

In 1808, the time Mr. Adair entered upon his mission, Europe was in a most confused and intricate political situation, Napoleon being on the scene of action. England was at war not only with France, but in a sense, with the countries under French influence. She had been in conflict with Turkey, not on account of British grievances, but for those of Russia. Later in the same year she found herself in discord with Russia herself. Such were the kaleidoscopic changes and counter-changes of the time. The aim of Mr. Adair's mission was to arrange a peace with Turkey, and the negotiations for the consummation of this object afforded young Canning his first lessons in the vexatious and procrastinating diplomacy of the Turks. The French, on their part, brought every possible influence to bear upon the Porte, to deter her from acceding to England's propositions. The desired result, was, however, at last accomplished, and the "Treaty of the Dardanelles" was signed in January, 1809.

On the departure of Mr. Adair, in 1810, Mr. Canning, in his 24th year, was placed in the responsible position of minister-plenipotentiary at the Sublime Porte. The time was at hand for him to enter upon his true career in a contest of high importance. Napoleon was pressing on in deep-laid schemes for Eastern dominion. His aim was nothing less than the spoliation of the Ottoman Empire. To withstand, in battle, this man of prestige and might, in his grasping and selfish ambitions, was the work set before the youthful minister. Far from England, with no one in Constantinople on whom he could rely for advice, alone he entered upon the task. A mysterious silence rested upon the office of the Foreign Secretary, in London. "The fact seems incredible," says Canning's biographer, "nevertheless it is true, that not a word of political instructions did he receive during these two years in which he (at this time) represented England at the Porte." This was the school in which he was trained in self-reliance, and in which were developed his rare diplomatic abilities. Most keenly, however, did he feel his isolation and responsibility. Oft and oft did he besiege the Foreign Office for instructions, but for some unexplained cause the silence on the subject of his repeated dispatches remained unbroken.

The "Treaty of Bucharest" effecting a peace between Russia and the Porte, signed in 1812, was the outcome of these labors. By means of this, the Russian army of the Danube was released and enabled to oppose the French. The Duke of Wellington afterwards wrote, in terms of extreme laudation, of the value of the work that had thus been done, rating it even as "the most important service that ever fell to the lot of an individual to perform." Thus early in life was he providentially the agent in accomplishing great results, and his writings indicate his appreciation of the deep moral responsibility resting upon him. There is something pathetic in the stripping, alone, without