

of the Congress. Mr. Canning's determination had the effect of preventing the great powers of the Continent engaging in the attack upon the Constitutionalists of Spain. The French armies marched to Madrid, which they occupied on the 24th of May. They overran Spain, they accomplished the release of Ferdinand who had been detained at Cadiz; the Cortes were overturned. Spain entered upon that long night of tyranny and superstition which left her among the feeblest and most degraded of nations. Such was the position of affairs at the close of 1823. At the opening of the session of Parliament on the 3rd of February, 1824, the Royal Speech alluded to the strict neutrality which the king had observed during the war in Spain. With respect to the provinces of America which had declared their separation from Spain, his conduct had been open and consistent, and his opinions frankly avowed to Spain and to other powers. "His Majesty has appointed Consuls to reside at the principal ports and places of those provinces, for the protection of the trade of his subjects. As to any further measures, his Majesty has reserved to himself an unfettered discretion, to be exercised as the circumstances of those countries, and the interests of his own people, may appear to his Majesty to require." On the 4th of March Mr. Canning laid upon the table of the House of Commons a memorandum of a conference between himself and the Prince de Polignac. Mr. Canning said, at this interview in October, 1823, that being convinced that the ancient system of the Colonies could not be restored, the British government could not enter into any stipulations binding itself either to refuse or to delay its recognition of their independence; that the British government had no desire to precipitate that recognition so long as there was any reasonable chance of an accommodation with the mother country by which such a recognition might come first from Spain; "but that it could not wait indefinitely for that result; that it could not consent to make its recognition of the new states dependent upon that of Spain, and that it would consider any foreign interference, by force or by menace, in the dispute between Spain and the colonies, as a motive for recognizing the latter without delay. The lapse of time has shown that Mr. Canning had as great difficulty in the accomplishment of his policy in opposition to the influence exercised in the highest quarter at home, as in the hostility of those powers who had constituted themselves a union for the government of the nations. At the end of November, 1824, lord Sidmouth withdrew from the Cabinet, upon the ground of his inability to reconcile his opinions to that of so many of his colleagues, who advocated the immediate recognition by

his Majesty of the independence of Buenos Ayres. Mr. Charles Williams Wynn wrote to the duke of Buckingham on the 28th of January, 1825, six days before the meeting of Parliament, "There have been steps to revive the discussions of December last, proceeding wholly from *foreign* influence, which, to my mind, manifest a decided wish to break up the government." On the 27th of January, the King had addressed a long letter to lord Liverpool, for the purpose of its being laid before the Cabinet. This Royal manifesto is the language of one who appears, like the Seven Sleepers, to have awakened from a long slumber, and to have spoken in a tongue with which men had ceased to be familiar. "The Liberalism of late adopted by the King's government appears to the King to be a substantial part of that creed which was hailed in the House of Commons in those revolutionary days when it required all the talents and firmness of the late Mr. Pitt to put it down. . . . Can the present government suppose that the King will permit any individuals to force upon him at this time a line of policy of which he so entirely disapproves, and which is in direct opposition to those wise principles that the King's government has, for so many years, supported and uniformly acted upon." The King then asks, Why was the Quadruple Alliance formed? and he answers, For the maintenance of the treaties of Europe, and also for the purpose of controlling the ambition and jealousies of the great allied powers themselves in relation to each other. "The Jacobins of the world, now calling themselves the Liberals, saw the peace of Europe secured by this great measure, and have therefore never ceased to vilify the principle of the Quadruple Alliance. The King desired therefore distinctly to know whether the great principles of policy established by his government in 1814, 1815, and 1818, were or were not to be abandoned. Lord Liverpool, in his answer to the King, stated that so entire an agreement subsisted between his Majesty's servants, as to request his permission to give their answer generally and collectively. He pointed out the divergence of opinion between his Majesty and his allies as to the nature of their engagements for maintaining the peace of Europe, especially in 1815, in 1818, and in 1821. "Whatever difference or shades of difference of opinion may have hitherto existed amongst your Majesty's servants on the subject of Spanish America, they humbly submit now to your Majesty their unanimous opinion, that the measures in progress respecting Spanish America are in no way inconsistent with any engagement between your Majesty and your Allies; that those measures are now irrevocable; and that the faith and honour of the country are

pledged to all their necessary consequences." The King yielded with a tolerable grace. Disappointed as he might be at the unanimous determination of the Cabinet, he saw it was impossible now to accomplish what was his real object—the dismissal of Mr. Canning. The "foreign influence" was undoubtedly what weighed upon the King. Mr. Canning, writing to our Ambassador at Paris, Lord Granville, in March, after using strong terms with regard to Metternich, says, "I have evidence which I entirely believe, of his having been for the last twelvemonths, at least, perhaps longer, at the bottom of an intrigue with the Court here; of which Madame de — was the organ, to change the politics of this government by changing me." In April he returned to the same charge against Metternich, and said that he should like him to understand that a renewal of his intrigues would lead to some such public manifestation of Mr. Canning's knowledge of what had passed as might let the House of Commons and the public into the secret. "I wonder whether he is aware that the private communication of foreign ministers with the King of England is wholly at variance with the spirit, and practice too, of the British Constitution."* The recognition of the South American Republics was confirmed by the declaration in the King's Speech on opening the Session of Parliament on the 3rd of February, 1825. The firm attitude of the Cabinet had produced the consent of the King that the following passage should represent his opinions:—"In conformity with the declarations which have been repeatedly made by his Majesty, his Majesty has taken measures for confirming by treaties the commercial relations already subsisting between this kingdom and those countries of America which appear to have established their separation from Spain." In the debate upon the Address Mr. Canning alluded to the speech of Mr. Brougham upon the subject of South America. The honourable and learned gentleman admitted that much had been done to which he could not object, but he suggested that things might have been better, especially as to time. "I differ from him essentially; for if I pique myself on anything in this affair it is the time. That, at some time or other, states which had separated themselves from the mother country should or should not be admitted to the rank of independent nations, is a proposition to which no possible dissent could be given. The whole question was one of time and mode. There were two modes: one a reckless and headlong course, by which we might have reached our object at once, but at the expense of drawing upon us

* This very curious correspondence is given in chap. xxv. of Stapleton's "George Canning and his Times."

consequences not lightly to be estimated; the other was more strictly guarded in point of principle; so that, while we pursued our own interest, we took care to give no just cause of offence to other powers." It is important to bear in mind this very clear statement of the general principle that the precise time for the recognition of States throwing off their allegiance is to be determined by circumstances of which a neutral State is the best judge. The explanation which Mr. Canning proceeded to give of the circumstances of the South American Republics at the time of the recognition by Great Britain is equally important, as showing that the claim for recognition depends upon the power of the separating State to maintain and defend itself. Mr. Canning briefly and clearly explained the actual position of the three States with which the British government had to deal, namely, Buenos Ayres, Columbia,* and Mexico. "Long ago the contest between Buenos Ayres and the mother country had ceased. Buenos Ayres comprised thirteen or fourteen small and separate states, which were not till very lately collected into any federal union. Would it not have been an absurdity to have treated with a power which was incapable of answering for the conduct of the communities of which it was composed? So soon as it was known that a consolidation had taken place the treaty with Buenos Ayres was signed. As to Columbia, as late as 1822, the last of the Spanish forces were sent away from Porto Cabello, which was, up till that time, held for the King of Spain. It was only since that time that Columbia could have been admitted as a State of separate existence. Some time after that, however, Columbia chose to risk her whole force, and a great part of her treasure, in a distant war with Spain in Peru. Had that enterprise proved disastrous, the expedition would have returned with the troops to re-establish the royal authority. The danger was now at end. The case of Mexico was still more striking. Not nine months ago, an adventurer who had wielded the sceptre of Mexico left these shores to return thither and re-possess his abdicated throne. Was that a moment at which this country ought to have interfered to decide, by recognition, the government for Mexico? The failure of the attempt of that adventurer afforded the opportunity for recognition; and the instant the failure was known the decision of the British Cabinet was taken." †

During the progress of the deliberations of the British Cabinet

* On December 17th, 1819, in a general Convention of Venezuela and Granada, the two States were united under the name of the Republic of Columbia, of which Bolivar was President. In 1832 this republic was divided into three states.

† Hansard, vol. xii. col. 78.

on the subject of the South American Republics, Mr. Rush, the Minister of the United States, was addressed by Mr. Canning, with a view that the two governments should come to an understanding, and join in a concurrent declaration as to the policy to be pursued by them. Mr. Rush, in a despatch to President Monroe, on the 23rd of August, 1823, says:—"The tone of earnestness in Mr. Canning's note naturally starts the inference that the British Cabinet cannot be without its serious apprehensions that ambitious enterprises are meditated against the independence of the new Spanish-American States, whether by France alone, or in conjunction with the Continental powers, I cannot now say on any authentic grounds."* It would seem that the President having made a communication of this despatch to his celebrated predecessor, it was understood by Mr. Jefferson as a proposition by Mr. Canning, that Great Britain should unite with America in an armed resistance to the possible attempt of the Allied Powers to intrench upon the independence of the infant republics. Mr. Jefferson considered this as the most momentous question that had been ever offered to his contemplation since that of their own independence. The venerable ex-president appears at once to have thrown aside the prejudices against Great Britain which had sometimes marked his official career. "Great Britain is the nation that can do us the most harm of any one, or all, on earth; and with her on our side, we need not fear the old world. With her then, we should most sedulously cherish a cordial friendship; and nothing would tend more to knit our affections than to be fighting once more, side by side, in the same cause."†

We may here mention that during the residence of Mr. Rush at the Court of London, he entered upon several most important discussions—in 1818, with Lord Londonderry, in 1824 with Mr. Canning,—upon questions of former controversy, and of possible future differences that might arise, between Great Britain and the United States. The most pressing question was with reference to the American claim for a boundary, which would have given the United States Vancouver's Island and the Columbia river. The settlement of this question stood over, the proposal of each negotiator for a modified settlement being rejected by the other. This was the Oregon question, which was not finally settled till 1846, when, in the strong desire for peace, much more was conceded than Mr. Canning consented to admit as the right of the United States. The maritime questions upon which the two

* Rush's "Residence at the Court of London," Second Series, pp. 29—39.
† See Tucker's "Life of Jefferson," vol. ii. p. 515.

countries had gone to war in 1812, which included the relations of neutral and belligerent powers, were declined by the American plenipotentiary to be gone into without the question of impressment being considered, which matter the British plenipotentiaries refused to admit into discussion. Mr. Rush maintained the same principles which he maintained in 1818: "Great Britain claims the right of searching the vessels of other countries on the high seas for her seamen, and here begins the cause of complaint. For, how can the claim ever be enforced consistently with what is due to other nations? Let the steps by which the enforcement proceeds, be attended to. A British frigate in time of war meets an American merchant vessel at sea, boards her, and under terror of her guns, takes out one of the crew. The boarding lieutenant asserts, and let it be admitted, believes, the man to be a Briton. By this proceeding, the rules observed in deciding upon any other fact where individual or national rights are at stake are overlooked. The lieutenant is accuser and judge. He decides upon his own view instantly. The impressed man is forced into the frigate's boat, and the case ends. There is no appeal, no trial of any kind."* Thus strongly did the minister of the United States remonstrate in 1818, against the difficulty and danger of entrusting such an authority to the discretion and humanity of an irresponsible naval officer. In 1824, Mr. Rush put the argument with equal force, that "the assumption of a right of search *for men*,† whether as a right direct or incidental, was denied by the United States to have the least sanction in public law. The bare claim was affronting to the United States in the dearest attributes of their national sovereignty." The right of search was not denied by the American Plenipotentiary, but he maintained that "the doctrine of perpetual allegiance" was but as "a municipal rule, to be executed at home—not upon the high seas, and on board the vessels of a sovereign and independent state."‡

In the remarkable letter of the King to his Cabinet which we have just quoted, his Majesty imputed to "the late policy of Great Britain" a "restless desire of self-interest." This was an allusion to the almost universal demand of the mercantile community for the establishment of commercial relations with the new States of South America by treaties of amity and commerce. In point of fact, the ultimate form of recognition consisted in the negotiation and adoption of such treaties. The policy of the British Govern-

* Rush's "Residence at the Court of London," First Series, pp. 200—1.
† The *italics* are used by Mr. Rush.
‡ Rush's "Residence at the Court of London," Second Series, p. 244.

ment was no doubt in some degree determined by the general wish of the mercantile community; but Mr. Canning invariably put the recognition of the South American States upon higher ground: "If France occupied Spain, 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 paramount object of separating the policy of England from any subservience to the absolutism of the Continent was accomplished. It was accomplished without war. But when, a year later, the adoption by Portugal, of a constitutional government was an offence to the Spanish despot, and he sent an army into Portugal to make the one rule of irresponsible power prevail throughout the Peninsula, Mr. Canning took the attitude of a great War Minister, and by that attitude prevented a war. On the 11th of December, 1826, a message was presented to the House of Commons, stating that his Majesty had received an earnest application from the Princess Regent of Portugal, claiming, in virtue of the ancient obligations of alliance and amity subsisting between Great Britain and Portugal, his Majesty's aid against a hostile aggression from Spain. On the next day, Tuesday, December 12th, Mr. Canning moved an Address, in answer to the Royal Message, in a speech which was declared to have been "an epoch in a man's life to have heard him." In his most eloquent periods there was nothing more truly eloquent than his brief statement of the manner in which the government had received the news of the Spanish aggression. The first intimation of the event was a demand on the 3rd from the Portuguese ambassador for assistance. The government desired to obtain official and precise intelligence of facts on which to found an application to Parliament. "It was only on Friday night that this precise information arrived. On Saturday his Majesty's confidential servants came to a decision. On Sunday that decision received the sanction of his Majesty. On Monday it was communicated to both Houses of Parliament; and this day, Sir, at the hour in which I have the honour of addressing you, the troops are on their march for embarkation." † Mr. Canning concluded his magnificent speech with these words:—"We go to plant the standard of England on the well-known heights of Lisbon. Where that standard is planted foreign dominion shall not come." The British troops were in the

* Hansard, vol. xvi. col. 397.

† *Ibid.*, col. 367.

Tagus in less than a fortnight after these words were spoken. Not a shot was fired. The Spanish troops retired from the Portuguese frontier. The British armament returned home. It had accomplished what Mr. Canning proposed to accomplish: "Let us fly to the aid of Portugal, by whomsoever attacked, because it is our duty to do so; and let us cease our interference where that duty ends." *

In carrying forward this rapid view of the foreign administration of the country during the four years since the accession of Mr. Canning to office, we have necessarily passed over some points of political importance to which we must advert in a future chapter. But as the foreign relations of the country received a marked change during this period, an equal change was wrought upon its commercial policy during the same period—a change that may therefore properly be regarded as forming part of the same system of taking a broader and more comprehensive view of human affairs than was agreeable to those who thought that "all advances towards improvement are retrogradations towards Jacobinism."

In January, 1823, Mr. Huskisson became President of the Board of Trade. He was held to be a political adventurer, and it was not till 1825 that his great talents and vast financial and commercial knowledge gave him a seat in the Cabinet. Liverpool, in 1823, had not hesitated to accept in Mr. Huskisson, as its representative, a second political adventurer. In 1816 Mr. Canning had told his constituents that he pleaded guilty to the heavy charge that had been made against him that he was an adventurer. "A representative of the people, I am one of the people, and I present myself to those who choose me, only with the claims of character, be they what they may, unaccredited by patrician patronage." The talent and knowledge of Mr. Huskisson soon rendered him the highest official authority in his own walk, in spite of lord Eldon's dislike of this colleague and his principles, "looking to the whole history of this gentleman." † In the Session of 1823 Mr. Huskisson developed a broader system of commercial policy than any previous government had dared to propose, in opposition to the prejudices of generations—to the belief that the prosperity of the commerce and manufactures of Great Britain rested upon the exclusive employment of her own shipping, upon prohibitory duties, upon restrictive duties almost amounting to prohibition, and upon the Balance of Trade. Mr. Wallace and Mr. Robinson had taken some steps towards commercial freedom, but Mr. Hus-

* Hansard, vol. xvi. col. 369.

† Twiss, "Life of Eldon," vol. ii. p. 468.

kisson, by rapid strides, advanced towards the completion of a healthier system than had as yet prevailed in the world. In 1823 he carried through Parliament a measure known as the Reciprocity of Duties Bill, the object of which was that Duties and Drawbacks should be imposed and allowed on all goods equally, whether imported or exported in British or in foreign vessels; but reserving the power of continuing the existing restrictions with respect to those countries which should decline to act upon a system of reciprocity. The Bill was passed on the 4th of July. On that occasion Mr. Stuart Wortley made a remark which we may now regard somewhat as a prophecy:—"So many impolitic restrictions called protections being removed from the trade and shipping, it would be impossible to retain, for any considerable time, the protection given to agricultural produce."*

The measure of 1823, which struck a heavy blow at the old navigation laws, provoked little opposition compared with the clamour against the proposition of Mr. Huskisson, on the 5th of March, 1824, that the prohibitions on the importation of silk manufactures should cease on the 5th of July, 1826; that the duties on raw silk should be largely reduced; and those on thrown silk reduced one half. We all now know the value of the great argument which Mr. Huskisson employed:—"The system of prohibitory duties, which has been maintained with respect to the silk trade, has had the effect—to the shame of England be it spoken—of leaving us far behind our neighbours in this branch of industry. We have witnessed that chilling and benumbing effect which is always sure to be felt when no genius is called into action, and when we are rendered indifferent to exertion by the indolent security of a prohibitory system. I have not the slightest doubt that if the same system had been continued with respect to the cotton manufacture, it would at this moment be as subordinate in amount to the woollen as it is junior in its introduction into this country."†

It is unnecessary for us to pursue this subject beyond the point of showing the beginnings of that great system of Free Trade which has raised this country to a height of prosperity which could scarcely have been contemplated by the most enthusiastic advocates of a liberal commercial policy in the time of Mr. Huskisson. In his own day he had to endure an amount of opprobrium somewhat in excess of that which usually attaches to all reformers. About six months before his measures with regard to the import of foreign silks were to come into operation, Mr. Baring, on presenting a petition from Taunton against the introduction of French

* Hansard, vol. ix. col. 1439.

† "Huskisson's Speeches," vol. ii. p. 249.

silks, expressed a hope that the subject would undergo discussion at an early period, seeing that hundreds and thousands of individuals anticipated ruin and starvation from the late regulations. The discussion was brought on upon a motion for a Select Committee by Mr. Ellice, the member for Coventry. In seconding the motion, Mr. John Williams declared that if the authors of this measure were prepared to make the sacrifice of the existence of half a million of persons in support of an abstract theory, the strength of their resolution would only prove the quality of their hearts. "A perfect metaphysician, as Mr. Burke had observed, exceeded the devil in point of malignity and contempt for the welfare of mankind." Mr. Huskisson most triumphantly vindicated his motives, and asserted his confidence that the power and resources of the country had been increased by those measures of commercial policy which it had fallen to his lot to submit to Parliament. Mr. Canning, on this occasion, came to the defence of his friend, in affirming that the doctrine and spirit which animated those who now persecuted him was the same which had embittered the life of Turgot, and consigned Galileo to the dungeons of the Inquisition—a doctrine and a spirit which had at all times been at work to stay public advancement, and to roll back the tide of civilization. Very noble and impressive was one part of Mr. Canning's speech:—"Sir, I consider it to be the duty of a British statesman, in internal as well as external affairs, to hold a middle course between extremes; avoiding alike extravagances of despotism, or the licentiousness of unbridled freedom; reconciling power with liberty: not adopting hasty or ill-advised experiments, or pursuing any airy and unsubstantial theories; but not rejecting, nevertheless, the application of sound and wholesome knowledge to practical affairs, and pressing, with sobriety and caution, into the service of his country any generous and liberal principles, whose excess, indeed, may be dangerous, but whose foundation is in truth. This, sir, in my mind, is the true conduct of a British statesman; but they who resist indiscriminately all improvement as innovation may find themselves compelled at last to submit to innovations although they are not improvements."*

A distinguished statesman and writer of France has thus described the most important effect of Mr. Canning's foreign policy: "By his speeches, by his measures, in recognizing the republics of Spanish America, and in protesting boldly, though merely by word, against the entrance of the French into Spain, he soon effected a

* Hansard, vol. xiv. cols. 854—55.

change (sooner perhaps than he would have been inclined to do if he had not found it necessary), in the foreign policy of England, and transferred her from the camp of resistance and of European order into the camp of progress and liberty." * This was the all-sufficing benefit which Mr. Canning conferred upon his country. Once fairly severed from the principles and acts of the great Continental powers, and embarked upon her own course of "progress and liberty," the ultimate hopes of sanguine politicians might still be very far from immediate realization. The great problem of the union of freedom with order might be no nearer a solution in the year 1860 than in the year 1790. The "war of opinion" might have its vicissitudes of anarchy and of despotism. It might eventually seem to have been a mere flourish of eloquence, when the great orator, with "an attitude so majestic that he seemed actually to have increased in stature," exclaimed, "I called the New World into existence to redress the balance of the Old." The representative governments of Europe which had arisen out of the dust and ashes of Napoleon's tyranny might be again trodden down by other despots. The new republics of America might for years be torn to pieces by internal commotions, and their second condition might be even worse than their first. The proud confidence of the founder and upholder of the democratic constitution of the United States might be proved fallacious, in an exhibition of arrogance as offensive as that of absolute rulers; whilst his belief that men enjoying in ease and security the full fruits of their industry would follow their own reason as their guide, † might some day be held as visionary, when the action of the supreme government should be dictated by the passions of the multitude. Yet for all this we may mistrust the partisan assuming the office of the historian, when we learn that the experience of the world since the year 1819, "which was the turning-point in our policy, both foreign and domestic," has "diffused a very general doubt amongst thoughtful men, whether the whole representative system is not a delusion;" and are told that "the ruin of industry, and the destruction of property, effected in Great Britain, since the manufacturing school obtained the ascendancy in Parliament, much exceeds anything recorded in the history of pacific legislation." ‡ To the restoration of a convertible paper-currency, advocated by Mr. Horner and finally carried by Peel; to the retirement of England from the Quadruple Alliance

* Guizot, "Memoirs of Sir Robert Peel," p. 24.

† See Jefferson's Letter to Judge Johnson, in his "Works;" and in Tucker's "Life," vol. ii. p. 506.

‡ Alison, "History of Europe from the Fall of Napoleon," vol. i. p. 54 and p. 56, 18.

and the recognition of South American republics accomplished by Canning; to the removal of commercial restrictions and prohibitions effected by Huskisson; to these causes the ghosts of ultra-Toryism that still walk the earth and will not be laid, attribute what they deem the evils which have fallen upon their country in the peaceful revolutions of the reigns of William the Fourth and Victoria. If such were the causes of that vital change in the condition of England, which enables us with an honest exultation to contrast the Present with the Past, doubly blessed were the partial successes of those eminent statesmen. Some thoughtful man of their day might have anticipated the sentiment of a later poet:—

"Progress is
The law of life—man's self is not yet man!
Nor shall I deem his object served, his end
Attained, his genuine strength put fairly forth,
While only here and there a star dispels
The darkness, here and there a towering mind
O'erlooks its prostrate fellows." *

* Browning.