

THE MONROE DOCTRINE

ITS BRITISH ORIGIN AND AMERICAN DEVELOPMENT

George Canning, born 11th April, 1770, was contemporary with Fox, the younger Pitt, Castlereagh, Sheridan, Huskisson, Erskine and Burke, and it required a strong light to shine distinctly in such a galaxy. He first took a seat in the British House of Commons in 1793, in the twenty-third year of his age. Canning's name is said to have been derived from the original family name of Bishop Canninges in Wales.

His father was a literary man, with a gift of eloquence; his mother was a lady of talents who for a time followed the stage as her profession, so the future prime minister came honestly by his varied mental powers.

He was educated at Eton and Oxford, and of scholarly attainments. He used his poetic skill sometimes in satire, but generally for amusement.

While Mr. Falck represented the Dutch Government, Sir Charles Bagot, British Ambassador at the Hague, was, in 1826, urging that Holland adopt a more reasonable spirit in her tariff, when he received from Mr. Canning, then Prime Minister, a despatch in cipher. It was short and seemed urgent, but to his amazement he found it was rendered thus:

"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.'"

Canning became Minister for Foreign Affairs in 1801. His system of foreign policy resolved itself into this principle of action, that "England should hold the balance, not only between contending nations, but between conflicting principles; that, in order to prevent things from going to extremities, she should keep a distinct middle ground, staying the plague both ways." The measure adopted by Canning, providing generally for non-interference and fair play, was opposed by Lord Castlereagh and Lord Eldon, but Mexico, Colombia, Buenos Ayres and other Spanish-American colonies, were sustained by Canning's bold front. "In the result," as Sir F. Pollock says, "England recognized the Spanish-American States in the modest but effective way of making commercial treaties with them. Spain grumbled, the Holy Alliance protested, but Canning paid no attention to either."

He said in the House of Commons, "I called the New World into existence to redress the balance of the old."

When the Union between England and Ireland was brought about, and Pitt could not induce King George to agree to Catholic emancipation, which he argued should follow the Union, he resigned office, and Canning went out with him, in 1801. His most famous lyric was now written, called "The Pilot that weathered the storm," the pilot being Pitt.

Canning contended for the repeal of the corn laws and did much in unravelling the tangle of British foreign relations. When he died, on the 8th of August, 1827, he was laid beside Pitt in Westminster Abbey, and Britain mourned for a talented and