

## INVASION OF PORTUGAL.

## MR. CANNING'S SPEECH.

HOUSE OF COMMONS,

DECEMBER 12.

MR. CANNING moved the Order for taking into consideration the Message of his Most Gracious Majesty.—[The Order of the Day was read, when the Right Hon. Secretary spoke to the following effect:—]—Sir,—it is proper before I call upon the House to acknowledge the Message of his Most Gracious Majesty, and reply in terms that will echo the sentiments contained in that Message—sentiments which I confidently anticipate, that I should proceed to state the causes, and the just and clear grounds which rendered this Message imperatively necessary; because his Majesty's Ministers, in recommending any steps that might hazard a war, are bound, in justice to this House and to the Country, to explain the motives of such steps, before they call upon them to second measures which every man must look upon with regret. I assure this House, most sincerely, that hardly any set of men are more convinced than his Majesty's Ministers, and none more than the individual who addresses them, of the vital importance of peace to this country and to Europe.—(Hear hear.) So strongly am I impressed with this sentiment, that I declare there is no question of future advantage—no anticipation of remote danger, that I would not pass over or adjourn, rather than call upon this House to enter into a war; but that I feel that which has been felt in the best times, and by the best Statesmen of this Country—Statesmen that have been supported by Parliament and their Country—that there are two causes which it would be improper and impolitic to compromise or adjourn—national faith and national honour. The question which is now before the House, I am fully convinced, applies to both,—[Hear, hear]; otherwise I should not so confidently anticipate the reply which this House will make to his Majesty's most gracious Message. In order, Sir, to understand clearly the cogitance which Parliament is bound to take of this subject, which has called forth the Message, I will state briefly, before going into the collateral consideration and necessary accompaniments, that it is in a case of law and of fact.—[Hear, hear.] It is quite impossible, after taking the whole case into consideration in all its bearings, for Parliament or the Government to come to any other decision than that this is a question of national law. Of all the different alliances which this country at different periods has entered into with foreign nations, there are none so old or so constant, none so precise in their obligations, or so much interwoven with the most brilliant periods of our history, as the alliance between Great-Britain and Portugal. If we look back to dates, we shall find that this alliance survived the most conflicting events, and is older than the epoch when the House of Braganza mounted the throne, and Portugal became an independent monarchy. From that period up to the present moment the alliance between Great Britain and Portugal had been invariably maintained amidst the most trying difficulties. When the faith of all other nations was shaken, when many nations which had formed leagues with this country disregarded the faith of treaties, and made war on England, Portugal ever remained steady, and shared with us the glory of the brightest annals of our history. It had been occasionally a burden, and we had been repeatedly called upon to shake off a country which, instead of benefiting, only incumbered England,

other considerations of minor importance, always prevented this country from preferring comparative advantage to the honour and glory of remaining the steady friend of an ancient and faithful ally. At various periods treaties of family and alliance have been entered into between this country and Portugal. The latest treaty entered into was when the different Sovereigns assembled at Vienna, and agreed to as the compact of modern Europe, which is now patent law. By this treaty England renewed the former obligations, and became bound to assist Portugal in defending her rights, privileges and independence. The question now was one of public faith. The liberty of our ancient ally has been attacked, and it was left to that House to say whether, according to the terms of that treaty, we were not imperatively called upon to come to her relief. Before, however, I say more on this point, I beg leave to read to the House the third article of that treaty, made at Vienna, between Great Britain and Portugal, on the 22d of January, 1825.—“The Treaty of Rio Janerio, concluded on the 19th of February, 1810, being only temporary, and adapted for the exigencies of the time, the said treaty is hereby declared void in all its parts, without prejudice to that treaty of alliance and friendship, which has so long and so happily subsisted between the high contracting parties, and which is still in full force.” In order the better to understand the application, and the effect of this treaty, the House will permit me to explain some parts of it, and allude to the circumstances which gave rise to it. In 1807, when Bonaparte declared that the House of Braganza had ceased to reign, the King of Portugal, by the advice of this country, was induced to emigrate to Brazil. At that time a secret Convention was entered into between this country and Portugal, in which Great Britain declared that in case of the Court emigrating to Brazil, she never would acknowledge any other dynasty but that of Braganza on the throne of Portugal. This emigration to Brazil, and the measures which were adopted in consequence of it, were resorted to for the sole purpose of rescuing the house of Braganza from the power of France. The secret Convention which had been entered into in 1808, was inserted in the treaty of 1810, when of course it ceased to be secret, and became a part of the law of nations. From that time then, up to the period of the Congress of Vienna, we were under an obligation not to acknowledge any other Sovereign on the Throne of Portugal than a Member of the House of Braganza. But then that obligation was contracted by Great Britain in the contemplation of a forced residence of the Royal Family of Portugal in Brazil. When, however, by a happy termination of the war, the right of returning to their native kingdom was offered to the Royal Family, it was felt by Great Britain that the foregoing obligation ought not to continue. That is to say, we deemed it reasonable so long as the forcible separation of the King from his dominions in Portugal existed, that we should guarantee to him and his Family the right of the possession of the Throne; but the moment His Majesty obtained the re-enjoyment of the Crown, then the ground for the obligation ceased, and the treaty was at an end. Instead of the treaty thus ended, there was substituted an obligation, which I have just read to the House, contained in the treaty of 1810, which was repealed, without prejudice to the ancient treaties of alliance, friendship, and guarantee, so long happily subsisting between the two Crowns, hereby renewed between the two contracting parties, and of full force and effect. I should state, that if there existed

no one of the treaties to which allusion is made in the the paragraph; if they were all, by some convulsion of nature, or some destructive accident, consigned to total oblivion; if there was no appearance whatever of the obligation, so far as it is embodied in these treaties so alluded to, yet it would be impossible for any man to say, that Great Britain was not bound to be the effectual defender of Portugal. But that is not the case. All the preceding treaties, however, exist in the full knowledge of the nation; they are known to Spain; they are known to every nation of the civilized world. They are so numerous, and the result of the whole of them so clear, that it is only necessary to select one or two of them to show the bearing of the whole. The first to which I call the attention of the House is that of 1661, which was concluded on the marriage of Charles II. with the Infanta of Portugal, and which, after reciting the grant of Bombay, Tangiers, and other places, some of which were since taken away, and some still remain to us, proceeded thus:—“And in consideration of the grants and privileges now made over, and which are so much to the benefit of his Majesty the King of Great Britain, His Britannic Majesty professes and declares, with the consent of his Council, that he will hold the interest of Portugal and all its dominions at heart, and will defend the same with all his power by sea and land, even as England itself. That his Majesty will transport to Portugal at his proper costs and charges, two regiments of horse of 500 men each, and two regts. of foot of 2,000 men each.” And then follow the detail of the stipulation, into which it is not necessary to go any further. I next come to the second treaty, that of 1703, which was a tripartite engagement entered into by the States General of Holland, by England and Portugal, and which was contemporaneous with the famous commercial Treaty of Methuen, which ever since has been held to be so binding. The second article of this Treaty of 1703 is the one to which I beg to call the attention of the House. It proceeds as follows:—“And whenever it may happen that the King of France or the King of Spain, either separately or both together, shall make war or give occasion to suspect that they or either of them intend to make war on Portugal, in her European dominions or in her possessions beyond the seas, that then her Majesty the Queen of Britain and their Mightinesses the States General of Holland, shall exert their good offices with either or both of the above powers to persuade them to refrain from war, and observe relations of peace.” “Article 3d.—But if these good offices shall not be successful, and that war shall be made by both or either of the aforesaid Kings, then that the above-mentioned contracting powers shall make war on the King of France, or the King of Spain, or both of them, and that towards that war the States General of Holland and her Majesty the Queen of Great Britain shall supply twelve thousand men, shall arm and pay them, and be obliged to keep up the same force as long as it may be necessary.” Now, Sir, I am aware that with respect to these two treaties it is possible to raise a question of this nature—namely, that the variation of circumstances and changes of time were such as to relax the obligations which they contained. The treaty, it might be said, of 1661, was so loose and prodigal in the wording, it was so unreasonable, so wholly out of nature, that any one country should be expected to defend another, as itself; in short it was altogether of so exaggerated a description, as to be subject to the imputation of being more the effusions of feeling than the result of a deliberate intention to act. Again, with respect to the other treaty,

that of 1708, if the case rested on that alone, a question might be raised whether or not when one of the contracting parties, Holland, had since so totally changed her relations with Portugal, as that this treaty must so far as the latter was concerned, be considered obsolete, whether or not, I say, under such circumstances the obligation on the remaining parties was not void. But without entering into the pleading that applies to those questions, it is sufficient for me that the time for taking such objections was at the period of the Congress at Vienna, when, with your eyes open, in a state of things known to all Europe, and in the face of the whole modern world, you proclaimed that the ancient treaties of alliance, friendship and guarantee, so long subsisting between the Crowns of England and Portugal, were acknowledged by you, and declared to be in full force and effect. But it is not on specific articles, but it is on the spirit and understanding of the whole of the treaties embodied in the Treaty of Vienna; that Portugal has an unquestioned right to look to Great Britain as her ally and defender.—(Hear.) Thus, Sir it is that I state the moral as well as political obligation. Nor am I ashamed to say, for I have a right to say it, that when Portugal in apprehension of the coming storm called on the British Government for assistance, we did not hesitate to acknowledge our obligation to do so, if the *casus fœderis* should arise. Whatever delay occurred in answering the application, it did not proceed, therefore, from any doubt of the necessity we were under to assist Portugal, but from a want of knowing the fact whether or not the proper case had arisen.—[Hear.] In this stage of my statement, I have answered, I think, incidentally, an objection, which I understand has been taken in some quarters, to the conduct of his Majesty's Government, as if any extraordinary delay had taken place. The fact is, that it was not until the 3d of December I received from the Portuguese Ambassador the direct demand for assistance on the part of his Government. The answer then given was, that though rumours had reached us through France and other parts of the Continent, of certain occurrences that took place in Portugal, yet that we had not that accurate information, that precise account of the facts, that would be sufficient to found a communication to Parliament. It was only on Friday last that this authenticated information arrived. On Saturday the decision of Government was taken upon it. On Sunday that decision received the sanction of His Majesty. On Monday it was communicated by a Message to Parliament—and at the hour in which I have the honor to address the House, the troops are on their march to the Portuguese territory.—(Much cheering.) I trust, then, that no unseemly delay is imputable to the Government.—But undoubtedly on the other hand, when this claim, so clear and so obligatory, so binding in its effect, and so spreading in its possible consequences, came before us, it was the duty of his Majesty's Government to give nothing to hearsay; but whilst admitting the full force of the obligation to assist, to take care, at the same time to have a full knowledge of the necessary case having arisen. Let me, in addition to this, state that we, in this country, labour under disadvantages with respect to the proceedings that take place in the extremity of the Portuguese kingdom. We derive our rumours through the medium of Madrid, where information is distorted to answer some partial political purpose. Then, again, we are under the necessity of being indebted to the press of France, or another source of intelligence; and every Gentleman who takes notice of those productions, must know that they disguise, is