INTRODUCTION

The period covered by the Documents brought together in this book extends for only 31 months, but it is one of the most important and dramatic in Modern History. The downfall of Napoleon and the reconstruction of Europe which followed the destruction of his Empire has deservedly attracted the attention of posterity, and never more so than to-day at the close of a conflict even more terrible and portentous. Round Napoleon himself a literature has grown which has analysed in the minutest detail every scrap of information which could throw light on his immense and versatile genius. Though not so much attention has been paid to the processes by which he was overthrown, yet in all countries the great upheaval of 1812–1815 has been much studied. No continental victory is more famous in this country than Waterloo, and the British, like the Germans, the Russians or the Spaniards, are apt to claim a special share in bringing about the downfall of the most successful soldier and statesman of modern Europe. History can only make very rough quantitative estimates, and to attempt to apportion the exact share of any one nation in a result that was due to the union of so many different forces is both ludicrous and unsatisfying. Nevertheless it should be both a duty and a pleasure to know something of events by which succeeding generations have been intimately affected, while the principles and methods which were used by British statesmen of a hundred years ago still have much to teach us to-day.

The study of foreign policy is never easy, and it becomes increasingly difficult in a period like that of 1813–15. The history of the Great Alliance of rulers and peoples which finally overthrew the Napoleonic Empire has not yet been fully written. A number of circumstances made it specially difficult to find out exactly what happened. Not only were a large number of different people directly concerned, but during most of this period the Sovereigns and their principal ministers were assembled together in one spot. At a time, therefore, when events were

moving with unexampled rapidity, the most important decisions were often made after hurried interviews between the parties concerned and embodied in mere verbal agreements or promises. No one has a better claim to generalise on the diplomacy of this epoch than Metternich, who has laid down very clearly the special difficulties of the historian in the records which he compiled of his own share in these events :—

"By a coincidence which was not only singular at the time, but without example in the annals of history, the chief personages in the great drama found themselves together in the very same place. The Emperors of Austria and of Russia, the King of Prussia, and their three cabinets, were really never separated. The leader of the English cabinet had also generally been with his colleagues of Austria, Russia, and Prussia. At the Congress of Vienna most of the Princes who now form the German Confederation were also present at the negotiations. Since, therefore, the European potentates and their ministers were in the same place, the forms of diplomatic business had to adapt themselves to circumstances. The most difficult affairs, and the arrangements most complicated in their nature, were, so to speak, negotiated from one room to another; no sending of couriers, no written negotiations, no medium between the Courts: all these things, so necessary in ordinary times, had disappeared. Many a business which under any other circumstances would have required a long time for arrangement was concluded in the course of a forenoon. This state of things had two results: the first and the happiest was the success of the vast undertakings; the second, and it may be lamented, was this, that now the courts concerned are without any written accounts of the course of the most important negotiations." [1]

But Metternich had to confess that these conditions did not apply to all the countries concerned. "While asserting the fact," he added, "that the diplomatic archives of the courts most concerned contain no documents relating to some of the most important negotiations of the years 1813, 1814, and 1815, we must except those of England and France at the time of the Vienna Congress. Lord Castlereagh and the Plenipotentiaries of England and France constantly corresponded with their Governments." This is true, and, as Castlereagh was also with the Allied Sovereigns during the winter campaign of 1814 and the negotiation of the two peaces of Paris in 1814 and 1815, the remarks apply especially to the British Archives. Castlereagh also, unlike Talleyrand, was a member of the Alliance, indeed in a sense its founder, and the accounts which he forwarded to England are the most important record of these events that exists. Unlike those of Talleyrand and Metternich they are composed exclusively of letters, dispatches, and memoranda written at the time, and not of memoirs composed at leisure when causes and motives could be

[1] Metternich Memoirs. English Edition, I., 172.

adduced to suit the historical events. Both Metternich and Talleyrand were concerned to preserve the good opinion of posterity: there is no record that Castlereagh ever worried very much about the verdict of History on his own personality. The documents which he left behind him were intended to serve the purpose of the moment, and there was no attempt to do more than to give to his colleagues an account (sometimes, unfortunately, of a very general character) of the negotiations with which he was concerned, or to transmit to his subordinates the information and instructions which events rendered necessary. Not all his letters and dispatches have come down to us, but in the four or five hundred volumes at the Record Office and in the private collections of the Londonderry and Wellington papers there is a fairly complete account of these momentous years. Wellington himself played a large part in diplomacy, as well as in strategy. His Embassy at Paris was of great importance; he succeeded Castlereagh at the Congress of Vienna and by the time of Napoleon's return from Elba he held a unique position in the council of the Alliance which the events of the Hundred Days were to make even more important. For the years 1814–15, therefore, the dispatches quoted in this book are mainly the correspondence of Castlereagh and Wellington with the British Cabinet and one another.

In the year 1813 British Diplomacy played a less important part. Until the end of the year the dispatches took nearly a month to reach their destination, and it was thus impossible for Castlereagh to keep pace with the rapidly changing situation on the Continent. Nevertheless, the foundation of the Quadruple Alliance was laid in this year and the policy of the subsequent period can scarcely be fully understood without some knowledge of its origin. In the correspondence of Castlereagh with Cathcart, Stewart and Aberdeen, the British Ambassadors to the Russian, Prussian, and Austrian Courts, there is a fairly complete record of the hopes and fears of the British policy, though they were only partially informed of the transactions between the three Continental Powers.

The first necessity in the study of a collection of documents such as is contained in this book is to know the relations that exist between the writers. The position which the Foreign

Minister held in the Cabinet, and especially his relations with the Prime Minister, are of fundamental importance, whatever period of Modern History is being studied. It is also necessary to know how far the Foreign Minister was inclined to trust his subordinates and the character and achievements of each of these are factors in determining the value of the reports for which they are responsible. The student may determine many of these points for himself by an intelligent study of the documents themselves. The commanding position which Castlereagh held in the Cabinet, the very tentative way in which the Prime Minister attempted to influence his work, the enormous responsibility he was prepared to take upon himself at moments of crisis, are clearly indicated on every page of his dispatches. His trust in Wellington and the latter's confidence in him are also easily discerned. The relations of Castlereagh to Alexander, Metternich, Hardenberg, and Talleyrand are also defined by Castlereagh himself in the course of his correspondence. Nevertheless it may be of some assistance to point out some of the circumstances which determine the scope and value of the records from which this selection is made and to indicate the principles and methods on which Castlereagh's policy appears to have been founded.

Castlereagh had been brought into the Perceval Cabinet in March, 1812. He succeeded Wellesley, whose wayward genius had proved to be peculiarly unsuited to the difficulties of the post of Foreign Secretary, and whose energy and ability had both failed him. Liverpool, on his accession to the Premiership in June, 1812, after the assassination of Perceval, undoubtedly preferred Canning, and indeed made a great effort to get him into the Ministry as Foreign Secretary. Castlereagh was prepared to surrender this post, if he kept the lead of the House. But Canning's own vanity and the ill-advised flattery of his friends prevented this combination, and Castlereagh was therefore left with the conduct of Foreign Affairs as well as the lead of the House of Commons. Only two other of his colleagues were commoners and these had neither ability nor reputation. As a result, therefore, Castlereagh almost immediately became the leading member of the Government; and, down to his death in 1822, he was more responsible for its decisions than any other member of it. His influence was consolidated

by the energy and success with which he conducted his own special department and managed the general policy of the Government in the Commons. He was a first-class party manager, and his dignity, good manners, and debating skill gave him an almost complete ascendency over the House. The scurrility of writers like Creevey and the jealousy of rivals like Brougham have perpetuated a tradition that Castlereagh was an almost unintelligible speaker and that his position rested entirely on a corrupt and subservient House of Commons. Nothing could be further from the truth. Though he had none of Canning's power of oratory, yet Castlereagh was a clear and effective speaker, and, as Canning himself has confessed, he was far the abler at an impromptu, however inferior in a set speech. This power of argumentative debate was to serve him in good stead in his round table conferences in these years. He had, moreover, a considerable experience of Foreign Affairs, and Pitt regarded him as one of his most promising pupils. As a member of the Cabinet and Secretary of State for War in 1804–6 he had played an important part in determining Pitt's attitude and, above all, made himself thoroughly conversant with Pitt's ideas on the reconstruction of Europe. His later career as Secretary of State for War had been a chequered one, and marred by the failure of the Walcheren expedition. Nevertheless, he had learnt something of the limitations that strategy lays down for politics, and in that period began his association with Wellington which was to prove of such enormous importance in the succeeding years.

British Foreign policy at this period was determined mainly by Castlereagh himself. He had, indeed, to carry with him a Cabinet which contained, besides the Prime Minister himself, such stalwarts as Eldon and Harrowby, and an energetic War Minister in Bathurst. Foreign Affairs were, however, but little known to most of them and they never obtained a real comprehension of the events and problems of their time. The acquisition of Colonies, the protection of the Sea Power and the " Maritime rights " of their own country were objects which they could understand and had at heart. They had, too, a passionate hatred of Napoleon, which they shared with most of their countrymen. But they were not much concerned with the construction of a new Europe. Foreign policy was therefore left to Liverpool and Bathurst, who

had both held the office of Foreign Minister, and it is to these two that Castlereagh mainly addresses himself. His instructions in 1814 were indeed debated with a full Cabinet, and in the question of the first Restoration of the Bourbons and the policy to be pursued after Waterloo the whole Cabinet appears to have shewn a lively interest. But even so important a point as the ratification of the Treaty of January 3rd, 1815, was decided without a full Cabinet being summoned, and, if Liverpool was in agreement, Castlereagh seems to have been quite sure of his ground. Nor did the Prime Minister generally do more than give advice, leaving for the most part the final decisions to Castlereagh himself. Such a policy was, indeed, almost a necessity. When Parliament was not sitting the Prime Minister was generally at Bath and his colleagues scattered about in their country seats. The exigencies of their offices kept Bathurst and Melville in London, but the others could transact necessary business at a distance; and even Castlereagh himself wrote many of his dispatches from Cray Farm or other country seats following the practice of his time, when a Minister and his private secretaries made their office the place that best suited their personal predilections. When the House was sitting, matters were rather different; but even then, when Castlereagh was on the Continent, the safest course was to profess ignorance or the necessity of delay until the Foreign Minister returned. Only on points like the Slave Trade on which there was an organised body of public opinion of which the Whigs could take advantage, did the Ministry find it necessary to insist on something being done.

The Opposition was, indeed, like all oppositions when the Ministry is conducting, or has just concluded a successful war, pitifully weak. Apart from the hostility of the Prince Regent and the corruption of the Commons, the Whigs were suffering from the fact that the Tories had brought to a triumphant conclusion the most deadly conflict in which the country had ever been engaged. The Opposition had sometimes been unable to resist the temptation of making party capital out of the misfortunes of the previous years, and their ill-omened prophecies could now be used with deadly effect against them. In the final crisis in 1814 they behaved with commendable restraint and the first peace of Paris was welcomed and approved by

them. But during the Congress of Vienna and the Hundred Days, they made an attempt to advocate principles which had been forgotten under the stress of the conflict, with as much success as such efforts usually attain. The people of this country were wildly delighted with a period of victory after twenty years of warfare. They knew little of the details of Foreign policy. Their fierce hatred of the French and especially of "Boney" was now given full play, and their only complaint was that the terms inflicted on France were not half hard enough. To a few educated people the questions of Poland, Saxony or Italy appealed, but information was hard to obtain and matters were decided before they knew much about them. Only on the question of the Slave Trade, which the abundant energy and skilful propaganda of Clarkson, Wilberforce, Macaulay, and others had made a really popular subject, was there any considerable feeling.

Neither his colleagues, the Opposition, nor public opinion, were therefore likely to affect Castlereagh very much. Over almost all his subordinates, also, he had complete control, and, with the all-important exception of Wellington, they had little influence on his policy. Several of the most important of them were not professional diplomatists but relations or friends of the Tory Ministers. Others were soldiers who had the virtues and defects of their profession. In this collection it is three especially whose personalities are of importance since they were accredited to the three other members of the Great Alliance, and in the critical year 1813 Castlereagh could only attempt to put his plans into action with their aid. These three, the Earl of Cathcart, Sir Charles Stewart, and the Earl of Aberdeen, were none of them diplomatists by profession. Cathcart was an eminent soldier who had commanded the British forces at Copenhagen in 1807. He had been attached to the Russian headquarters during the year 1812, and he remained as Ambassador throughout this period. He was a rather stupid man who lacked both insight and energy and never grasped the problems with which he was confronted. Alexander and his ministers found him complacent and ignored him or used him as they chose. Nevertheless his military profession and a decorous exterior made him a favourite of the Tsar and he could sometimes get concessions from Alexander when no one else could approach him. Sir Robert Wilson, a

wonderfully brave and foolish soldier, was also attached to Russian headquarters in 1812 and 1813 in an unofficial position, but Cathcart never trusted him, and with reason, for he was constantly opposing the policy of his Government.

Stewart, Castlereagh's half-brother, was much more energetic and much less discreet than Cathcart. He had been a dashing cavalry leader, but Wellington distrusted his capacity for the more extended command which he desired. Castlereagh therefore gave him the Mission to the Prussian Court in 1813, and he played a big part in all the events of these years, being subsequently Ambassador at Vienna and a Plenipotentiary at the Congress, where his vanity and pomp were a bye-word. Nevertheless, he was generally at the right place at the critical moment, and his zeal and energy, as well as his intimate connection with the Foreign Minister, who had a great affection for him, made him a conspicuous figure in these years. George Jackson, who accompanied him as his principal subordinate, had acted in the same capacity to his brother, F. J. Jackson, in 1806. He was a zealous and well-intentioned official, but had not much influence.

Aberdeen was a man of quite a different stamp and consorted ill with his colleagues. The future Foreign Minister and Premier was then only 29 years of age and had rather reluctantly accepted his diplomatic mission which had been earnestly pressed by Liverpool and Castlereagh on the ward of Pitt. He was a shy and inexperienced man, and it must be confessed fell a victim to Metternich's wiles. His honesty and desire for peace made him an awkward colleague in that age, and perhaps all were as relieved as he certainly was himself when he refused to continue after the first Peace of Paris. The mistakes and rivalries of these three Ambassadors and their laborious and utterly inadequate attempts to carry out Castlereagh's instructions in 1813 furnish the theme of Part I. of this collection. After that they drop out of the picture, for in 1814 and 1815 Castlereagh was himself with the Alliance during most of the time and in his presence his subordinates played no independent part.

More useful to Castlereagh than any of these three was the Earl of Clancarty, Minister at the Hague in 1813–1814 and Castlereagh's principal subordinate at the Congress of Vienna, where he

was left as First Plenipotentiary after the departure of Wellington. Clancarty was a subordinate member of the Ministry and a devoted admirer of Castlereagh. His outlook was a very limited one, but he had industry, self-confidence, and administrative capacity, and played a really important part at the Vienna Congress. He enjoyed the full confidence of his chief and worked throughout this period with unexampled diligence and on the whole with success.

Another personage of very considerable importance in these years was Count Münster, who represented the Prince Regent as ruler of Hanover in all the conferences of the time. His influence on Castlereagh was considerable, since he had a great knowledge of men and events and possessed the full confidence of the Prince Regent. In purely German affairs he determined to a large extent the course of British policy, and his advice undoubtedly carried weight in other matters. But though Castlereagh had to take Hanoverian interests into account, he kept them completely subordinate to British policy and sacrificed them ruthlessly to larger issues. Münster's chief role, indeed, appears to have been to supply information, of which he had always an ample supply, for he was a member of the inner circle of European diplomatists.

Castlereagh had other important subordinates, but as they were stationed at minor Courts their correspondence is not included in this collection. Of these, Sir Henry Wellesley managed with a fine restraint and immense prestige the complicated relations between the British and the Spanish Junta and subsequently the restored Spanish King. Lord William Bentinck, a violent Whig, combined a military and diplomatic command in Sicily, which island he really governed. He was a man of ideas, and these bore little relation to the policy of the Ministry which he was serving. They included the freeing of Italy from the foreigner and the erection of Sicily, where in 1812 a Constitution had been established, into a British protectorate, which was to be a model for the peoples of Europe. Castlereagh had perforce to tolerate these extravagances in 1813 and 1814, but he prevented them from interfering in his own policy which he had inherited from Pitt, namely, to exclude French influence from the Peninsula by substituting Austrian in its stead. Edward Thornton had the difficult task of looking after the ambitious and untrustworthy

Bernadotte, who had hopes of succeeding Napoleon on the throne of France. He was a man of but moderate parts and was fooled by the intriguing Charles Jean in 1814, but it is doubtful whether any one else could have done better. Amongst other Ministers may be mentioned Stratford Canning, British representative in Switzerland, whose affairs he helped to arrange at the Vienna Congress, just then at the threshold of his great career, though he had already concluded the Peace of Bucharest in 1812; his successor at Constantinople, Sir Robert Liston, a weak and feeble minister; Lord Beresford, who practically controlled Portuguese policy, and Sir Charles Stuart, an energetic and capable man who succeeded Wellington at Paris, but whom Castlereagh did not trust very far.

Mention should also be made of Castlereagh's permanent staff, William Hamilton and Edward Cooke, the Under Secretaries of State, the latter accompanying Castlereagh to Vienna and corresponding directly with Liverpool, and the discreet and able private secretary, Joseph Planta, who accompanied his master in most of his journeys.

These were Castlereagh's principal instruments, not a very brilliant, but on the whole a zealous and trustworthy set of men. With the exception of Bentinck and Sir Robert Wilson, Castlereagh could rely on their loyalty, and most of them were Tories like himself. If they threw an immense burden on him personally, his method of work was to rely on himself rather than to delegate affairs to others. Only Wellington, whose services as a diplomatist were invaluable to him, had in any way a policy of his own, and even with him Castlereagh was the dominating mind. The Foreign policy of Great Britain was therefore imagined, inspired, and largely carried out by the Foreign Minister himself.

This almost complete control of Foreign policy was essential to Castlereagh, if he was to meet on anything like equal terms the Sovereigns and statesmen of the Alliance. Of these he had naturally but little knowledge when he took over his charge and his policy in 1813 betrays the fact that he knew little of the men who were controlling events on the Continent. England had been in a sense isolated for many years, and personalities like Metternich and Hardenberg were quite unknown to most of her statesmen. Alexander had, indeed, been the principal founder to the Third

Coalition, but since then the peace of Tilsit had intervened and the suspicions which Pitt had always felt concerning Russia—the main inspiration of the Armed Neutrality—had been inherited by his disciples and especially by Castlereagh. The Austrian Mediation was also viewed with deep distrust in England, and Metternich was regarded as the founder of the Hapsburg connection with Napoleon. The resentment felt at Prussia's policy towards Hanover in 1805–6 was still alive and entered into the relations of these years. Throughout the year 1813, therefore, Castlereagh was dealing at a distance with men whom he had some reason to distrust, and it must be admitted that his Ambassadors were none of them sufficiently able to fathom the motives by which the three great Powers were animated or to prevent agreements being made by which British interests might possibly be gravely compromised. Yet on the whole Castlereagh's policy was one of trust and confidence. He had, as is seen in the dispatches, a plan of welding the Alliance more closely together and constantly urged closer co-operation, more courage in the face of the enemy, and greater exertions on the part of all.

The Armistice, the Conference at Prague, and above all, the "Frankfort Proposals," were none of them relished in London, and British statesmen thought that they had a legitimate grievance in the fact that their Allies neglected to give British commitments to the Spaniards a due place in the propositions which were made to Napoleon at various times. The methods by which Metternich procured Aberdeen's adherence to the Frankfort proposals not only caused grave misgivings to the British Cabinet but also brought the three British Ambassadors to the verge of an open quarrel. Castlereagh found it impossible to obtain a due influence over these events from London, and it was this fact that made the Cabinet send the Foreign Minister himself to the Allied headquarters. During 1814–1815, therefore, Castlereagh carried out his own policy and negotiated in person.

The personal intervention of the Foreign Secretary was of profound importance in Continental politics. By months of close and constant intercourse Castlereagh came to know intimately all the principal Continental personalities and to obtain a knowledge of men and affairs which no correspondence,

however skilfully conducted, could have produced. It gave him a point of view which his colleagues never shared—a wider outlook and a less rigorous insistence on a national policy. The idea of an Alliance (the Alliance which subsequently developed into the " Congress System ") had been adumbrated in the State Paper of 1805 and put forward by Castlereagh in 1813, yet his zeal for some new form of Continental diplomacy and his conviction that only by round table conferences could Continental problems be adequately solved, are undoubtedly mainly a result of his experiences in 1814–15.

It was in this period also that the close personal relations between Castlereagh and Metternich were begun. Metternich's temperament was undoubtedly the most congenial to Castlereagh of all those with whom he had to deal. The Austrian minister stood out as a cool and practical statesman, especially when compared with the vacillating and mysterious Alexander and the sluggish and rapidly ageing Hardenberg. " He is charged with more faults than belong to him," wrote Castlereagh after his first interviews in 1814, " but he has his full share, mixed up, however, with considerable means for carrying forward the machine, more than any other person I have met with at headquarters."[1] The dispatches of 1814, on the other hand, shew how antipathetic to Castlereagh were Alexander's emotional outbursts, and though he was from the first allowed by the Tsar a frankness of statement of which he availed himself on many occasions, yet there was always the difficulty of dealing with a Sovereign in person. Until the visit of the Sovereigns to London in June, 1814, Alexander was, however, far more popular with the Prime Minister (who always disliked Metternich) and the Cabinet than the Austrians. But his mistaken and even ridiculous behaviour during this visit mortally offended the Prince Regent, while his attempts to establish close relations with the Whigs alienated the sympathies of the Tory cabinet. Henceforth Alexander was distrusted, and his attitude at the Congress of Vienna increased these suspicions. This was one reason why Castlereagh found it so hard to win his Cabinet over to his policy in the autumn of 1815, when events made it necessary for him to work with Alexander rather than with Metternich.

In spite of all the inevitable friction between the Allies during

the progress of the reconstruction of Europe, there can be no doubt, however, as to the commanding influence which Castlereagh obtained on the councils of the Alliance. There were, indeed, factors in the situation which gave him an irresistible authority if he cared to exercise it. He was the paymaster of the coalition and the Continental Powers were all of them almost bankrupt. They relied, too, on Great Britain for much *materiel* of war, as well as for the manufactured goods of which they had been deprived so long. In spite of the American War the colonial and maritime supremacy of the British Empire was overwhelming. In the year 1813, moreover, by the victory of Vittoria, Wellington had at last enabled Great Britain to assume a position as a military as well as a naval Power.

These were great advantages. Nevertheless, in 1814, Castlereagh was at the headquarters of a vast army in which were no British troops. The political decisions had to be enforced at the expense of the armies of his Allies, who, in spite of their immense preponderance in numbers, were still daunted by the prestige of Napoleon and the heroism of his handful of young conscripts. Moreover, when Castlereagh arrived on the Continent the Allies were hopelessly at variance. Sovereigns, statesmen, and soldiers were full of suspicion, and though a great and elaborate campaign had been planned, its ends were not defined, and its principles had not been accepted by all the Allied armies. It was Castlereagh who infused energy and purpose into the halting counsels of the Alliance and at last succeeded in obtaining the signature of a common instrument which bound them together to resist French aggression for twenty years. Even as it was, Castlereagh failed to settle the future disposition of the conquered territories before the peace with France was signed, as his instructions and dispatches clearly shew was his intention. At the Congress of Vienna he had therefore once more to take up the rôle of conciliator, and it was his energy and initiative that finally produced the compromises accepted by the Great Powers. After Napoleon's defeat in 1815 Castlereagh had the prestige of Waterloo and the authority of Wellington to aid him, but it was the Foreign Minister's diplomacy that induced the Germans and Austrians, as well as his own Cabinet, to shew moderation at the moment of victory. In spite of many checks and failures the settlement of 1814-15

was, on the whole, the work of Castlereagh more than of any other single person, not only as regards the principles to be applied but in the choice of expedients by which the principles were translated into political acts.

Castlereagh did not invent, but inherited from Pitt, the principles upon which his actions were based. In the first place he had to insist upon the special interests of Great Britain, her maritime and colonial rights. The maritime rights were naturally regarded with almost as much hostility by the Allies and especially by Russia, as by France. The unyielding nature of British statesmen on this point had, however, been demonstrated by the fact that even at the height of the struggle with Napoleon Great Britain had not shrunk from a war with the United States in order to preserve them in their most vigorous and brutal form. It is probable, indeed, that if Castlereagh had entered into office a little earlier he might have avoided this futile and unnecessary struggle, but once engaged, he found it impossible to surrender any of the rights which Britain claimed to exercise as a belligerent Power. Still less, therefore, could the subject be admitted as one liable to be discussed by the European Powers, and, in spite of an ingenious attempt on the part of Napoleon, Castlereagh easily succeeded in maintaining this point of view intact throughout all his negotiations.

On colonial questions Castlereagh was able to shew more moderation. All the French, Dutch, and Danish colonies were in British hands. The power of the British Empire had grown so much during the course of the struggle that there was no great desire to retain these conquests in order to increase possession. But it was claimed that some were necessary to the strategic safety of the British Empire and especially of the route to India. These, among which were included not only Malta, but the Cape, the Cabinet insisted on retaining. The rest were placed at Castlereagh's disposal, and were one of the means by which he exercised his influence in the negotiations between the Allies and France. He endeavoured in fact to use them to obtain the kind of reconstruction which he thought best. Nevertheless, the renunciation of the rich Dutch colonial Empire in the East Indies was a piece of disinterested statesmanship which astounded some contemporaries.

Lastly, as a special British interest Castlereagh had to advocate at every opportunity the abolition of the Slave Trade. This duty gave him more trouble than almost any other, since he had to try and impose it on unwilling and suspicious Allies, as well as on France. It cannot be doubted that it was only the strong and persistent pressure of public opinion in England that made him devote so much time and energy to this subject in the midst of other urgent and pressing claims. Nevertheless he showed a practical wisdom in endeavouring to set up machinery by which abolition might be made into a reality when the principle was obtained, and though Spain and Portugal were not won over completely during this period, the total abolition of the Slave Trade was practically secured.

In all these matters Castlereagh was merely expressing the views of his Cabinet and countrymen. It was in his general attitude towards European problems that he showed his difference from his colleagues. He had himself as deep an interest in the reconstruction of Europe as he had in purely British interests, but it was only with difficulty that he persuaded his ill-informed and insular colleagues to agree with him on these former questions. He did indeed share with them an almost complete unconsciousness of the strength of the national forces which had been called into new life by the French Revolution and the Napoleonic system. The aspirations of Poles, Italians, or Germans left him unmoved. He thought, as almost all the men of action of his time thought, in the terms of the Eighteenth Century. He was, indeed, not unaware that the last struggle against Napoleon was something different from all those that had preceded it. The importance of awakening " national sentiment " was continually stressed by him in his dispatches during the year 1813. But he never encouraged the expression of these sentiments in the new Europe, or he was content at least to subordinate them to strategic exigencies or the claims of Allied dynasties.

His main object was to establish a Balance of Power, or, as he generally phrases it, " a just equilibrium " in Europe. This he announced to his Allies, was his fixed purpose, and to it he was prepared to subordinate all minor points. It was France who had overthrown the Balance of Power, and therefore it was against France that a balance must first be constructed, though Castle-

reagh was also concerned with the growth of the power of Russia. The system which he desired for this purpose he inherited from his master, Pitt. As he confesses, it was on the State Paper of 1805, which he had himself helped to prepare, that he founded his policy. To build up Austria and Prussia once more into powerful States and thus create a strong central Europe was the essence of his statesmanship, as it had been of Pitt's. The dominance of Prussia in North Germany and on the Rhine, and the supremacy of Austria in Italy may be traced to the same source, and it will be seen from the dispatches how much these solutions owed to Castlereagh's consistent and powerful advocacy. There were, of course, differences in detail owing to lapse of years, but it is surprising how many of Pitt's schemes Castlereagh was able to put into practice. Even the creation of the Netherlands can be seen in Pitt's " Barrier," and the placing of the line of fortresses along the Rhine in the hands of the two great German Powers, was partially carried out. The dangers and disadvantages of such a policy are stated in their most convincing form in the speech of Mackintosh, which is given in the Appendix. Nevertheless it may be doubted if any other solution was possible at the time, especially as it combined with security a means of rewarding those Powers to whose exertions the fall of Napoleon was ultimately due. The speech in which Castlereagh defends his policy, if not so eloquent nor idealistic as his opponent's, yet is convincing in its sincerity and common sense.

Nor did Castlereagh's wish to safeguard the peace of Europe stop at the Balance of Power. In Pitt's paper appears the device of a special guarantee of the reconstructed Europe which he adopted from a suggestion made to him by Alexander through Novossiltzov. This also Castlereagh attempted to put into practical shape in these years. The expedient of the special Treaty, by which the Powers guaranteed for twenty years the new order of things against French attack, appears also to have come to him from this source, and it was certainly the basis of the abortive attempt to obtain a special guarantee by all the Powers of the Vienna settlement. If the main result was the Quadruple Alliance which merely guarded against the special dangers from France, that was in itself a great achievement, and the dispatches show how difficult it was to obtain until Castlereagh conducted the negotiation in person.

But even more important was the new system of diplomacy which arose in these years, and of which to the end of his life Castlereagh was the ardent and consistent defender. The period was an especially important one in the development of new diplomatic forms. Many of the old absurdities of diplomatic intercourse had been overthrown by the French Revolution and Napoleon. The statesmen of the Congress of Vienna were no longer hampered by absurd disputes as to precedence and form. The frankness of Alexander and the common sense of Metternich and Castlereagh produced an atmosphere of practical business relations in which new expedients were easily adopted. They developed, for example, a new system of attaching Memoranda to the Protocols or records of their formal conferences which has persisted ever since. But most important of all was the fact that for almost two years the Sovereigns and leading statesmen of the Great Powers were in close personal contact with one another. The coalition only obtained some sort of political and strategic direction by the institution at headquarters of a Supreme Council by which the great questions at issue could be decided. There affairs were discussed in intimate and confidential interviews before they were brought to a formal conference. The same policy was pursued at the Congress of Vienna and thus grew up a system of Diplomacy by Conference, which Castlereagh, who firmly believed in it, desired to make permanent. How different his position was in 1814 and 1815, when he was a member of such a Conference, from that which he held in 1813, when he vainly tried to get his views adopted through the medium of a number of Ambassadors! It was his experience which converted Castlereagh to what has since been called the Congress System. "If the Councils of the Sovereigns had not been brought together," he said in the House in 1816, "if they had been forced to look at their special interests through that cloud of prejudice and uncertainty which must always intervene when events are viewed at a distance . . . he was sure the councils of Europe would have been disturbed to such an extent by doubts and misapprehensions that those great exertions whose successful issue was now before the world, would never have been made." While Alexander's unstable and emotional nature was busy with schemes like the Holy Alliance, Castlereagh was anxious that some per-

manent system of round table conferences should be established, and it was, in fact, due to him that in the revision of the Treaty of Alliance in 1815 such special conferences were made part of the European system. It was thus that the "Congress System" grew up, the precursor of the so-called "Concert of Europe," and in a sense Castlereagh may be considered its founder. The prejudices and ignorance of his countrymen, and the ill-advised attempts in later years of Metternich and Alexander to distort its purpose, prevented him doing more than adumbrate such a scheme. So long, indeed, as it depended on the personalities of one or two statesmen who had special experience and remained without support of public opinion, it was foredoomed to failure. Nevertheless Castlereagh is entitled to the credit of being the first statesman to devise a practical expedient by which international affairs might be regulated by a European Council.

Closely connected with this development is the evolution of the special rights and privileges of the Great Powers which began at this time. The institution of a European Conference made it necessary to determine who should compose it, and as a result it was found that the four Great Powers of the Alliance could alone conveniently share the responsibility, since they alone had the resources necessary to enforce its decisions. The development of European armies as a result of wars of the Revolution and the new methods of conscription and *levées en masse* had, indeed, made so great a difference in power between large and small countries that no other result was possible. But it was only gradually and partially that the fact was recognised, and there was at the outset of 1814 no general consent as to who exactly the Great Powers were. In Castlereagh's Treaty of Alliance, Sweden and possibly Spain were originally intended to have the same rights as the other Powers. It was only when the obligations to be incurred were examined that it became apparent that they could only be assumed by the Four. Thus inevitably these obtained a position which was strengthened by the trend of affairs at the Congress of Vienna. The smaller Powers naturally protested against the privileged position of the great, but their protests were unavailing, since they had no means of enforcing them. Castlereagh's attitude throughout was one of conciliation. He recognised that efficiency could only be obtained by confining the direction of the European Conference to the Great Powers.

At the same time he was anxious that they should aim at influence rather than authority over their smaller neighbours. The subject was, of course, to be one of great importance during the next few years, when the question of the exact rights of the Great Powers in Europe became one of the main causes of the failure of the " Congress System."

Specially interesting is it also to trace Castlereagh's attitude towards the evolution of constitutional liberty in Europe. In this matter he showed himself the most unbending of Tories and did not scruple to use his influence against any concession of popular rights when he could do so without risk of exposure in Parliament. His attitude towards the restoration of the Bourbons in 1814 follows very closely that laid down in Pitt's paper of 1805. He desired the complete overthrow of Napoleon as much as any of his colleagues, but he was doubtful of its expediency. At any rate, he wished most scrupulously to avoid any appearance of forcing the old dynasty on an unwilling France. It must be confessed that he managed that thorny question which threatened to wreck the Alliance in 1814 with much address. The *Charte* was, however, the work of Alexander and Talleyrand, and Castlereagh was as little pleased with it as Metternich himself. Towards the other constitutional experiments in Europe he shewed himself uniformly hostile. Bentinck's wild and doctrinaire policy in Italy did indeed need restraint to prevent it from endangering the Alliance at a critical moment. But Castlereagh, in his zeal for Austrian interests in Italy, did not scruple to support Metternich's policy of preventing liberal ideas from obtaining any recognition at all. His attitude towards the Spanish Cortes betrayed the same dislike of constitutional experiments. Neither this policy nor his very dubious conduct in the negotiations with Murat could be avowed, and he was forced at times into statements which lacked both candour and truth. The new constitutions were admittedly ill adapted to the conditions of the countries in which they had been established, but Castlereagh's hostility appears to have gone beyond the form to the principle. At any rate he was prepared to sacrifice them completely to the diplomatic advantages of the Austrian connection.

Such principles Castlereagh advocated consistently and on the whole with remarkable success during these years. As a British minister he was, of course, in a very strong position diplomatically,

for Great Britain was less exhausted than any continental country. Moreover his Allies for the most part were not directly interested in the special objects of British policy and were perfectly ready to concede them in return for British support. But Castlereagh also obtained an influence over Continental problems which few British statesmen have possessed. His personality was indeed peculiarly suited to the position which he wished to occupy. He had great dignity, charm of manner, and, above all, moral courage. Moreover, his mind was sufficiently agile to adapt his schemes to the shifting circumstances of the moment. He was not an able writer and his dispatches, as this volume reveals, were full of long and involved sentences. Nevertheless, their purpose is generally abundantly clear, and, if they lack grace and point, they marshall the arguments with force and sometimes with very skilful dialectic. Nor was Castlereagh unable to employ irony and sarcasm when the occasion merited it. But on the whole he avoided all such methods. He was as expert at disarming his opponents as moderating the pretensions of his friends, and his aim was always conciliation and compromise. He undoubtedly possessed to a marked degree that indefinable quality of power which is called " personality," which gave his words more weight than they intrinsically possessed. It was thus at the council table and especially at the informal conferences that he excelled rather than in the exchange of notes and memoranda. His manner was sufficiently intimidating without being provocative, and he was able to adapt it to the various personages with whom he came in contact. That he was perhaps too tortuous on occasion, too anxious to obtain a result, whatever the means, sometimes deliberately deceptive in order to accommodate his secret designs to his avowed and actual policy, must be allowed. But it must be remembered that he had to deal with diplomatists as skilful and supple-minded as Metternich and Talleyrand, and he may claim that at any rate they rarely deceived him. Alexander's emotional and vague idealism was also especially repugnant to Castlereagh since it retarded rather than assisted the success of the expedients which his own cautious and intensely practical mind devised for the needs of the time.

It must be remembered also that Castlereagh never obtained the support of an enlightened public opinion for the wisest parts of his policy. His countrymen were not interested in these

problems on which he rightly saw that the peace of the world, and thus their own interests, ultimately depended. The Whigs who championed the principles of nationality and constitutional liberty were unwise and doctrinaire critics when their practical application came to be discussed. As Lord Salisbury pointed out in his essay sixty years ago, if they had had their way, the union of Italy and Germany would have been made harder to attain in subsequent years. Even more did Castlereagh stand alone in his attempt to substitute discussion and agreement for force in International affairs. In this matter he remained in practical isolation in his own country. The liberals and idealists refused to associate themselves with the reactionary statesmen of the restored monarchies. The Tories were content to consider merely the selfish interests of the moment. It was Castlereagh alone who secured a trial of the system of Conferences. In such circumstances he could only lay down the vaguest of formulæ and he had no appeal to any body of public opinion in this country. The system depended merely on his own personal position in the councils of his country and his Allies, and was bound to die with him. His diplomatic skill and ceaseless energy therefore merely availed to construct a new Europe which bore within itself the seeds of its own dissolution.