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THE FIRST LORD LANSDOWNE

A SOLEMN WARNING AGAINST A PREMATURE AND DISASTROUS PEACE

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IT is one of the curious coincidences of history that Lord Lansdowne, who is being censured for his eagerness to accept an inglorious peace with the Germans, is the direct descendant of the statesman who is responsible for the unfavourable terms of the peace made in 1783 between Great Britain and the United States. This was Lord Shelburne, who became the first Marquis of Lansdowne. The present Marquis is his great-grandson. The marquissate was conferred upon Shelburne for his services in arranging the treaty. This mark of favour is not to be regarded as proof that either the monarch or the nation was satisfied with his achievement. Far from it. George III., in a letter to Lord North, uttered his famous lament that he hoped posterity would not lay at his door the downfall of "this once respectable empire", while the principal public men of the time were of one

mind in believing that "the sun of England's glory had set forever". Shelburne's reward was a form of polite dismissal. He was never afterwards employed in state affairs, although he lived on for more than twenty years. The British Empire did not, as so many feared, sink into insignificance, and soon regained its commanding place in the world. But the error of the first Lord Lansdowne brought many evils in its train, because the injustice of the peace kept alive misunderstandings, and created fresh ones, between two countries which ought to have been as friendly a century ago as they happily are to-day in the face of a common danger.

The useful purpose to be served in recalling the events of 1783 is to illustrate the permanent evils that follow a badly negotiated peace. The Americans, after France came to their aid, fairly won their independence. Whatever comfort we may extract from the causes and the cir-