

MARGINAL NOTES

THE APPEASEMENT OF EUROPE.—History will record that some three years ago a situation of tension arose between Great Britain and Italy which, as time progressed, developed into an attitude of hostility on the part of Italy that might have precipitated war between the two powers. This interruption of their erstwhile friendly relations was due to questions arising under the rules of international law involved in Italy's conquest of Ethiopia, the control of the Mediterranean, and intervention in the Spanish civil war. These, together with certain related questions, constitute the subject-matter of the Anglo-Italian treaty formally executed on the 16th of the present month. The treaty is very generally hailed as a long step towards the cessation of armed strife and a return to sanity in Europe. The effect of this formal restoration of amity between the British and Italian peoples in widening the area of appeasement on the Continent was instantaneous. Premier Daladier lost no time in proposing conversations with Premier Mussolini with a view to the attainment of a settlement between France and Italy of Ethiopian, Mediterranean and Spanish issues along similar lines as those of the Anglo-Italian pact. Furthermore, it is stated in the press at the moment of writing that Prime Minister Chamberlain's move to renew his efforts to promote a better understanding between England and Germany and to secure a four-power pact between Germany, Italy, France and Great Britain for the restoration of international amity in Europe, is meeting with the active co-operation of France and its appeal is not being heard by a deaf ear in Germany. Should such an *entente* become *fait accompli*, it is reasonable to think that concurrently with the date of the execution of a treaty embodying the agreement of the four powers, the recovery of Europe from the effects of the cruel and stupid blunders of the Treaty of Versailles will begin its course.

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THIS ENGLAND.—To reflect upon the foreign policy that England has lately been forced to pursue in order to maintain her position as a world power, is to recognize that the 'splendid isolation' from Continental entanglements which she enjoyed during the greater part of the nineteenth century has passed away, with small hope of return. Indeed this valiant age of isolation may roughly be said to extend from Canning's appointment (in 1822) as Foreign Secretary in Lord Liverpool's ministry

to the retirement of Lord Salisbury from public life and leadership in the year 1902. Taking advantage of the naval achievements of Thomas Cochrane (later known as Lord Dundonald) on behalf of the revolted Spanish Colonies in South America, Canning was able to say to the House of Commons in 1823 that he had "called a New World into existence to redress the balance of the Old". And this was said in defiance of what Spain and France might think or do about it at the time. Concurrently with Britain's acknowledgment of the independence of the Spanish American republics President Monroe proceeded to lay down his famous 'Doctrine' denying to European States the right to acquire new territories on the American continent in addition to what they then held, or to extend their systems of government to any part of America to the prejudice of the peace and safety of the United States. Canning was not immensely pleased with the 'Monroe Doctrine', but, as G. M. Trevelyan puts it, "in Canning's day the questions in dispute with the United States were dormant, and on the question of the hour the two branches of the English-speaking race were at one. It was not, however, President Monroe's 'Doctrine', but the British fleet that prevented France or the Holy Alliance from suppressing the independence of the Spanish colonies". It was the superiority of the British fleet that enabled Lord Salisbury's Conservative ministries to maintain England's policy of 'splendid isolation' in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, and to control her imperial interests without resenting, by hostile act or gesture, the patent unfriendliness of the Continental powers. Reliance upon her sea-power also prompted England to decline to align herself with any of the European groups and alliances having a war-like bearing or significance. But when the present century began to write history it recorded a renaissance of barbarism. It found the world setting up a stage for the enactment of a tragedy unparalleled in the history of civilization. Confronted by a war promoted by a nation superior in arms on land and her rival in sea-power, England realized that her days of isolation were over, and that the hope of preservation both for herself and her overseas empire lay in association with the European States which were attacked by the aggressor nation. England's share in turning the fortunes of war against the aggressor is a matter of history, and history will reveal to future generations the grim irony subsisting in the fact that England is now seeking the co-operation of the erstwhile aggressor nation to prevent the happening of a greater war than the Great War.

**‘Splendid isolation’ is an interesting phrase as applied to a nation. It signifies a course of conduct related primarily to the physical features of the territory wherein the nation is domiciled, and reveals a sense of self-confidence in the ability of the nation to make a distinctive place for itself in the civilized world unassisted by the friendly attitude of other States and unhindered by their enmity. That was the position of Great Britain during the greater portion of the time in which she was engaged in building up her empire, and she was helped to that end by her physical detachment from the Continent and by her control of the seas. Great in English minds are the advantages of living on an island. Only there can a man obey the apostolic admonition to keep himself unspotted from the world. Possibly some such thought was in the mind of Vergil when he wrote,—“*Penitus toto divisos orbe Britannos*”. Ever since the time of the Tudors Englishmen have been insular, differing from the Continental peoples both in character and culture. Novalis summed up the English character in the clever epigram: “*Non seulement l’Angleterre, mais chaque Anglais est une île*”. Heine, who did not like England as a dwelling-place and could speak of her language as “*der Zischlaut des Egoismus*”, gave precedence to the Englishman over the Frenchman and the German as a lover of liberty, arriving at that conclusion after but a short stay in Britain. He said that an Englishman loves Freedom as he loves his lawfully-wedded wife, the Frenchman as he loves his *fiancée*, and the German as he loves his old grand-mother.

Speaking with particular reference to the cultural side of the Englishman, J. T. Merz has said that there is an individual character in English philosophy which entitles it to rank as one of the most important phases in the history of human thought. After quoting Merz as above, Dean Inge remarks: “The ‘individual character’ is well marked in English theology philosophy, and science alike. . . . In Samuel Johnson, Englishmen love and honour a perfect representative of the national character with its sturdy independence, high-minded rectitude, and robust common sense. Equally typical, in their different ways, are Wordsworth, Tennyson and Browning; we cannot imagine any of the three a Frenchman or a German.”

We close our list of witnesses to the insularity of the Englishman in character and culture, with the following pertinent observations by D. C. Somervell in his essay on “Europe Throughout the Ages”: “We have never, it seems, quite made

up our minds whether we are Europeans or not. When we say 'Europe' we include ourselves; when we say 'the Continent' we don't. Any one who, fresh from the study of English history, passes to the study of French or German history, feels that he is reading a different story. Right down to the sixteenth century England was on the edge of the civilized world; she was a receiver rather than a creator of civilization. But what she received she made peculiarly her own. The gifts of the Continent suffered a sea change—a change for the better *we* generally think—when they crossed the channel."

And so while England's 'splendid isolation' from Continental entanglements of a kind appertaining to war has vanished with the coming of the twentieth century, the Englishman himself is still able to possess his soul in aloofness, with all its old concernment about "playing the game" in battle as well as in cricket.

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THE NEW CHANCELLOR.—The elevation of Lord Maugham from the office of Lord of Appeal in Ordinary to that of Lord Chancellor has given much satisfaction to the English Bar. There is a certain resemblance between the professional career of Lord Maugham and that of the late Viscount Cave in that each of them when at the Bar specialized in equity practice, and that both of them in this respect would have satisfied the requirement of former days—not always enforced, it is true—that the Keeper of the Great Seal should come from the Chancery side of the Bar. Then, again each of them held office as Lord of Appeal in Ordinary previous to appointment to the Chancellorship. But there the resemblance ceases. Lord Cave's path of progress to the Woolsack led through the customary stages of distinction at the Bar, Parliamentary membership, and Cabinet rank; while Lord Maugham has taken no part whatever in active politics, and, perforce, lacks Parliamentary experience. Yet at the age of seventy-two he becomes one of the most important members of His Majesty's Government. This is rather a unique happening in the office in modern times. As is well-known, the English policy of uniting executive with judicial functions in the Keeper of the Great Seal has no parallel in the constitution of other modern States. It is inconceivable as a constitutional norm for other countries. It is an indigenous product of "This England". Lord Birkenhead, speaking of the Chancellor's office, says in one of his essays: "Perhaps no one in modern times when

framing a constitution would invent such an official as the Lord Chancellor — if they had no experience of our existing machinery. But 300 years of history, together with the fact that history has been what it is, are the best justification for things being as they are.”

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