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LETTER

OF

LORD WILLIAM RUSSEL

TO HIS FRIEND

Lord Cavendish,

SUPPOSED TO BE

WRITTEN THE NIGHT PREVIOUS TO HIS EXECUTION.

By GEORGE CANNING, Esq.

DOUGLAS :
PRINTED AT THE PHENIX PRESS,
ISLE OF MAN.

1817.

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John W. ...

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TO THE
RIGHT HON. GEORGE CANNING,

REPRESENTATIVE IN PARLIAMENT

FOR THE BOROUGH OF LIVERPOOL,

AND LATE

Ambassador

FROM THE COURT OF ST. JAMES'S,

TO THAT OF HIS

MOST FAITHFUL MAJESTY THE KING OF PORTUGAL,

&c. &c. &c.

THIS RE-PUBLICATION OF THE FOLLOWING

POETICAL EFFUSION,

FROM THE ELOQUENT PEN OF HIS MUCH RESPECTED SIRE,

GEORGE CANNING, ESQ.

Is respectfully dedicated

BY HIS MOST OBEDIENT,

AND VERY HUMBLE SERVANTS,

THE PROPRIETORS OF

The Phœnix Press.

ISLE OF MAN, *March*, 1817.

FOR THE RECORD
1911

MEMORANDUM

TO THE RECORD

The first

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PREFACE.

THE fate of the brave but unfortunate Lord WILLIAM RUSSEL, during the reign of CHARLES the SECOND—the high sense of honour and independence which characterized the conduct of that Nobleman on the occasion which led to his execution—and the undaunted resignation with which he met his ill-fated end, have given a peculiar interest to the pages of *English History* in which the transactions of that period are recorded.

WELL therefore might the subject be selected as a theme for the lively imagination

of **GEORGE CANNING**, Esq. whose plenitude of thought and powers of heroic and pathetic description, appear happily combined in the following **EPISTLE**, supposed to have been written by **LORD WILLIAM RUSSEL** to his bosom friend **LORD CAVENDISH**, on the night previous to his execution.

THOUGH not generally known in the **ISLE OF MAN**, this **POEM** has many admirers in it—to whose importunity the Proprietors of **THE PHOENIX PRESS** have freely yielded, and are now induced to republish it from amongst the beautiful collection of **Mr. SOUTHEY**, for more general circulation.

GEORGE CANNING.

1771.

An Irish Gentleman, father to the Right Honourable
GEORGE CANNING.

*Epistle from Lord William Russel to William Lord Cavendish,
supposed to have been written by Lord Russel, on Friday
night, July 20, 1683, in Newgate.*

Lost to the world, to-morrow doom'd to die,
Still for my country's weal my heart beats high,
Though rattling chains ring peals of horror round,
While Night's black shades augment the savage
 sound,
Midst bolts and bars the active soul is free,
And flies, unfetter'd, CAVENDISH, to thee.

Thou dear companion of my better days,
 When hand in hand we trod the paths of praise ;
 When, leagued with patriots, we maintain'd the
 cause

Of true religion, liberty, and laws,
 Disdaining down the golden stream to glide,
 But bravely stemm'd Corruption's rapid tide ;
 Think not I come to bid thy tears to flow,
 Or melt thy generous soul with tales of woe ;
 No : view me firm, unshaken, undismay'd,
 As when the welcome mandate I obey'd—
 Heavens ! with what pride that moment I recall !
 Who would not wish, so honour'd, thus to fall !
 When England's Genius, hovering o'er, inspired
 Her chosen sons with love of Freedom fired,
 Spite of an abject, servile, pension'd train,
 Minions of Power, and worshippers of Gain,
 To save from Bigotry its destin'd prey,
 And shield three nations from tyrannick sway.

'Twas then my CA'NDISH caught the glorious flame,
 The happy omen of his future fame ;
 Adorn'd by Nature, perfected by Art,
 The clearest head, and warmest, noblest heart,
 His words, deep-sinking in each captiv'd ear,
 Had power to make even Liberty more dear.

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While I, unskill'd in Oratory's lore,
 Whose tongue ne'er speaks but when the heart runs
 o'er,
 In plain blunt phrase my honest thoughts express'd
 Warm from the heart, and to the heart address'd.

Justice prevail'd; yes, Justice, let me say,
 Well poised her scales on that auspicious day.
 The watchful shepherd spies the wolf afar,
 Nor trusts his flock to try the unequal war;
 What though the savage crouch in humble guise,
 And check the fire that flashes from his eyes,
 Should once his barbarous fangs the fold invade,
 Vain were their cries, too late the shepherd's aid,
 Thirsting for blood, he knows not how to spare,
 His jaws distend, his fiery eye-balls glare,
 While ghastly Desolation, stalking round,
 With mangled limbs bestrews the purple ground.

Now, Memory, fail! nor let my mind revolve,
 How England's Peers annull'd the just resolve,
 Against her bosom aim'd a deadly blow,
 And laid at once her great Palladium low!

Degenerate nobles! Yes, by Heaven I swear,
 Had BEDFORD's self appear'd delinquent there,

And join'd, forgetful of his country's claims,
 To thwart the exclusion of the apostate JAMES,
 All filial ties had then been left at large,
 And I myself the first to urge the charge.

Such the fix'd sentiments that rule my soul,
 Time cannot change, nor Tyranny controul ;
 While free, they hung upon my pensive brow,
 Then my chief care, my pride and glory now ;
 Foil'd I submit, nor think the measure hard,
 For conscious Virtue is its own reward.

Vain then is force, and vain each subtile art,
 To wring retraction from my tortur'd heart ;
 There, lie, in marks indelible engraved,
 The means whereby my country must be sav'd ;
 Are to thine eyes those characters unknown ?
 To read my inmost heart, consult thine own ;
 There wilt thou find this sacred truth reveal'd,
 Which shall to-morrow with my blood be seal'd,
 Seek not infirm expedients to explore,
 But banish JAMES, or England is no more.

Friendship her tender offices may spare,
 Nor strive to move the unforgiving pair,
 Hopeless the tyrant's mercy-seat to climb—
 Zeal for my country's freedom is my crime !

Ere that meets pardon, lambs with wolves shall
range,

CHARLES be a saint, and JAMES his nature change.

Press'd by my friends, and RACHEL's fond desires,
(Who can deny what weeping love requires !)
Frailty prevail'd, and for a moment quell'd
Th' indignant pride that in my bosom swell'd ;
I sued—the weak attempt I blush to own—
I sued for mercy, prostrate at the throne.
O! blot the foible out, my noble friend,
With human firmness human feelings blend !
When Love's endearments softest moments seize,
And Love's dear pledges hang upon the knees,
When Nature's strongest ties the soul enthrall,
(Thou canst conceive, for thou hast felt them all !)
Let him resist their prevalence who can ;
He must, indeed, be more or less than man.

Yet let me yield my RACHEL honour due,
The tenderest wife, the noblest heroine too !
Anxious to save her husband's honest name,
Dear was his life, but dearer still his fame !
When suppliant prayers no pardon could obtain,
And, wonderous strange ! ev'n BEDFORD's gold
proved vain.

The informer's part her generous soul abhorr'd,
 Though life preserved had been the sure reward;
 Let impious ESTRICK act such treacherous scenes,
 And shrink from death by such opprobrious means.

O! my lov'd RACHEL! all accomplish'd fair!
 Source of my joy, and soother of my care!
 Whose heavenly virtues, and unfading charms,
 Have bless'd through happy years my peaceful arms.
 Parting with thee into my cup was thrown,
 Its harshest dregs else had not forc'd a groan!—
 But all is o'er—those eyes have gaz'd their last—
 And now the bitterness of death is past.
 BURNET and TILLOTSON, with pious care,
 My fleeting soul for heavenly bliss prepare,
 Wide to my view the glorious realms display,
 Pregnant with joy, and bright with endless day.
 Charm'd, as of old when ISRAEL'S Prophet sung
 Whose words distill'd like manna from his tongue,
 While the great bard sublimest truths explored,
 Each ravish'd hearer wonder'd and adored;
 So rapt, so charm'd, my soul begins to rise,
 Spurns the base earth, and seems to reach the skies.

But when, descending from the sacred theme,
 Of boundless power, and excellence supreme,

They would for man, and his precarious throne,
 Exact obedience, due to Heaven alone,
 Forbid resistance to his worst commands,
 And place God's thunderbolts in mortal hands ;
 The vision sinks to life's contracted span,
 And rising passion speaks me still a man.

What ! shall a tyrant trample on the laws,
 And stop the source whence all his power he draws ?
 His country's rights to foreign foes betray,
 Lavish her wealth, yet stipulate for pay ?
 To shameful falsehood's venal slaves suborn,
 And dare to laugh the virtuous man to scorn ?
 Deride Religion, Justice, Honour, Fame,
 And hardly know of Honesty the name ?
 In Luxury's lap lie screen'd from cares and pains,
 And only toil to forge his subjects chains ?
 And shall he hope the public voice to drown,
 The voice which gave, and can resume his crown !

When Conscience bares her horrors, and the dread
 Of sudden vengeance, bursting o'er his head,
 Wrings his black soul ; when injured nations groan
 And cries of millions shake his tottering throne ;
 Shall flattering churchmen soothe his guilty ears,
 With tortured texts, to calm his growing fears ;

**Exalt his power above the etherial climes,
And call down Heaven to sanctify his crimes !**

O ! impious doctrine !—Servile priests away !
Your PRINCE you poison, and your GOD betray.

Hapless the Monarch, who, in evil hour,
Drinks from your cup the draught of lawless
power !

The magick potion boils within his veins,
And locks each sense in adamantine chains ;
Reason revolts, insatiate thirst ensues,
The wild delirium each fresh draught renews ;
In vain his people urge him to refrain,
His faithful servants supplicate in vain ;
He quaffs at length, impatient of controul,
The bitter dregs that lurk within the bowl.

Zeal your pretence, but wealth and power your aims,
You even could make a SOLOMON of JAMES.
Behold the pedant, throned in awkward state,
Absorb'd in pride, ridiculously great ;
His courtiers seem to tremble at his nod,
His prelates call his voice the voice of GOD ;
Weakness and vanity with them combine,
And JAMES believes his majesty divine.

Presumptuous wretch ! almighty power to scan,
While every action proves him less than man.

By your delusions to the scaffold led,
Martyr'd by you a royal CHARLES has bled.
Teach then ye sycophants ! O ! teach his son,
The gloomy paths of tyranny to shun ;
Teach him to prize Religion's sacred claim,
Teach him how Virtue leads to honest fame,
How freedom's wreath a Monarch's brows adorns,
Nor, basely fawning, plant his couch with thorns.
Point to his view his people's love alone,
The solid basis of his steadfast throne ;
Chosen by them their dearest rights to guard,
The bad to punish, and the good reward,
Clement and just let him the sceptre sway,
And willing subjects shall with pride obey,
Shall vie to execute his high commands,
His throne their hearts, his sword and shield their
hands.

Happy the Prince ! thrice firmly fix'd his crown !
Who builds on public good his chaste renown ;
Studious to bless, who knows no second aim,
His people's interest, and his own the same ;
The ease of millions rests upon his cares,
And thus Heaven's high prerogative he shares.

Wide from the throne the blest contagion spreads,
 O'er all the land its gladdening influence sheds,
 Faction's discordant sounds are heard no more,
 And foul corruption flies the indignant shore.
 His ministers with joy their courses run,
 And borrow lustre from the royal sun.
 But should some upstart, train'd in Slavery's school,
 Learn'd in the maxims of despotick rule,
 Full fraught with forms, and grave pedantic pride,
 (Mysterious cloak the mind's defects to hide!)
 Sordid in small things, prodigal in great,
 Saving for minions, squandering for the state—
 Should such a miscreant, born for England's bane,
 Obscure the glories of a prosperous reign;
 Gain, by the semblance of each praiseful art,
 A pious Prince's unsuspecting heart;
 Envious of worth, and talents not his own,
 Chase all experienc'd merit from the throne;
 To guide the helm a motley crew compose,
 Servile to him, the King's and country's foes;
 Meanly descend each paltry place to fill,
 With tools of power, and panders to his will;
 Brandishing high the scorpion scourge o'er all,
 Except such slaves as bow their knee to BAAL—
 Should Albion's fate decree the baneful hour—
 Short be the date of his detested power!

Soon may his Sovereign break his iron rods,
And hear his people ; for their voice is God's !

Cease then your wiles, ye fawning courtiers ! cease,
Suffer your rulers to repose in peace ;
By Reason led, give proper names to things,
God made them men, the people made them kings ;
To all their acts but legal powers belong,
Thus England's Monarch never can do wrong ;
Of right divine let foolish FILMER dream,
The public welfare is the law supreme.

Lives there a wretch, whose base, degenerate soul
Can crouch beneath a tyrant's stern controul ?
Cringe to his nod, ignobly kiss the hand
In galling chains that bind his native land ?
Purchas'd by gold, or aw'd by slavish fear,
Abandon all his ancestors held dear ?
Tamely behold that fruit of glorious toil,
England's great charter made a ruffian's spoil ;
Hear, unconcern'd, his injured country groan,
Nor stretch an arm to hurl him from the throne ?
Let such to freedom forfeit all their claims,
And CHARLES's minions be the slaves of JAMES.
But soft awhile—Now CAVENDISH, attend
The warm effusions of thy dying friend ;

Fearless who dares his inmost thoughts reveal,
When thus to Heaven he makes his last appeal.

All-gracious God! whose goodness knows no bounds!
Whose power the ample universe surrounds!
In whose great balance, infinitely just,
Kings are but men, and men are only dust;
At thy tribunal low thy suppliant falls,
And here condemn'd, on thee for mercy calls!
Thou hear'st not, LORD! an hypocrite complain,
And sure with thee hypocrisy were vain;
To thy all-piercing eye the heart lies bare,
Thou know'st my sins, and, knowing, still can'st
 spare!

Though partial power its ministers may awe,
And murder here by specious forms of law;
The axe, which executes the harsh decree,
But wounds the flesh, to set the spirit free!
Well may the man a tyrant's frown despise,
Who, spurning earth, to Heaven for refuge flies;
And on thy mercy, when his foes prevail,
Builds his firm trust—that rock can never fail!
Hear then, JEHOVAH, hear thy servant's prayer!
Be England's welfare thy peculiar care!
Defend her laws, her worship chaste, and pure,
And guard her rights while Heaven and earth endure!

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O let not ever fell tyrannick sway
His blood stain'd standard on her shores display!
Nor fiery Zeal usurp the holy name,
Blinded with blood, and wrapt in rolls of flame!
In vain let Slavery shake her threatening chain,
And Persecution wave her torch in vain!
Arise, O LORD! and hear thy people's call!
Nor for one man let three great kingdoms fall!
O! that my blood may glut the barbarous rage
Of freedom's foes, and England's ills assuage!—
Grant but that prayer, I ask for no repeal,
A willing victim for my country's weal!
With rapturous joy the crimson stream shall flow,
And my heart leap to meet the friendly blow.

But should the fiend, tho' drench'd with human gore
Dire Bigotry, insatiate, thirst for more,
And, arm'd from Rome, seek this devoted land,
Death in her eye, and bondage in her hand—
Blast her fell purpose! blast her foul desires!
Break short her sword, and quench her horrid fires!

Raise up some champion, zealous to maintain
The sacred compact, by which monarchs reign!
Wise to foresee all danger from afar,
And brave to meet the thunders of the war!

Let pure Religion, not to forms confin'd,
 And love of freedom fill his generous mind !
 Warm let his breast with sparks celestial glow,
 Benign to man, the tyrant's deadly foe !
 While sinking nations rest upon his arm,
 Do thou the great Deliverer shield from harm !
 Inspire his councils ! aid his righteous sword !
 'Till Albion rings with Liberty restored !
 Thence let her years in bright succession run,
 And Freedom reign coæval with the sun.

'Tis done, my CA'NDISH, Heaven has heard my
 prayer ;
 So speaks my heart, for all is rapture there.

To Belgia's coast advert thy ravish'd eyes,
 That happy coast, whence all our hopes arise.
 Behold the Prince, perhaps thy future king,
 From whose green years maturest blessings spring ;
 Whose youthful arm, when all o'erwhelming Power
 Ruthless march'd forth, his country to devour,
 With firm-braced nerve repell'd the brutal force,
 And stopp'd th' unwieldy giant in his course.

Great WILLIAM, hail ! who sceptres could despise,
 And spurn a crown with unretorted eyes :

O! when will Princes learn to copy thee,
 And leave mankind, as Heaven ordain'd them,
 free.

Haste, mighty chief, our injur'd rights restore,
 Quick spread thy sails for Albion's longing shore!
 Haste, mighty chief, ere millions groan enslav'd;
 And add three realms to one already sav'd!
 While Freedom lives, thy memory shall be dear,
 And reap fresh honours each returning year;
 Nations preserved shall yield immortal fame,
 And endless ages bless thy glorious name!

Then shall my CA'NDISH, foremost in the field,
 By justice arm'd, his sword conspicuous wield;
 While willing legions crowd around his car,
 And rush impetuous to the righteous war.
 On that great day be every chance defied,
 And think thy RUSSEL combats by thy side;
 Nor, crown'd with victory, cease thy generous toil,
 'Till firmest peace secure this happy isle.

Ne'er let thy honest, open heart believe
 Professions specious, forged but to deceive;
 Fear may extort them, when resources fail,
 But, O! reject the baseless, flattering tale.

Think not that promises, or oaths can bind,
 With solemn ties, a Rome-devoted mind ;
 Which yields to all the holy juggler saith,
 And deep imbibes the bloody, damning faith.
 What though the bigot raise to Heaven his eyes
 And call the Almighty witness from the skies !
 Soon as the wish'd occasion he explores,
 To plant the Roman cross on England's shores,
 All, all will vanish, while his priests applaud,
 And saint the perjurer for the pious fraud.
 Far let him fly these freedom-breathing climes,
 And seek proud Rome, the fosterer of his crimes ;
 There let him strive to mount the Papal chair,
 And scatter empty thunders in the air,
 Grimly preside in Superstition's school,
 And curse those kingdoms he could never rule.
 Here let me pause, and bid the world adieu,
 While Heaven's bright mansions open to my
 view !

**Yet still one care, one tender care remains ;
 My bounteous friend, relieve a father's pains !
 Watch o'er my son, inform his waxen youth,
 And mould his mind to virtue and to truth ;
 Soon let him learn fair liberty to prize,
 And envy him, who for his country dies ;**

In one short sentence to comprize the whole,
Transfuse to his the virtues of thy soul.

Preserve thy life, my too, too generous friend,
Nor seek with mine thy happier fate to blend !
Live for thy country, live to guard her laws,
Proceed, and prosper in the glorious cause ;
While I, though vanquish'd, scorn the field to fly,
But boldly face my foes, and bravely die.

Let princely MONMOUTH courtly wiles beware,
Nor trust too far to fond paternal care ;
Too oft dark deeds deform the midnight cell,
Heaven only knows how noble ESSEX fell !
SIDNEY yet lives, whose comprehensive mind
Ranges at large through systems unconfined ;
Wrapt in himself, he scorns the tyrant's power,
And hurls defiance even from the tower ;
With tranquil brow awaits the unjust decree,
And, arm'd with virtue, looks to follow me.

CA'NDISH, farewell ! may Fame our names en-
twine !

Through life I loved thee, dying I am thine ;
With pious rites let dust to dust be thrown,
And thus inscribe my monumental stone.

" Here RUSSEL lies, enfranchised by the grave,
 " He prized his birthright, nor would live a slave,
 " Few were his words, but honest and sincere,
 " Dear were his friends, his country still more dear;
 " In parents, children, wife, supremely bless'd,
 " But that one passion swallow'd all the rest;
 " To guard her freedom was his only pride,
 " Such was his love, and for that love he died."
 " Yet fear not thou, when Liberty displays
 " Her glorious flag, to steer his course to praise;
 " For know, (whoe'er thou art that read'st his fate,
 " And think'st, perhaps, his sufferings were too
 great,)
 " Bless'd as he was, at her imperial call,
 " Wife, children, parents—he resign'd them all;
 " Each fond affection then forsook his soul,
 " And *amor patriæ* occupied the whole;
 " In that great cause he joy'd to meet his doom,
 " Bless'd th' keen axe and triumph'd o'er the tomb."

The hour draws near—But what are hours to me?
 Hours, days, and years hence undistinguish'd flee!
 Time, and his glass unheeded pass away,
 Absorb'd, and lost in one vast flood of day!
 On Freedom's wings my soul is borne on high,
 And soars exulting to his native sky!