcilable attitude of the Ottoman Government towards what it denounced as an impertinent interference with its domestic concerns had once more been made plain, that he realised the necessity for using coercive measures, if only to prevent isolated action on the part of Russia. On 6th July, 1827, accordingly, the Protocol of St. Petersburg was converted into the Treaty of London. By this instrument, which Austria and Prussia refused to sign, the three signatory Powers bound themselves to secure the autonomy of Greece under the suzerainty of the Sultan, but without breaking off friendly relations with the Porte. The most immediately important

part of the treaty was the secret article by which it was agreed that an armistice should be proposed to both parties, and that this should be enforced by any means that might "suggest themselves to the High Contracting Parties". In this respect a wide discretion was left to the admirals commanding the allied fleets in Levantine waters ; but, since it was not for a moment supposed that the Greeks would reject the armistice, it was suggested that in general the best way to bring Ibrahim to terms would be by a "pacific" blockade of the coasts of Greece.

The signature of the Treaty of London was Canning's last political act; and he did not live to witness even its immediate results. It may be doubted whether these would have been essentially more welcome to him than they were to his successor, the Duke of Wellington, who had protested against the whole policy of which they were the outcome. The "pacific" blockade culminated rapidly in the destruction of the Ottoman sea-power at Navarino; the Turks, angered by so huge an outrage in time of peace, proclaimed a holy war; and there followed the very invasion of the Ottoman Empire by Russia which it had been the main object of Canning's policy to prevent. It is idle to speculate as to how far Canning would have been able to modify the actual course of events, had he lived. His aim

had been, firstly, to compose the differences between Russia and Turkey, so as to avoid war; secondly, to secure a settlement of the Greek question so as to protect Greece, without weakening the Ottoman Empire. Neither of these objects were, in the long run, attained. The Russian invasion of Turkey ended in the temporary effacement of the Ottoman power as a barrier against Muscovite aggression; and the erection of Greece into an independent kingdom, which followed, was a fresh stage in the break-up of the Turkish Empire, the integrity of which it had been a cardinal article of Canning's creed to maintain.

CHAPTER X

PREMIERSHIP AND DEATH

Split in the Tory Cabinet—The Free Trade party—The "Reciprocity of Duties Act"—Canning's rhymed despatch—Illness of Lord Liverpool—Canning's motion on the Corn Laws—Canning at the head of a Coalition Government—Illness and death.

IT was in the diplomatic battle of wits on the field of European politics that Canning's genius was most conspicuously illustrated; and it was here that he was always most ambitious of gaining distinction. During the years of his tenure of the Foreign Office, then, he had been mainly absorbed in his task of restoring to Great Britain that leading influence in the councils of Europe which he believed to have been compromised by the undue partiality of his predecessor for the system of the "Holy Alliance". How he achieved this task, in the working out of the great problems connected with the Spanish peninsula and the revolt of the Greeks against the Ottoman rule, has been described in the two last chapters. Canning himself had no misgivings as to the result

GEORGE CANNING

From an engraving by Turner after the portrait by Lawrence

of his labours. To the King, afraid lest "the restless desire of self-interest" displayed in the new British policy should lose him his status among the Powers of the continent, he pointed out convincingly that, so far from his policy having produced any such result, it had in reality placed him at the head of Europe instead of at the tail. To a large section of the Tory party, however, of which the Duke of Wellington was the most distinguished representative, the Liberal tendency of Canning's foreign policy was increasingly distasteful; and this heightened the dislike which they already felt for him in consequence of his attitude towards some of the more burning questions at home.

The general attitude of Canning towards the great problems of domestic politics in his day has already been described. To the end it presented the same apparent contradictions and inconsistencies, setting him as it were half-way between the opposing political camps, ready to throw his weight on to the one side or the other, as the needs of the moment dictated. On two important questions only did he remain to the last consistently Tory: in his opposition to parliamentary reform, and to the repeal of the Test Acts, he never wavered. But, while maintaining throughout the sufficiency of the actual Constitution for all the needs of the nation, he was persuaded

that it could be used, and ought to be used, for the purpose of passing "the mildest and most liberal legislation". And to those who had eyes to see and ears to hear the direction which such legislation should take was sufficiently obvious. Man is not, in spite of Aristotle, primarily a political animal; and so long as his belly is full he is not generally greatly concerned with the form of the institutions under which he thrives. Canning saw that the revolutionary agitation in the country was mainly the outcome of intolerable economic conditions; of the artificial dearness of food stuffs, and generally of the antiquated restrictions, inherited from a less expansive age, which everywhere hampered the free development of British trade and industry. The Reformers held that a radical political change was the necessary preliminary to any economic improvement. Canning believed that the unreformed Parliament would do all that was necessary, if it were convinced of the necessity of doing it.

In 1823 Vansittart, whose reckless finance had been largely responsible for the misery of the country, was raised to the peerage as Lord Bexley. His place at the Exchequer was taken by Robinson; and the vacancy in the Presidency of the Board of Trade thus created was filled, at Canning's instance, by his friend Huskisson. This was a fresh infusion of Liberal leaven into the

Government; for, though Huskisson was politically a Tory, he was a man of singularly enlightened economic views, a supporter of free trade—not yet become a party question—and courageous in carrying through his measures in the face of opposition. For a complete policy of free trade, indeed, the country was not yet ripe; but a good deal could be done in the way of removing restrictions here and there, and Canning supported all Huskisson's proposals directed to this end. Of these the most important was the "Reciprocity of Duties Act," introduced by Huskisson on 6th June, 1823. By the terms of the old Navigation Act, passed in Cromwell's time and completed in the days of Charles II., goods from Asia, America and Africa were only allowed to be imported into Great Britain in British vessels, while European produce had to be brought, either in English ships, or in those of the country of origin. This had, of course, led to reprisals and, consequently, to an enormous waste of money and energy by all concerned. The restrictions had been removed in the case of American vessels by the Treaty of Ghent in 1814. Huskisson now proposed to put the ships of British and foreign Powers upon an equal footing, while maintaining the right to place restrictive dues upon the ships of nations which should reject the reciprocal rights thus offered.

A minor outcome of the "Reciprocity of Duties

Act" was perhaps the most famous, as it certainly is the most amusing, of Canning's despatches. In 1826 the Dutch Minister, Mr. Falck, in the course of negotiations growing out of the Act, proposed to Sir Charles Bagot an exceedingly one-sided arrangement for the admission of British ships to Dutch ports, which the British Minister duly forwarded home, with a request for instructions. By return, enclosed in an official envelope, and signed by the Secretary for Foreign Affairs, he received the following verses:—

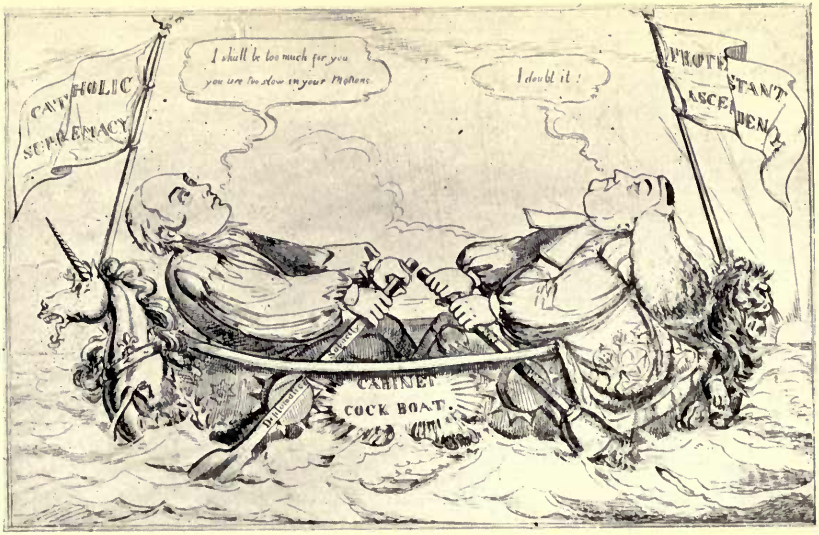
> In matters of commerce the fault of the Dutch
> Is giving too little and asking too much.
> With equal advantage the French are content,
> So we'll clap on Dutch bottoms a twenty per cent.
> Twenty per cent.,
> Twenty per cent.,
> Nous frapperons Falck with twenty per cent.,

which was done, with excellent results.

Huskisson's free trade policy, the modification of the Corn Laws, Catholic emancipation, the gradual abolition of slavery—all of which Canning supported—had violent enemies, not only in the Tory party at large, but in the ranks of the Cabinet itself. On all these questions the Government could reckon on the support of the Whigs, but not on that of its own followers; until Palmerston, himself a member of the Ministry, could declare that the genuine Opposition in Parliament was not facing, but behind, the Treasury bench.

"THE GREAT BATTLE FOR THE CHAMPIONSHIP BETWEEN BLACK GEORGE AND DUBIOUS JACK

(LORD CHANCELLOR ELDON AND CANNING)



THE STRUGGLE

OR A LONG PULL, A STRONG PULL, AND A PULL *ALL 'TOGETHER*

(CANNING AND ELDON)

From a contemporary caricature

By the beginning of 1827, indeed, it was clear that the Government was only held together by the influence and tact of Lord Liverpool; and when, on 17th February, he was seized with an apoplectic fit which compelled him to withdraw from public affairs, it was obvious that a crisis was inevitable.

The illness of Liverpool was, both personally and politically, a severe blow to Canning. They had been friends ever since their college days; and, in spite of differences of opinion—notably on the Catholic question—there had always been preserved between them the confidence born of mutual regard and affection. It was Liverpool's consistent support of him that had alone made Canning's position in the Cabinet tolerable; and with his retirement a crisis in the Government was inevitable. Canning, who was himself suffering from the painful illness which was to prove fatal, took the earliest opportunity of persuading the King to leave the rearrangement of the Government open until all chance of Liverpool's recovery should be past. George IV. was only too willing to postpone the settlement of a troublesome question; and during the interregnum that followed the divisions of opinion within the Cabinet became still more violently accentuated. The climax was reached with the introduction by Canning, on 15th March, of a motion for the relaxation of the Corn

Laws. The measure was, in his opinion, absolutely called for by the breakdown of the existing system, by the accidental working of which "the ports had been shut when the home supply was deficient, and opened when the home market was glutted"; the general result being at once the ruin of the agricultural interest and the starvation of the people. He now proposed a sliding scale of duties on imported corn, so arranged as to maintain the average price at sixty shillings the quarter. The eloquent and closely reasoned speech in which he presented his case to the House of Commons sufficed to overcome the prejudices of the Tory majority, and the motion was triumphantly carried. But when the bill embodying it was sent up to the House of Lords it met with a very different reception. The opposition to it was led by the Duke of Wellington, Canning's colleague in the Cabinet, and under his auspices it was so "knocked about" that Canning preferred to withdraw it.

In momentary anger at conduct so insensate in view of the actual condition of the country, Canning forgot his lifelong belief in the "reason" which he had stoutly maintained to be the ruling characteristic of Parliament; and warned the peers of the danger of hurrying on that struggle between "the people and property" which he saw to be impending. In any case the episode made all question of the preservation of the existing Cabinet

THE RATS AT THE CORN

WELLINGTON AND CANNING'S CORN LAW

From a caricature published July 1, 1827

under a new head, which was the solution desired by the King, impossible, quite apart from the Catholic question, on which opinions were equally sharply divided, and which, in view of the formation of the Catholic Association and the alarming developments in Ireland, equally clamoured for solution.

When it became obvious that Lord Liverpool would never be able to resume the reins of power, Canning suggested to the King that, considering his Majesty's own Protestant prejudices and the general feeling of the constituencies, the interests of the country would be best served by excluding him from the Government and forming a purely anti-Catholic Ministry. The King's religious zeal, however, was not so potent a quantity as his sense of personal importance; and this latter was offended by the attitude of the Tory peers. Wellington, while recommending the re-establishment of a Government committed neither way on the Catholic question, refused point-blank to serve under Canning; and the Duke of Northumberland, claiming his privilege as a peer, had pressed into the royal presence in order to protest against the appointment of Canning, and to threaten to withdraw the support of his following in the event of his being placed at the head of the Government. This was more than the pride of the King could endure; he was personally no longer indisposed towards Canning, who had persuaded him that

his foreign policy, so far from diminishing, had increased his prestige in Europe; and on 10th April he handed him the seals of office. The members of the Tory "cabal" in the Cabinet—Lord Chancellor Eldon, Wellington, Westmorland, Melville, Bathurst, Bexley and Peel—at once resigned. Their places were filled up by accessions from the Whig ranks, on the understanding that the questions of parliamentary reform and of the Test Acts were not to be raised. Canning himself combined the Chancellorship of the Exchequer with the Premiership, handing over the Foreign Office to Lord Dudley. Of the other Ministers the most notable were Huskisson, who resumed his place at the Board of Trade, and Lord Palmerston, who became Secretary at War.

Canning had thus, at last, attained the summit of his ambition; but he was not destined to enjoy it long. What a Ministry combined of such healthy elements would have done for the benefit of the country, had it survived, it is impossible to say. The few weeks of its existence were not sufficient to test its quality. Its most important work was the advancement of the settlement of the Eastern question, which had already been discussed. In home affairs the Corn Amendment Bill was reintroduced, and this time passed through both Houses. Canning, on this occasion, only spoke very shortly to explain that the bill had been

A HEAD FOR THE CABINET

From a caricature published April, 1827

originated and worked out, not by himself, but by Lord Liverpool. On 1st June, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, Canning introduced the budget in the last great speech he was destined to address to the House of Commons. On the 29th he spoke for the last time in Parliament: a few remarks in answer to a question. When, on 2nd July, Parliament was prorogued, Canning was already dying.

His fatal illness was traced to a cold caught while attending the funeral of the Duke of York, the heir to the throne. The duke's death had taken place on 29th January, and he was buried at night in St. George's Chapel at Windsor. By some mismanagement the funeral cortège was two hours late; and the official mourners, Canning among them, were kept standing all this time in a bitterly cold passage, over the damp stones of which not even a mat had been laid. Stapleton tells, as an illustration of Canning's personal kindliness, how he persuaded Lord Eldon, who he saw was suffering from the cold, to stand upon his cocked hat, so as to prevent the damp from the stones striking up through his thin shoes. He himself took no such precaution, with the result that he contracted a severe chill, from the effects of which he never recovered. Until the rising of Parliament, the necessity of attending to business had sustained him, though he was already

suffering much pain; but the immediate compulsion of affairs removed, the indomitable spirit was at last conquered, and he accepted the offer of the Duke of Devonshire to retire for rest and recuperation to his house near Chiswick. Here, on 8th August, in the same room where, a few years before, Fox had died, he breathed his last. His eldest son had predeceased him on 31st March, 1820; his second son, William Pitt, was not destined long to survive him, being drowned at sea on 25th September, 1828. It was reserved for the third son, Charles John, to carry on, as Governor-General of India during the Mutiny and first Viceroy, the tradition of a name which his father had made illustrious.

In the presence of death the voice of criticism, which had raged so bitterly round Canning in life, was hushed, and men of all parties and shades of opinion united in praise of the large qualities of the great Englishman so prematurely lost to his country. In January, 1828, the King gave expression to the sentiment which he now shared with the whole country, by conferring a peerage on Mrs. Canning. The feelings of the people had been more eloquently expressed by the huge crowds that assembled at Westminster on the day of his burial. Looking back, after the lapse of three-quarters of a century, we cannot altogether join in the unmeasured chorus of praise that went

up from his admirers over his grave. That he did a great and necessary work for England is true enough. His career was coincident with the period during which the immemorial Constitution of England was on its trial; when it was yet doubtful whether it would prove elastic enough to expand with the expanding age. His position, half-way between the old and the new, served to break the violence of the impact of the colliding political forces; and the very strenuousness and obvious honesty of his opposition to any change in the constitutional balance made it easier for him to obtain a hearing when, in the unreformed Parliament, he raised his voice in favour of changes which foreshadowed the coming times. Yet what has been said of Metternich seems to be true also of him: that he was less skilful in discerning the direction and force of the great undercurrent of human affairs, than in dealing with those phenomena which from time to time appeared on the surface. His great speeches on Reform, so impressive when delivered, form curious reading now. The "will of the people" has long been expressed in Parliament; yet who will say that Edward VII. is less firmly seated on the throne than George IV.? Or who will affirm that the House of Lords is impotent to stem the violent onrush of democratic legislation? So, too, perhaps in his conduct of those foreign affairs which were his especial

interest and delight. He claimed to have found Great Britain occupying the fifth place in a Confederation of Powers, and to have left her the arbitress of the destinies of Europe. He certainly made the influence of England very effectively felt in the great questions of the hour; but did he see beyond these to the great issues of the future? The Grand Alliance had been established in the interests of peace; Canning proclaimed that the interests of peace would be best served by studying the rights of nationalities. Yet the clamour of nationalities for their rights has been since, and will yet be, the most fruitful cause of bloodshed; and in our own day, as the direct outcome of the principle which Canning championed, we have the nations of Europe weighed down under the crushing burden of an "armed peace" almost as intolerable as war.

Yet in whatever degree we may feel disposed to modify the eulogies poured upon him by his admirers who, living closer to him, were dazzled by his genius, it is impossible to deny that Canning was, in his day and generation, great. His noble presence, his masterful will, his abounding eloquence and wit, marked him out as a ruler of men; and if he was ambitious, his ambition was certainly not that desire "to be the only figure among cyphers" which, according to Bacon, is "the decay of an age". His ambition was, as

he once put it, "to advance through character to power"; he loved a fight and a rival worthy of his steel; and, as Bacon says again, "He that seeketh to be eminent amongst able men, hath a great task, but that is ever good for the public".

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