TALLEYRAND.

By LADY BLENNERHASSETT
(GRÄFIN LEYDEN).

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN
By FREDERICK CLARKE,
Late Taylorian Scholar in the University of Oxford.

"Les hommes à principes sont dispensés de réussir. Le succès est au contraire pour les habiles une condition obligée."—A. THIERS, "*Consulat et Empire,*" xviii., 99.

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TO THE MEMORY

OF

SIR ROBERT MORIER, G.C.B., G.C.M.G.

THESE PAGES ARE DEDICATED BY

A DEVOTED FRIEND.

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PREFACE.

IN May 1892 I was entrusted with the task of reviewing Talleyrand's Memoirs in the *Deutsche Rundschau*. His will directed that their publication should be deferred for thirty years after his death. This term expired in 1868. Owing to over-anxious scruples, it was prolonged to 1891. The impatience of the public rose with its expectations. Most of Talleyrand's contemporaries had already told their story, and when at last his turn came, he addressed a generation whose jaded curiosity imagined itself adequately informed as to his public career, and hoped to find indiscretions relating to his private life. In this it was not gratified. The words "Je veux éviter tout ce qui aurait une apparence libellique" precluded, with but few exceptions, the admission of all frivolous matter into the text of the Memoirs. The disappointment to which this gave rise found vent in a controversy as to their authenticity, which never had any solid

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basis. No one now has any serious doubt that Talleyrand is the author of the memoranda to which his executors, the Duchesse de Dino and Monsieur de Bacourt, gave their present connected form.

On the other hand, an objection of a different kind proved all the more well founded. The Memoirs, by far the greater part of which were composed in 1816 for a definite object, and for Louis XVIII., are silent on many points, and only give fragmentary notices of Talleyrand's work in life. It was obvious that he would confine himself to what was strictly necessary in regard to such events as the murder of the Duke of Enghien. On the other hand, people were naturally surprised that he should pursue precisely the same course with regard to matters which do him the greatest credit, such as his mission of peace to London in 1792, or the courageous stand which he made for religious tolerance on the eve of the Reign of Terror. In the same way, the prominent part he took in the settlement of the Concordat in 1801 is not known through his Memoirs, but from the three volumes of documents which have been recently published by Boulay de la Meurthe. These and similar instances lead to the conclusion that in cases where his silence is not intentional, Talleyrand's experiences were of too manifold

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a nature to permit him to render an exhaustive account of everything he did. As feudal aristocrat, ecclesiastic, financier, economist, bishop, deputy, legislator, co-founder of a schism, diplomatic agent, refugee, exile, speculator in New York, Academician in Paris, ex-communicated by one Pope, secularised by another, Minister of the Directory, the Consulate, the Empire, and of both Restorations, twice ambassador, once regent, disciple of Montesquieu, contemporary of Turgot and colleague of Thiers, Talleyrand, in the eighty-four years of his life, experienced almost every variety of human fortune. His contemporaries marked the weak points, the shortcomings, the blemishes of his character, and passed a severe verdict on him. But history is able to survey a homogeneous whole and a coherent policy, in which moderation and wisdom rise to the level of greatness.

It was not in 1814 and 1815, after Leipzig and Waterloo, and under the pressure of necessity, but in 1792, on the eve of the universal war which he wished to avert, that Talleyrand put forth a programme of peace: "La France doit rester circonscrite dans ses propres limites; elle le doit à sa gloire, à la justice, à la raison, à son intérêt et à celui des peuples qui seront libres par elles." Forty years afterwards he

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addressed the same language to Louis Philippe. The policy which he advocated for France under Louis XVI. remained the same throughout: the hegemony of the Latin races, the abandonment of the Rhine frontier, the establishment of a counterpoise to Russian ambition, and the foundation of a vast colonial empire with its centre of gravity in North Africa.

The outlines of Talleyrand's home policy are not less clear and distinct. He has been called the greatest of all Opportunists, and rightly so. He was the last person in the world to sacrifice himself for ideas, even if they were his own. But he waited patiently till their time came round again. Amid the tumult of 1789 he kept a cool head and laid the foundations of the modern state. He remained faithful to his creed when the waves of reaction were submerging the best and the wisest of his contemporaries. His interpretation of the genius of his race was that Monarchy, which had founded France, could alone continue her historical development, and reconcile and harmonise the conservative forces of the past with the aspiring elements of the future. Like Cavour and Bismarck, he believed that national unity was safest when encircled by the golden orb of the Crown and placed under the ægis of the nation's

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hereditary dynasty. This policy failed on three separate occasions, but on each of them he addressed himself once more to the task. It was not till the year 1830 that he gave up the dynasty, and then with the bitter conviction that kings cannot be improvised, that the Monarchy of July was only another stage in the development of the still unfinished Revolution, and that the work of his life was ending in disappointment.

The last historical figure of the eighteenth century, Talleyrand remains one of the leading statesmen of the nineteenth. His frigid scepticism prevented him from indulging in the generous delusions of enthusiasm; but he escaped the inevitable reactions which overtake enthusiasts. His observation and experience culminated in the conviction that democracies are incapable of governing, and that the work must be carried on for them. No one has taken a more active part in raising the edifice of modern society than this aristocratic Minister, who never courted popularity, and under every régime, at all periods of his life, was a great patriot and an advocate of peace.

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LIFE OF TALLEYRAND.

CHAPTER I.

TALLEYRAND'S YOUTH.

1754—1780.

"QUI t'a fait Roi?" retorted a powerful vassal, the Count of Périgord, when asked by the new King Hugo Capet: "Qui t'a fait Comte?" The descendants of both might have resumed the dialogue more than eight hundred years afterwards. The family which has shown such vitality traces its pedigree from Helie V., sovereign lord of Périgord, who in the thirteenth century transferred the name of Taleiran or Tailleran, which he was the first to bear, to a younger son, while the elder line was henceforward styled "Princes de Chalais," after an estate which had lately come into the family. The coat-of-arms, gules, three lions rampant or, azure crowns, with the motto "Re que Diou," was common to both lines. From the elder line was descended the Count de Chalais, the youthful conspirator who plotted with

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Gaston of Orléans in 1626, was condemned to death by Richelieu, and expired under four-and-thirty blows, owing to the clumsiness of an improvised executioner. A descendant of the younger line was the first husband of the celebrated Princess Orsini, Duchess of Bracciano, better known to history as the Princesse des Ursins.

Their grandnephew was Charles-Maurice, born on the 13th of February, 1754, to Lieutenant-General Charles-Daniel de Talleyrand-Périgord and his wife Alexandrine de Damas d'Antigny. By his mother the boy was a grandson of Michel Chamillart, Marquis de Cany, an honourable but incapable man of business, raised by the favour of Madame de Maintenon to the post of Finance Minister of Louis XIV.

The pecuniary circumstances of the family did not correspond to the distinction of its origin and name. Talleyrand's father, an officer who had seen good service in the Seven Years' War, lived after its termination as "menin" or, as we should say now-a-days, attendant on the Dauphin at the court of Versailles, "the place where lords are turned into lacqueys," as Montesquieu used to say. "Ce sont nos gens," said the Comte d'Artois on his wedding-day to his young bride, referring to his court. This aristocracy degraded to a court nobility cost the king a sum which Vauban reckoned at forty million livres a year. The outgoings were not reduced when Madame de Pompadour spent thirty-seven millions in nineteen years. Louis XVI.

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abolished five hundred court offices in the first ten years of his reign, but the saving was swallowed up by sixteen other places, which cost 1,097,750 livres. Luxury and gambling involved an expenditure which offices and pensions could not meet. Talleyrand's father was not spared this experience, and seems never to have succeeded in defraying the expenses of bringing up his children. It was the children who in the eighteenth century felt the full weight of the pressure of this unnatural state of things. The care of them and their education were left to chance; the fashion of looking after one's own children had not yet penetrated into the regions of the exalted society which at Versailles bent the knee before the empty bed of the Monarch: "Too much attention to their doings and shortcomings would have appeared pedantic; tenderness too warmly expressed would have seemed strange and almost ridiculous." In those days sons were the heirs of the name and of the coat-of-arms. Parents thought they had done enough for them in helping them to get on in life, and providing them with appointments, offices, wealthy marriages, and means of enriching themselves.

In other words, eight years more had to elapse before "Emile" appeared and taught this artificial society the "return to nature," the long-forgotten joys of motherly love, the revelation of childhood, before, to quote Talleyrand once more, it became "the

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fashion" again to have a heart, and to follow its dictates. For him the appeal came too late. Immediately after his birth he was handed over to the care of a nurse in a Paris faubourg, and left in her charge, or, to speak more correctly, forgotten, until he was four years old. By the death of an elder brother the right of primogeniture devolved upon him, and he was intended for a military career when, owing to neglect, he had a fall from a chest of drawers and sustained the injury which maimed his right foot and made him lame. This was not noticed until his great-grandmother, the Princesse de Chalais, sent for the child to her *château* of Périgord. The mischief had then become permanent, and a cure hopeless. But they managed to strengthen the other leg, and Talleyrand in spite of his deformity grew up a man of lofty stature, broad shoulders, and powerful frame, and walked with the help of a stick only in later years. But after this accident the profession of arms was quite out of the question, and consequently it was decided in the interest of the family, which in those days was paramount, that he should enter the Church. The die was already cast when the little fellow arrived at his "grandmother's" after a seventeen days' journey in the mail-coach from Paris to Bordeaux. This old lady occupies a place in his life which none should dispute her, for she was the only one of all his belongings who really loved him. He

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refers to it himself with emotion, and always venerated her memory. The tenderest and most feeling passages in his Memoirs are devoted to her, and to the days spent at Chalais. She was a Mortemart, which was accounted an intellectual distinction. To her gifts of intellect she united a noble and dignified character, and a lofty conception of the duties of her rank and of her position in the country: "The first lady in the province would have lowered herself in her own eyes, if she had not been courteous, helpful, and charitable. In like manner the nobility of the neighbourhood would have considered themselves as wanting in self-respect if they had not paid to the bearer of a historic name that intelligent deference which, when shown with good breeding, seemed a homage of the heart. As for the country people, they were accustomed to meet with help by word and deed, with consolation and encouragement, at the *château*. The ways of the Périgord nobility resembled its old *châteaux*; they had something grand and stable about them. Light penetrated slowly, but with a mild and beneficent gleam. They prepared with a wise deliberateness for a more enlightened civilisation. . . . Even the Revolution has not succeeded in robbing these venerable old seats of the sovereign power of their charm. There they stand, like ancient temples deserted by their worshippers, but still venerable in the eyes of tradition."

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The man who wrote the above at an advanced age remembered well how as a child, attended by trusty retainers, he accompanied his grandmother every Sunday to the parish church, where his little stool was ready by the side of her prie-dieu, and an old relative of the family arranged the prayer-books, which he had solemnly carried behind the venerable lady in a red velvet bag trimmed with gold. After the service they returned to the *château* and the dispensary, where all the year through, under the supervision of the priest and the apothecary, medicines and healing draughts, lint and nice old linen, were kept ready for the sick, and clothing for the poor. The grandmother in a handsome dress, trimmed with lace and decked with flowing ribbons, and a high cap, took her seat in the arm-chair surrounded by her little court; the first lady of the chamber presented the applicants for relief in their order, and two sisters of mercy distributed the gifts. The old lady had a kind word for all. We can fancy her grandchild standing by her side, in powder, even at that tender age, his hair carefully curled and tied tightly into a pigtail, with a lace cravat and embroidered coat, his little sword on, and his tiny hat under his arm. Talleyrand has apologised in his Memoirs for dwelling so long on these details: "But," he says, "the recollection of what I saw and heard in those early days is inexpressibly dear to me. To her I owe the

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spirit which governed my conduct in after life. If while entertaining good-will and affection towards my fellow-creatures I have avoided immoderate familiarity, if in difficult positions I have preserved perfect equanimity and self-control, and have always loved and respected old age, I owe it all to the days spent at Chalais, to the respect with which I saw my grandmother and my whole family surrounded, and to the example of goodness and highmindedness which she transmitted to me as a heritage added to by successive generations."

It sounds almost tragic to be told that this was the only time when Talleyrand shared in the joys of family life. He left Chalais in 1762 at the bidding of his parents. After a tearful parting he travelled back to Paris by coach, as he came, and was received by an old servant and taken to the Collège d'Harcourt, a school for boys of good family. In the eighteenth century the story ran that Talleyrand had never slept under the same roof with his parents. There was not much exaggeration in this, for he says himself: "I may say once for all, and then I hope dismiss it from my mind, that I am, perhaps, the only member of a large and distinguished family who never in his whole life had the good fortune to spend even a single week under the same roof with his parents."

He remained three years in the Collège d'Harcourt, under the care of insignificant teachers. On Sundays one of them took the boy to his parents, with whom he

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dined, and who used always to dismiss him after dinner with the words: "Be a good boy, and do what Monsieur l'Abbé tells you." His consolation in these school-days was his friendship for young Choiseul, a nephew of the Minister, who was known after his marriage as Count Choiseul-Gouffier, and became ambassador at Constantinople under Louis XVI., and Minister of State under Louis XVIII. At the age of twelve Talleyrand caught the smallpox. In spite of his illness, his parents sent him away to a nurse, who aggravated the patient's symptoms by keeping him in an overheated and unventilated room. He got through it all, but all kinds of thoughts assailed him in his solitude: "The little interest taken in me, the way in which I was sent to school, and other painful impressions, saddened me. I felt helpless, and always thrown upon myself. I will not complain of having had to suffer so early in my life. To it I owe a capacity for serious reflection and calm judgment in misfortune, which pleasurable impressions would never have given me. It is, therefore, not without a certain sense of satisfaction that I look back on the past. Since then I have come to the conclusion that my parents, after having decided for family reasons to devote me to a profession for which I had not the slightest inclination, were afraid of not having the courage to carry out their plans, if they saw me too often. This fear was a proof of their love, for which I gladly acknowledge my obligation to them."

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The above was written in all sincerity, a strong family feeling being a marked characteristic of this outcast from the family circle. He always provided for his relations, and once he came upon the following affectionate passage in a letter which he had written when he was assisting the children of one of his cousins: "I consider that the complete difference of opinion existing between my family and myself makes the claims of affection all the more binding on me."

About the year 1766 he was transferred from the Collège d'Harcourt to the seminary of St. Sulpice. In accordance with the system pursued in his case, he received as little encouragement and praise as possible, although he was a diligent student. The idea was that he was to be forgotten, and so be gradually prepared for the coming change, of which he had hitherto been kept in ignorance. The next step in this direction was the journey to Rheims, where his uncle Talleyrand, as coadjutor of the Archbishop and Cardinal de la Roche-Aymon, duke, premier peer of France and legate of the Holy See, was in a position to give him grand ideas of the brilliance of an ecclesiastical court. The hope that Talleyrand would at his age of fifteen be dazzled and seduced by this spectacle was doomed to disappointment. The historic city seemed to him a place of exile; the daily life, confined to external observances, was intolerable to him, and the magnificence surrounding the Cardinal-Duke "could not make up to him for

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the sacrifice of his sincerity, which was demanded of him at an age when the heart speaks truest." As the allurements of wealth and of rank made no impression on him, a more subtle form of temptation was resorted to by placing at his disposal the Memoirs of Retz, the Lives of Richelieu and Ximenes, and the writings of Hinkmar of Rheims. If the pleasures of the world failed to attract him, yet perhaps he aspired to rule, and the great Ministers who had worn the purple were incomparable teachers of the art of governing men. Talleyrand read them with advantage, and perhaps learnt more from Gondy than his teachers liked. But it was only in after years that he developed an aptitude for the maxims of this statecraft. At this time he was young, and unable to understand "why the world should be openly renounced while ambition was really the goal, and why the path to the Ministry of Finance led through the seminary." But there was no one to help him; everybody around him repeated a lesson got by heart, and so at last he resigned himself to the inevitable. After a stay of one year at Rheims he returned to the seminary, a melancholy morose boy of sixteen, in secret revolt against his superiors and his parents, and against the institutions and the power of the prejudices which compelled him to submit. He was called haughty, and reproached with a proud reserve; but he disdained to defend himself, for he knew that he was only profoundly unhappy

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and embittered. To the frequent reproach that he was good for nothing at all, a voice within him replied that he would, in spite of this, do good, perhaps great things; and then, for a few moments at least, he was seized with that delightful presentiment which sometimes reveals and lights up the future for the youthful soul.

At this period of his life the Saint-Sulpice library, formed by Cardinal Fleury, afforded him mental relaxation; his favourite authors were historians and moralists, and he "devoured" descriptions of travel. These tales of constant dangers and unforeseen catastrophes had a peculiarly tranquillising effect on his mind. Shipwrecks reminded him of his own fate; he used to dream of distant shores, where the unexpected happened, and tumultuous desires were satisfied.

In this crisis heroic courage and a formed character would have been necessary to save his better self. But the hero of the situation was only a boy who longed to be happy, and the issue was an episode of a very ordinary kind. In the chapel of St. Sulpice, Talleyrand had often remarked a young and handsome girl, whose simple and modest appearance pleased him greatly. One morning, when it was pouring with rain, he plucked up courage and offered her shelter under his umbrella. From that time they saw each other often, and later on almost every day. Her parents had destined her against her will for the stage, as his had

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him for the priesthood, and consequently they compared grievances. When afterwards it was pointed out to him that the object of his first affections was a person of very mediocre intelligence, he confessed that he had never remarked it in the course of his two years' intercourse with her. His superiors now found him in good spirits, and knew how to hold their tongues. He himself was fond of referring to the episode in after years, and it was in this way it became known through the Memoirs of Madame de Rémusat.

During this period of his life, Talleyrand, like nearly all men who have played an important part on the world's stage, read much and continuously. And it is characteristic of the bent of his mind, that he used always to argue with his authors: "Les livres," he said, "m'ont éclairé, mais jamais asservi." Neither in the case of men nor of books did he ever take things for granted. There was no such thing as ready-made assertions for a man "who had doubted so much in his life as he had." His best school was the world, and it was as a man of the world that he criticised literary productions, by the standard of classical tradition which Voltaire handed down to the revolutionary school. As late as 1817, Madame de Rémusat mentions Thomas' "Essai sur les Éloges" as a favourite book of Talleyrand's. On the other hand, when Chateaubriand's "Itinéraire" appeared, he did not join in the admiration of the public, but remarked:

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"Il y a là beaucoup trop d'esprit pour un livre de poste et pas assez de talent pour un ouvrage." But certain things were beyond his comprehension, and the verdict of the public proved the right one.

Books, however, are hardly mentioned in the five volumes of his Memoirs; at the most a passage from the "Principe" and the following from Thomassin: "Nothing is so much in keeping with the canons as an evasion of them; that is, when more good can be attained thereby than by their observance."

Talleyrand was speaking ironically when he told Gagern that he considered himself one of the ablest theologians of his age, but in all sincerity when he told him that he was astonished "at the amount of intelligence displayed in the Christian doctrine." If its deeper meaning always remained a sealed book to him, yet his ecclesiastical training had taught him all the more successfully the arts of keen observation and subtle discrimination. But it is not a difficult matter to trace his intellectual development to its source. The age explains the man, and the age in which he grew up was, perhaps more than any other, influenced by a literature which furnished the cosmopolitan propaganda of ideas with two incomparable instruments—a clear method, and a language of classical perfection.

The secret of this intellectual movement was that it enforced mental discipline while inspiring enthusiasm,

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that it carried away the multitude and gave thinkers matter for serious reflection. It was for the latter that Montesquieu wrote and observed. History and experience, facts and traditions, are the elements by which he explains the existing order of things. Neither caprice nor chance, but external and internal conditions, determine the character of institutions and make the laws of society. To preserve them from decay, we must hark back to the principle to which they owe their origin, and examine the spirit which has presided over their development. Even if the ideal of the state, as it floated before Montesquieu's mind, is found in English institutions, yet, as applied to France, his system is instinct with that elevated spirit of moderation, which can discover a remnant of justice in an abuse, and by the side of an evil descry the possibility of reform.

The Revolution would have been inconceivable if a system of this kind had been in harmony with the intellectual temperament of the French, and had determined their political development. But such calm wisdom was foreign to all their mental habits. The devotees of the right of nature, the apologists of despotism, the zealots in the Church, the adherents of routine in the State, all joined forces against the great empiric who preferred explanation to condemnation. In their *Journal de Trévoux* the Jesuits attacked the irreligious spirit which drew no distinction between

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truth and falsehood. The "Nouvelles Ecclésiastiques" of the Jansenists extorted from Benedict XIV. a condemnation which was kept so secret that they themselves never heard of it. On behalf of the philosophy of the day, Helvetius complained of the indulgence with which so many prejudices were treated, of the forbearance shown to aristocrats and despots, and of the influence of English political ideas on the author's train of thought. Voltaire, who had a personal dislike to Montesquieu, constantly varied in his estimate of the book which actually performed what the "Essai sur les Mœurs" had merely promised. It is true he uttered the apophthegm: "The human race had lost its patent of nobility: Monsieur de Montesquieu found and restored it." But gradually criticism got the upper hand. Sometimes he rated Mercier de la Rivière's book, at others Chastellux's work, higher than "L'Esprit des Lois," "de l'esprit sur les lois," as he mockingly remarked to Madame du Deffand. A whole series of writers,—Claude Dupin, Raynal, the Abbé Coyer, Count d'Albon, Diderot,—great and small, thought they were performing a patriotic duty in combating Montesquieu or warning the public against the example of England. On the eve of the meeting of the States-General, Sieyès called the British constitution "a piece of humbug, the object of which is to delude the people." "Voilà ce qui a perdu l'Angleterre!" Brissot used to exclaim, when constitutions

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were under discussion. Condorcet, Duport, A. de Lameth, and Garat took the same view. The speeches made in the Constituent Assembly teem with assertions of the following kind: "Have we not, as compared with England, the inestimable advantage that we can frame every part of our constitution at the same moment, while theirs is a fabric of time and mere piece-work? The English had to make allowance for prejudices; we consult only the rights and interests of the people." Even Turgot, the greatest statesman of the age, is evidently not free from a similar spirit of opposition. In a letter to Hume he doubts whether it will ever be possible to win over the English to his economical system, on account of the difficulty of reconciling its principles with that ambition which aims at monopolising the commerce of the world. In another passage Turgot calls "the supremacy of the English and the temporal power of the Papacy the two elements of abuse." Like Joseph II., he failed through undue haste, although far his superior in political insight.

Thus it came about that barely five-and-twenty years after Montesquieu's death he was only the representative of a minority; Taine goes even further and says: "Sa célébrité n'était pas une influence." This minority was Talleyrand's party up to the very end. Establishment of a limited monarchy was the aim of the constitutional politician in 1789; a gene-

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ration later the ambassador of Louis XVIII. at the Vienna Congress was found pledged to the very same ideas. It is by no means a mere coincidence that Talleyrand's despatches in 1815 preserve the impress of Montesquieu's style, for the policy of the Restoration expounded in them is penetrated with his spirit.

The seductive genius who threw a spell over the age tried his arts in vain here; J. J. Rousseau's name is hardly mentioned by Talleyrand. The aristocrat, whose birth entitled him to everything, could not sympathise with or even understand the parvenu's indignation against society. The disillusions of his early youth warned the sceptic against a rhetoric, the influence of which was all the more powerful because its glorification of an imaginary state of nature flattered the instincts of the multitude by inculcating the attractive belief in the original goodness of the human heart.

The brilliant sophisms of the "Contrat Social" had as little attraction for him as the harangues of the Savoy Vicar, and all the instincts of his race must have revolted against Jean Jaques' womankind. With the exception perhaps of Voltaire, scarcely any one was so little accessible to the pathos of that morbidly excited mind, and so averse to the Wertherism of the day, as this precocious Epicurean, and offences against good taste, such as Julie commits, were about the only sins which he could not pardon. Madame de

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Pompadour's well-known opinion of "La Nouvelle Héloïse," and Voltaire's verdict, "Sot, bourgeois, impudent, ennuyeux," were, we may presume, not very different from his own. On the other hand, Rousseau's passion in its highest flights has something of Germanic fervour and power, which accounts for his influence on Germany being much greater than on France, and is beyond the reach of Talleyrand's frivolousness. Shallow and incapable of enthusiasm, he contented himself with commonplaces in metaphysics. Even at an advanced age he quotes Voltaire: "Philosophy is simple, calm, free from envy and ambition. Far from luxury and the tumult and intrigues of the world, it lives for contemplation, is full of indulgence and ready to help. Its hand holds aloft the torch, which is to serve as a beacon to mankind; it has never used this to kindle a conflagration. Its voice is faint, but audible; it repeats unceasingly: 'Worship God, serve the King, love your fellow-creatures.'"

This philosophical trifling did not really harmonise so well with his theory of life as a sort of epicurean optimism, which hoped to see progress come, not from higher moral forces, but from the spread of refinement and from a superior civilisation, and which, when its precepts were at fault, got over the difficulty with some clever flout or gibe. Talleyrand considered the world which surrounded him as by no means the best

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imaginable, and was all the more ready to improve the existing order of things because he had had to fight his own battle with it. But both natural disposition and education inclined him from an early age to compromise, and he never believed in extreme solutions. Clever, worldly-wise, kindly, and tolerant, he was ready to further to the best of his uncommon ability the humanitarian aims and ideas of reform of his age, provided that the following was a limited one, and that the school did not turn into a sect. Within these limits Talleyrand was in his youth a "physiocrat."

Like Voltaire and Turgot, he became a convert to the school which considered the improvement of agriculture the only source of national wealth and the most effective remedy for the misery of the people. But of the two founders of this school it is not Quesnay, but Vincent de Gournay, who had the most enduring influence on Talleyrand. From the inventor of the axiom, "Laissez faire, laissez passer," he borrowed the doctrines of free trade and of emancipation of labour, commerce, and industry from all checks and restraints. Quesnay advocated these views in the interest of agricultural production; Turgot broadened and deepened them, and to the best of his power put them into practice, which makes him the precursor and pioneer of modern economical doctrines. Following his example, Talleyrand devoted himself to the study of economical and financial questions, and in this department

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acquired the knowledge and attained the authority of an expert. But the political ideal of the economists was not to the taste of the pupil of Montesquieu. Quesnay's enlightened despot, who was only to be bound by "the universal laws of natural order," "le roi pasteur," as that ardent adherent of physiocratic doctrines, the elder Mirabeau, calls him, never found favour with Talleyrand. Like Turgot, he preferred to see the people gradually educated for self-government by means of communal, district, and provincial assemblies, and when these latter were introduced on the motion of the Marquis de Mirabeau he took a lively interest in them.

Young Talleyrand had also the advantage of a finishing school of political education. As guest of the fallen Minister, the Duc de Choiseul, at his *château* of Chanteloup, which was more like a prince's residence than a place of banishment, he was able to make a personal study of the diplomacy of 1756 and 1760. With his friend Choiseul-Gouffier and his subsequent colleague and tried adviser, d'Hauterive, he was trained by Choiseul for public affairs. "In my department," Choiseul used to say to the young people, "I always made others work more than I did myself. It is no use burying yourself under a mass of papers; you must be able to lay your hands on subordinates who can get at the pith of them, and then you will have time enough and to spare. For a statesman, a nod, a gesture, a

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change of punctuation, should be sufficient. His proper place is in the world; in his office he learns nothing." This teaching was not lost on Talleyrand. Choiseul was the first to draw his attention to the conduct of great affairs.

In his sketch of Choiseul, which, although not written till 1816, bears traces of personal impressions, Talleyrand blames the French Cabinet, and Bernis more than Choiseul, for their thoughtless shortsightedness in allowing themselves to be over-reached by Austria in the treaty of 1756, and in neither foreseeing nor preventing the subsequent events in the north. But he considered the leading idea of the treaty, the Austrian alliance, as the only means of "protecting Europe from the calamity of Russian barbarism," and even at the height of his diplomatic career he reverted to the same policy, with the conviction that it alone could frustrate Russian plans of conquest and thwart the ambition of Prussia.

In the same way he considered the family treaty of 1761 as "worthy of a great statesman," but regrets that it was made too late, at a time when France, exhausted by the Seven Years' War, dragged Spain down with her. It was the traditional policy of the Monarchy, the alliance of the Latin races under the sceptre of the Bourbons at Paris and Madrid, with the intention of gaining over Italy to the family, that Choiseul inaugurated afresh. With the same object

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Cardinal Fleury had concluded the treaties of 1733 and 1743 with Spain, which have been called the key to the politics of Europe in the eighteenth century. The political idea which they furthered outlived the dynastic interests to which it owed its origin. Talleyrand found it again under the Napoleonic régime in the renewal of the Latin confederation by means of a fresh family arrangement, in which the Bonapartes took the place of the Bourbons. Talleyrand was not so severe a critic of Choiseul's diplomacy as of his attitude with regard to the great event of his home administration, the suppression of the order of the Jesuits, which Talleyrand discusses solely from a political point of view. "Choiseul," he writes, "had repeatedly noticed the influence of the order in ecclesiastical matters and parliamentary controversies. And although, in the case of a clergy so enlightened and so conversant with the great world as the French, the machinations of the Jesuits were much less to be feared than with another and less liberal-minded body, yet perhaps it was a salutary step to lower the prestige of the order. One might even take a further step, and suppress it entirely. I will not go into a question which might lead me too far. This much, however, is certain, that with a monarchical government, such as France had in those days, more good than harm would have been done by leaving the direction of the family, and, to a certain extent, that of public opinion, in the hands of the

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Jesuits. As a proof you might adduce the fact, that in 1789 not one member of the *noblesse* on the side of the minority had been educated by Jesuits. But Monsieur de Choiseul, heedless as he was and hostile to all power which did not emanate from himself, suppressed the Jesuits simply because he felt they were not quite under his thumb. The question was really an affair of state; in his hands it became a mere intrigue. . . . Just in the same way he afterwards declared war against the philosophers, because they impaired the authority which he wished to exercise alone over his contemporaries."

To find such a well-balanced piece of criticism as this, such an unbiassed consideration of pros and cons, we must go back to Montaigne, and bear in mind that Talleyrand was not only a denizen of the same sunny south, but also a member of the same intellectual family. Montaigne is the father of a line which has never become extinct in France. St. Évremond in the seventeenth century is a mild edition of Montaigne. La Fontaine seems to have had in his mind Pascal's severe strictures on the Essays, when he puts Montaigne's epigrams in the mouth of wise animals:—

> "Le peuple s'étonna comme il se pouvait faire
> Qu'un homme seul eût plus de sens
> Qu'une multitude de gens."

Mark what the weasel is made to say, a whole century before the "Discours sur l'Inégalité":—

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"La dame au nez pointu répondit que la terre
Était au premier occupant . . .
Et quand ce serait un royaume,
Je voudrais bien savoir, dit-elle, quelle loi
En a pour toujours fait l'octroi
À Jean, fils ou neveu de Pierre ou de Guillaume,
Plutôt qu'à Paul, plutôt qu'à moi."

It is the old unquenchable humour—*l'esprit gaulois*—speaking under the mask of decorum, and Talleyrand's Memoirs, which are so chary of quotations, do not carry the old dictum "In all things think of the end" further back than the Fables of the worthy La Fontaine, the moral of which they endorse.

If ideals are unattainable, defeats inevitable, if majorities win the day and dulness rules the roast, then, at all events, we can fall back upon our right of laughing at the folly of mankind, of flouting the matter-of-fact winners in the lottery of life, and of parrying the bludgeon of fate with the rapier-thrust of irony. This spirit has never quite died out in France. Ninon de l'Enclos, who knew St. Évremond well, lived long enough to remember Voltaire, then a boy, in her will. The latter in his old age laid his hands on the head of Talleyrand, then twenty-four: "C'est bien Voltaire en 1789 . . . bon sens parfait et fin," says Sainte-Beuve of the Abbé de Périgord on the eve of the meeting of the States-General. Thus did the intellectual descendants of Montaigne join hands on French soil.

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CHAPTER II.

TALLEYRAND AGENT-GENERAL OF THE CLERGY.

1780—1786.

TALLEYRAND'S Memoirs preserve a complete silence with respect to his entry into the priesthood. We only know from his friend Choiseul-Gouffier that the decisive step was preceded by a period of violent excitement. In vain Choiseul begged and implored him to save himself by a refusal at the last moment. Respect for his mother's wishes and fear of what the world would say restrained him, and with the words, "It is too late, there is no way out of it," the youth resigned himself to his fate.

Talleyrand was already a priest when he witnessed the coronation of Louis XVI. at Rheims in June 1775. The ceremony left in his mind a recollection of the noble bearing of the young King, the grace of the Queen, and the presence of three women, the Duchesses de Luynes and Fitz-James, and the Countess de Laval, whose friendship he won and retained. "Inclination, calculation, and taste," writes Vitrolles, "all led Talleyrand to look to women for advancement.

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They always played an important part in his career, and were his friends, companions, or masters in politics. The contrast between his natural disposition and his calling made them all the more attractive to him, and so he learned early in life not to be afraid of scandal, and to despise the comments of respectability." This verdict of an opponent omits all the extenuating circumstances—his need of attachments, his susceptibility and his capacity for true friendship, a character easily swayed by the passions, and affected by an element of weakness, which in society and among his intimates showed itself with almost feminine grace, but in public life only too often involved a loss of personal dignity. Talleyrand made his *début* in the world at Rheims, where, although only one-and-twenty, he was made a member of the assembly of the clergy. It was the first step to the much more influential position of Agent-General, the duties of which were not unlike those of a modern Minister of Public Worship.

Since the last meeting of the States-General in 1614, the clergy alone had preserved its representative institutions. It treated with the Crown like a power of equal rank, and made its only contribution to taxation by means of a loan, called the *don gratuit*, for the interest and amortisation of which the clergy were responsible, while the State remained liable for the capital sum. But in consequence of the ever-increasing debt the State treasury hardly received a

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penny, because the clergy kept back the greater part of the money to meet the sinking fund. The grant was accompanied by stipulations for a *quid pro quo*, which were exorbitant or moderate according as the State's want of money happened to be greater or less than the Church's need of protection.

The King made use of the means of pressure at his disposal, especially of the right to appoint to bishoprics and benefices conceded to him by the Concordat of 1517. The clergy demanded increase of its privileges, confirmation of its ancient rights and liberties, and enforcement of the law against heretics. There were assemblies of the clergy so stormy as to be called small *Constituantes*, and conflicts which could only be settled by an appeal to Rome. On the other hand, the movement in favour of applying Church property towards redemption of the public debt and in promoting the welfare of the nation dates from the sixteenth century and the time of the religious wars. From that time the clergy also consented to the regular payment of the ordinary and extraordinary tenths, but maintained its right to administrative autonomy, and in its general assemblies made excursions from the sphere of finance and administration into that of ecclesiastical discipline and theological controversy, so that these assemblies acquired more and more the importance of national synods, and became a stronghold of Gallican doctrine.

Elected as to one half from the ranks of the epis-

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copate, and as to the other from among ecclesiastics in possession of large benefices, they met from 1579 every second and fifth year for their own affairs, and every tenth year for the purpose of settling the *don gratuit*, which amounted to fifteen or sixteen million livres. The latter meeting was held in Paris, and the session lasted from three to six months. The resolutions of the assemblies, for the validity of which a two-thirds majority was requisite, were published in the sessional reports.

The administration, which with its widely-ramified interests and small army of officials formed an *imperium in imperio*, was controlled by two Agents-General of the clergy, appointed for a term of five years by two of the ecclesiastical provinces in rotation. These Agents-General acted as go-betweens for the clergy in its dealings with the Government, and their office was rightly considered of such importance that Cardinal Richelieu made an unsuccessful attempt to transfer the right of appointment to the Crown. Their importance increased as the situation became more threatening, when in the eighteenth century the clergy's claim to exemption from taxation and its monopoly of enormous revenues were attacked with increasing vehemence, not, as in the old days, by lawyers pleading for royal control over the property of the nation, or by isolated appeals on behalf of the general welfare, but by a newly awakened public opinion. The internal history

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of France under Louis XV. and in the first years of the reign of Louis XVI. is full of episodes of the struggle in which the clergy disarmed the opposition of parliament and humoured the vacillation of the Government by repeated concessions and grants of money, and yet, whenever a favourable opportunity offered, always managed to win back the lost ground and uphold its privileges. An edifice of centuries was not to fall at the first blow. The man who opened the attack on behalf of the State, the Minister Machault, was no opponent, but a devout adherent, of the Church. In 1749 he had a valuation of Church property made, which was followed by taxation of the clergy to the extent of a twentieth part of its revenues. But after Machault's fall in 1757 this tax was taken off, although the Ministry of the Abbé de Bernis would hardly have had much scruple in paying this price for the deliverance of France as she was after Rosbach, on the verge of bankruptcy and defeated at all points, and styled "Madame Job" in a well-known correspondence of the day. It was not until after these disasters that the moral blows were dealt, the Savoy Vicar's confession of faith in "Emile," and then Voltaire's "Sermon des Cinquante," which were the signal for a general and open assault. A little later, in 1768, came Puységur's attack on the right of the clergy to hold property, which gave rise to a whole series of similar publications. Six years afterwards Turgot became Minister. Of an

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inflexible character, he was not devoid of moderation in office, although his purpose never varied. His policy consisted of abolition of all privileges and equal taxation for all. These ideas inspired the famous six edicts which brought about his fall, especially the first relating to the *corvées*. The clergy's claim to exemption from public burdens seemed to him just as untenable as that of the *noblesse*. When, however, the Keeper of the Seals expressed the opinion that the clergy might at all events be excepted for the present, Turgot agreed, adding that "after deducting the tithe and the surplice-fees the Church property was not very considerable." But he maintained the principle, and, as matters stood, the clergy were fully justified in treating him as an antagonist, not so much on account of his financial policy, which recognised the principle of adequate compensation for all vested interests, as because he had, immediately on his assumption of office, submitted to the King a plan for re-constructing the entire French educational system and placing it in the hands of lay teachers. In this respect Talleyrand became Turgot's executor in the Constituent Assembly. The revolution intended by the Minister was so vast, and, it must also be added, so premature and so questionable in its proposed scope, that his wish to introduce toleration for all forms of worship, and his subsequent suggestion to the King at Rheims to omit the promise to extirpate heretics from the oath, sink into complete insignificance

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beside it. As a matter of course the clergy took care to join the coalition of menaced interests to which Turgot fell a victim.

Such were the conflicts in which Talleyrand received his training. He signed without a moment's hesitation petitions of his order demanding the condemnation of Voltaire's works or stringent measures against the Protestants, and drafted memorials which endeavoured to prove that the clergy owed no feudal services to the Crown. His orthodoxy was unimpeachable, but his sympathies were on the other side. He refers with finished irony to "the importation of conscience into all these questions of pounds, shillings, and pence, the treatment of which became, in consequence, marked by a certain eloquence, such as the clergy alone has at its command." He saw without feelings of regret that Loménie de Brienne, at that time still Archbishop of Toulouse, suppressed many ecclesiastical orders under the pretext of reform, and checked the spread of the philosophic movement among the ambitious members of the clergy. When the assembly at Rheims had concluded its sittings, he returned to Paris, ostensibly for two years' further study of theology in the Sorbonne, but in reality to enjoy himself, and lay a foundation for his career. "In those days," he writes in his Memoirs, "I knew ambition only in its good sense; my aim was to attempt everything which I felt able to do well. . . . The thought of Cardinal Richelieu, who

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has such a fine monument in the Sorbonne church, was in this respect not calculated to discourage me." It was certainly anything but discouraging, for from first to last the theologian element turned the scale in the politics of the day.

The eighteenth century, transported from the domain of Christianity into that of philosophy, believed in the same ideal of a perfect State, and of a wise and happy people—"un peuple neuf," as Turgot expresses it—which, under the transparent veil of Salent's generous delusion, had inspired the successor of Louis XIV. with enthusiasm. Fénelon, who wished to limit the royal prerogative by transferring part of it to the Estates, the Abbé de St. Pierre, who, like St. Simon, wanted to see the country governed by elective councils, are the forerunners and pioneers of the "constitutionals" in 1789. Chamfort, afterwards a friend of Talleyrand's, who was himself in his youth destined for the priesthood, and never lost sight of Church matters, remarks somewhere that thirty decrees of the Constituent Assembly could be found in the "Éducation d'un Prince," by the Jansenist Duguet. The religious disputes were a training-school for the parliamentary opposition; the dead weight of an enforced orthodoxy produced contempt for an authority which was satisfied with outward submission. Turgot, like Talleyrand, had been a pupil in the Sorbonne. Sieyès framed the political creed of the Revolution in the authoritative

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language which he had learned in the seminary. Grégoire, a blameless priest who looked for the advent of a new reformation with the fanaticism of a doctrinaire, brought in the motion for the establishment of a Republic. Two bishops were colleagues of the Abbé Sieyès in the constitutional committee of 1789. The constitutions of the years III. and VIII. were for the most part the work of theologians, and four theologians, Fouché, Talleyrand, Montesquiou, and the Abbé Louis, introduced parliamentary government in the Ministry of 1815. From this point of view Talleyrand had every reason to congratulate himself "d'avoir été trempé dans les eaux du Styx."

The first acquaintance which he made on his entry into Paris society was that of his mother, who had several surprises in store for him. Possessed of great intellectual distinction and charm, and without the slightest pretension, she was always careful to avoid emphasis: "Elle ne parlait que par nuances; jamais elle n'a dit un bon mot: c'était quelque chose de trop exprimé." From his intercourse with her he derived a mistrust of the intelligence of those who employ technical expressions, have no corresponding terms at their command, and insist upon always defining. But he did not deny himself the luxury of a *bon mot.* His first appearance in society is said to have been marked by one, in the days of Louis XV. and in Madame du Barry's *salon.* The gentlemen surround-

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ing her were relating their adventures, but the young Abbé remained silent. "You tell us nothing," remarked the favourite, turning towards him. "Alas, no, Madam; a melancholy reflection occurred to me." "What?" "How much easier it is to win the favour of a woman than to obtain preferment in a city like Paris."

The King's reply to this sally is said to have been the gift of the benefice of St. Denis at Rheims, and with his first receipts Talleyrand paid the arrears which his father owed to the Collège d'Harcourt for his education. About this time he stayed several months in Strasburg, to hear the professors of constitutional law, Schöpflin and Koch. The latter, although a Protestant, was considered an authority on the canon law in German Catholic circles. Narbonne, Ségur, Tracy, Rayneval, and Bignon among the French, and Cobenzl and Metternich among the Germans, attended his lectures. Talleyrand met him subsequently in the committees of the Constituent Assembly as representative of the interests of his Alsatian co-religionists.

Talleyrand, now known as the Abbé de Périgord, took an apartment, on his return to Paris, in the convent of Bellechasse, Rue St. Dominique, where Madame de Genlis was his neighbour. There he collected a small library of fine editions in choice bindings, and surrounded himself with friends. The

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eldest of them, Choiseul-Gouffier, had just returned after a long absence spent in travelling, and had married in Paris. There are some nice letters from Talleyrand to him, written when he was appointed ambassador at Constantinople shortly afterwards. In the Memoirs Talleyrand calls him one of those ordinary minds, "whose fate is to resolve themselves into forms." His opinion of the brilliant colonel of the Piedmont regiment, Count Louis de Narbonne, is even less enthusiastic. His name has often been mentioned in connection with that of Talleyrand, but the latter says that their relations did not go beyond mere comradeship, and hints that Narbonne was more entertaining than trustworthy, and that he was witty at the expense of good taste. You can read between the lines that Talleyrand thought this darling of Parisian drawing-rooms rather vulgar. Lauzun, then and afterwards notorious and famous as Duc de Biron, was evidently a much greater favourite of his. He calls him brave, romantic, generous, and witty. His own taste, with all its reputation for refinement, could tolerate every kind of moral corruption, as long as the tone was correct and the manners faultless. The saying that in the eighteenth century want of propriety found expression in actions but never in words applies to him more than any one else. Chamfort's notes preserve the tone of the conversation which probably passed at the Abbé de Périgord's breakfast-table.

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Besides the too carefully discussed *chronique scandaleuse*, some interesting *mots* were uttered. It must be Talleyrand who recommends a friend with the remark that "we must manufacture a little public opinion in his favour." Even more in his style is the pointed reply to the observation, "Vous aimez beaucoup la considération"—"J'en ai pour moi, ce qui m'attire quelquefois celle des autres." And the description of France as "an absolute monarchy tempered by lampoons" is probably also his.

Chamfort is certainly worth reading: "I cannot resist the pleasure of rubbing the most electrical head I have ever met with," says Mirabeau of him. Chamfort afterwards boasted that he had proclaimed his doctrines to the world by the mouth of Talleyrand from the tribune of the Constituent Assembly. His influence over the Abbé Sieyès was far greater. It is known that he suggested the inflammatory title of the pamphlet "What is the Third Estate?" The commentary on it is equally saturated with his spirit, and with the revolt against the existing order of things which distinguishes the revolutionists from the reformers. Of a milder disposition, but of scandalous conduct, was another friend of Talleyrand's, the Abbé Delille, the poet of the "Jardins." Count Lauraguais must have interested Talleyrand more by his essays on French constitutional questions than by his tragedies. Both Chamfort and Talleyrand have spoken with crushing

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severity of another of his guests, Rulhière, the popular historian of the day. His remark, " Je n'ai jamais fait de la vie qu'une méchanceté," is said to have drawn from Talleyrand the retort: " Quand finira-t-elle?" An invitation to breakfast did not necessarily imply affection, but might sometimes be compatible with mutual respect. This was the case with Dupont de Nemours, Turgot's friend and colleague, an enthusiastic " economist," whose optimism Talleyrand often ridiculed, but to whom he was sincerely attached. Panchaud, the Geneva banker, was a leading member of the set. Driven from Geneva by political troubles, he had, like Clavière, Dumont, Necker, and other of his fellow-countrymen, found a second home in Paris. Talleyrand calls him an extraordinary man, of an ardent and comprehensive mind and unerring intelligence. " Every kind of eloquence was at his command. If genius consists of a twin capacity for thought and feeling, then Panchaud certainly possessed it. I could quote a thousand instances of his magnanimity, his gaiety, and the uprightness of his character." And he adds: " Panchaud told Calonne, Meilhan, Foulon, and myself, over and over again, that, as Europe was circumstanced, whichever of the two countries France and England most carefully carried out his plan for the redemption of the public debt would win the day. England adopted his system, and took the lead in Europe for thirty years." Both Talleyrand and

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Mirabeau profited by Panchaud's teaching. The latter calls him the only man in France who understood the art of not killing the goose which laid the golden eggs. Mirabeau, who had just served a term of three years' imprisonment at Vincennes, was known only by the excesses of his youth and the scandals of his private life. The first house where he was received at this time, and afterwards on his return from England to Paris in 1785, was Talleyrand's, who was not slow to do justice to his vast though tarnished abilities.

His ideas of social intercourse may be gathered from his criticism of others. At the Swedish ambassador's, Count Kreutz, he submitted to the reading of Marmontel's "Contes" and stayed till "Numitor" was reached, but did not come a second time. He does not say whether he laughed when he listened to the immortal dialogue in "Figaro" at the Polignacs: "J'étais né pour être courtisan."—"On dit que c'est un métier si difficile."—"Recevoir, prendre et demander, voilà le secret en trois mots." But he makes no secret of having listened to the end of Delille's "Jardins," the "Révolution de Russie," as Rulhière's work was then called, and Guibert's "Connétable de Bourbon," simply because it was a *sine qua non* for would-be members of intellectual society. For the same reason he went to hear music, while taking no part in the controversy between the followers of Piccini and Gluck. But there is no doubt that neither recitals

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nor concerts were given in Bellechasse. *Belles-lettres* occupied a subordinate position there, and rhetoric made no impression. Talleyrand says cuttingly of Choiseul-Gouffier: "If he had admired Buffon's beautiful periods less as a young man, he would have been a writer of some distinction." He himself had read with advantage Voltaire's "Temple du Goût," in which, at the inner shrine, the great masters of literature improve their works by pruning them. After his first printed speech on public credit, loudly applauded by the old Geneva banker Rilliet, Talleyrand carefully put aside everything that had called forth this noisy admiration: "A frigid demeanour and an appearance of reserve first gave the idea that I was a man of parts." From the beginning he tried to come into contact with the celebrities of the day, and obtained the *entrée* to the Ministers, the frivolous old Maurepas, the Secretary of the Marine, de Castries, and Malesherbes, who had withdrawn into private life. He visited Turgot in the stern retirement of his concluding years, and afterwards Turgot's most powerful opponent, Choiseul, at Chanteloup, and in 1778 received Voltaire's apostolic benediction with calculated ostentation. There was nothing to lose and everything to gain by joining the opposition under Louis XVI.

It was not difficult for him to ingratiate himself with women, although the Duchesse de Broglie refers to "the insolent familiarity of the grand ladies of

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the day, who took all kinds of liberties." Foremost among them was the Duchesse de Grammont, sister of Choiseul, to whom she devoted herself with an affection bordering on idolatry, "not handsome, fair, buxom, and sprightly, of lofty character and powerful and unprejudiced mind. She would have been eloquent, were eloquence compatible with an unpleasing voice. She wrote well, and there was something at once attractive and imperious in her manner. In her own *salon* she allowed only one opinion: all who were on Choiseul's side were accepted; the others were not even tolerated. To her worship of her brother she united loyalty to her friends. Love had been only a brief episode of her youth. She maintained up to the close of her life the position which she had conquered for herself in society."

It was this lady who addressed the young Abbé de Périgord by his name when they first met: "Why did you say 'Ah! Ah!' when I called you, Monsieur l'Abbé?" she asked. "I did not say 'Ah! Ah!' but 'Oh! Oh!'" was the reply. Talleyrand, who for a wonder relates this anecdote, "cette misérable réponse," as he styles it, was soon invited everywhere: once a week to Madame d'Héricourt's, a literary dinner; to Madame de Boufflers' in Auteuil; to Madame La Reynière's, the wife of the *Fermier-Général*, whose cook was considered the best in Paris. Madame de Montesson, afterwards second wife of the Duke of

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Orléans, whose house, "à l'extrémité de la décence," was thought one of the pleasantest in Paris, gave performances of plays written by herself; a box was reserved "pour le clergé un peu dissipé," in which Talleyrand found a place kept for him next to Loménie de Brienne and Dillon, the Archbishops of Toulouse and Narbonne. Dillon, an aristocratic man of Irish descent, shrewd and unprejudiced, and well versed in worldly matters, has much in common with the Abbé de Périgord. "Your Grace," said Louis XVI. to him one day, "it is said that you are in debt, and even greatly in debt." "Sire," rejoined the prelate ironically, "I will consult my steward on the point, and then do myself the honour of reporting thereon to your Majesty." They were the days of *la sérénissime banqueroute* and enormous deficits; who could be expected to trouble his head about economy in the household or in the State?

Without being handsome, Talleyrand was a favourite with women. A portrait taken in his youth depicts him with wavy hair, slightly powdered, and tied into a pigtail with a black ribbon. The eyes look forth from beneath the brows with a cheerful assurance; a slightly turned-up nose and a prominent chin give the face a look of audacity and calm energy. The expression of misanthropy about the mouth was a product of much later years.

The only thing now required to assure the social

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position of the elegant young Abbé was an attitude of marked opposition to the opinions of the day, "so as not to be confounded with the multitude." Talleyrand fixed on Necker as the most suitable object of this. The latter had succeeded Turgot since the 22nd of October, 1776, after a brief *interregnum* of a few nobodies. Greeted by the Court as a deliverer, but also hailed as a saviour by the people, not feared, and rightly, by the clergy in his capacity of Protestant, he was branded by the economists as an opponent of Turgot and "the system."

Talleyrand ranged himself with emphasis on the side of this minority. He declined in a marked way to enter Necker's house, called him a bad statesman and a worse Minister, and a corrupter of morals into the bargain, because his extravagant loans had encouraged the selfishness of speculators to an unheard-of extent. He made fun of his pointed head, his awkward manners, and his frequent fits of absence of mind; he even went further, and accused "the charlatan" of having impoverished France to enrich a couple of dozen firms in Geneva. This slashing invective directed against a Minister who was the idol and slave of public opinion seems like an echo of Chamfort's words, which were probably spoken at Talleyrand's breakfast-table: "The public, the public! how many fools does it take to make a public?"

The public of France was just then on the point of

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surprising the world by a change of front. The American colonies had risen against the mother-country, and Montesquieu's fellow-countrymen took their side. Here at last was a subject on which King and people felt alike. Long years of humiliation, the loss of Canada, the disasters in India, defeats on the high seas, lowered prestige in Europe, and decline of national prosperity, all might be made good if they could only turn upon the hated foe and strike a blow at England in America. In vain did Necker, like Turgot before him, warn the public against warlike preparations with an empty treasury. His protest was drowned in the storm of youthful enthusiasm, which saw no contradiction in restoring the prestige of the Crown by means of a struggle which was to bring to the people a freedom moulded on the pattern of a democracy beyond the seas, itself ignorant of its own destiny.

Talleyrand saw the men of his own standing depart, Noailles, Damas, Lauzun, Montesquiou, Chastellux, who was somewhat older, Stedingk and Fersen, two young Swedes naturalised in France, La Fayette, Mauduit, La Rouerie, La Luzerne, Gouvion, and the rest of them, the knights-errant whose names are known to history as the Gallo-Americans. But there is not a syllable to show that the young Abbé envied them their departure or approved of their decision. Possibly he shared Narbonne's opinion that there was

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enough republicanism to be found in France without going elsewhere to seek it. The Memoirs profess but little admiration for the philosophers, who examined every point in the controversy and carefully weighed the sovereign's prerogative and the people's rights one against the other, while a petty, quarrelsome, and shortsighted policy made the Government an accomplice in all these extravagances. Then comes the satirical description of La Fayette, the hero of the piece, who would have remained forgotten and undistinguished his whole life through had not extraordinary events called him out of the ranks. "There was nothing in him above the common; he was below the level at which people gain a reputation for ability. There seemed to be something learnt by rote both in his desire for popularity and mode of acquiring it. His actions appear to be foreign to his nature and inspired by others. Unfortunately no one is likely to boast of having inspired him at the critical moment of his life." And Talleyrand continues: "The grand gentlemen of my young days had the peculiarity of thinking that they had discovered, and consequently of valuing all the more highly, everything that was new to them. Where should we be without America? you heard then on all sides. It procures us a navy, said Malouet; it extends our commerce, said Raynal; it provides for our surplus population, said the administrators; it is an outlet for our turbulent spirits, said

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the Ministers; it is a refuge for all our nonconformists, said the philosophers. . . ."

Are our differences less, our malcontents fewer in number, our wars shorter? retorts Talleyrand; and then he treats the American enthusiasts to a historical disquisition on the national movement towards the East, the importance of the Mediterranean, and the colonisation of Africa, every line of which reflects the great traditions of French policy, the teachings of Montesquieu, and the dazzling vision of a dominion marked out by climate, customs, and character for the Latin race, which the author of "L'Esprit des Lois" extols as the ideal of Charlemagne, and Napoleon's imagination made use of in the construction of his empire. At every stage of his stirring public life Talleyrand remained true to these ideas, by which he sought to attain the goal of his statesmanship—peace and the English alliance. For England the supremacy of the sea, and great colonies in distant lands; for France the control of the old world, if not direct, then secured by a well-knit system of alliances, which would recognise her unquestioned supremacy in the Mediterranean, and leave the north coast of Africa under her sway.

It is Talleyrand's rare merit that, even when all around him embarked in pursuit of illusions, he never required experience to keep him on the *terra firma* of reality.

The only trace of his participation in the American

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war is the equipment of a privateer against England, in conjunction with his friend Choiseul-Gouffier, a speculation the result of which is not known. The first political negotiations in which he took part were concerned with the treaty of commerce with England, which was foreseen at the Peace of Versailles in 1783, but not concluded till 1786. At his uncle's, the Archbishop of Rheims, he made the acquaintance in the summer of 1783 of Pitt, who was then four-and-twenty, and with his friends Elliot and Wilberforce was employing a short rest from his parliamentary work in learning French and paving the way for that very treaty. The two young men gave each other lessons in their respective languages, and exchanged ideas. Talleyrand saw perfectly clearly that the great industrial superiority of the English would secure them every advantage in the immediate future, and that the French Government would get nothing but reproaches. But in spite of this he clung to the principle of free trade. No country, he wrote to Mirabeau in 1786, would reap greater benefit from the treaty than France, thanks to its natural advantages, and in course of time a *rapprochement* with England would be brought about. The same view is expressed in his Memoirs: "In time each of the two countries would have adapted itself to the conditions of production assigned to it by nature, and as a final result the principle of free trade would have won the

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day. Prejudice willed it otherwise." Like Turgot, Talleyrand committed the unpardonable error of being a century ahead of his generation.

In 1780 he was appointed Agent-General of the Clergy. His colleague was Boisgelin, a cousin of the Cardinal-Archbishop of that name, whose mode of life created such scandal that all real influence passed to Talleyrand. The latter found useful subordinates in Mannay, Bourlier, and Duvoisin, who afterwards became bishops of Trèves, Évreux, and Nantes. Of Desrenaudes, whose name has so often been mentioned in connection with his on important occasions, he remarks pointedly that "he had great skill in carrying out the ideas of other people." A very able man also was the Abbé Louis, "a financier to his last gasp," as Talleyrand used to say of him. This group produced two Finance Ministers and several excellent servants of the State. Talleyrand did not hide from himself that his order was daily losing prestige owing to the repeated attacks made on it, and, by way of remedy, he took a step in the assembly of the clergy of 1782 which he rightly judged would have earned gratitude for the Church. The proposal was to buy the royal lottery, which was so pernicious to small investors, from the State, then suppress it, and meet the deficit by a voluntary annual grant, thus making a pecuniary sacrifice "in order to set the example of a lofty morality." The motion met with no support, and Talleyrand drew the conclusion

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that he had to deal with people who were much too feeble to wield the arms which he was ready to put in their hands.

But he was not discouraged, and his second proposal went beyond the first in scope and importance. On the ground that the existing provisions of the law were carried out only in the letter and not in the spirit, he moved that the stipends of the parochial clergy should be raised from five hundred livres to a sum not exceeding seven hundred and fifty, in proportion to the increase in the cost of the necessaries of life. The proposal seemed simple enough, but as a matter of fact it hit one of the worst blots of the *ancien régime*. The Church courted opposition, not only by its vast wealth, but also by the unequal distribution of it. There were ecclesiastical dignitaries whose revenues ranged between four hundred thousand and a million livres, and poor *curés* who had to beg their scanty means of subsistence from the impoverished community in whose service they passed their lives without hope of preferment. In the period preceding the Revolution there arose a whole literature of memorials and pamphlets on this subject. The writers complained that those who served the altar could not live by the altar, that priests overtaken by age and sickness were left a prey to grinding poverty, and they depicted the distress of vicars in receipt of two hundred and fifty livres a year, while the Abbé de Vermont,

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prelector to the Queen, drew eighty thousand livres, and many archbishops from a hundred thousand to two hundred thousand. "I pity," writes Voltaire, "the fate of the country *curé* who has to wrest his tithe from the wretched peasant, or go to law against him, in order to secure the portion of peas and lentils which forms his miserable subsistence. Still more do I pity the substitutes, who, for a pittance of forty ducats flung to them by the monks, perform the laborious duties of their office the whole year through, day and night, for miles around, and in all weathers."

The sequel of Talleyrand's attempts at reform was remarkable. The lottery was considerably increased by the advice of Casanova, and the famous decree of the War Department in 1781, making the grant of all officers' commissions dependent on proof of noble birth, was accompanied by another royal decree enacting that benefices and abbeys should in future be bestowed only on members of the *noblesse*.

The consequences of this blindness were seen in 1789. At the elections the Government had reckoned on the devoted support of the sixty thousand members of the lower clergy, wrongly so styled,—"expression étrange pour désigner un prêtre faisant son devoir," says Chamfort. But the hundred and eighty-seven priests returned as deputies had every reason not to make common cause with the prelacy, which had so long refused them justice, and their desertion to the

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ranks of the Third Estate turned the scale in its favour.

When men bethought them of the wise counsels which might have prevented this result, it was too late.

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CHAPTER III.

THE CALONNE MINISTRY AND MIRABEAU'S MISSION TO BERLIN.

(1786, 1787.)

IN the eighties Talleyrand used often to stay in the provinces, especially in Brittany, the Estates of which gave him an opportunity of studying the working of the French administrative machine in one of its original forms. While staying with Madame de Girac, the sister-in-law of the Bishop of Rennes, he wrote some *vers d'occasion* in her album, and jokingly referred to the second line as containing a sort of autobiography :—

> "Et que me fait à moi qu'on soit belle ou jolie,
> À moi qui, par raison, ai fait une folie ?"

He had, however, already succeeded in alleviating his lot. The social chronicles of the day mention the beautiful and gentle Countess Buffon, the daughter-in-law of the great naturalist, as one of the women to whom he had paid his addresses. Perhaps the relentlessness of his hostility to the Duke of Orléans may be partially explained by the fact that the Countess, "a sweet young creature, whose unselfishness and devotion

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gained for her the indulgence of all who knew her," was the Duke's mistress when the Revolution broke out. Talleyrand, moreover, did not always deal tenderly with women who had been the object of his erratic affections. During the period before the outbreak of the Revolution he was captivated by the Countess Flahaut, to whom he remained warmly attached for a considerable time. Married to an elderly man, whose position at Court gave him the privilege of living in the Louvre, Madame de Flahaut differed in one characteristic point from the women around her. They all talked politics: "Each has her particular party; every chatterbox in the *quartier* discusses the affairs of the nation and is full of schemes of government. . . . The women are the death of me; they talk and talk, but know nothing and have never learnt how to think," writes a sensible old lady, Madame de Créquy, who, however, was herself a reader of Grotius and Puffendorf. Talleyrand himself has a quiet laugh at Madame de Staël and Madame de Simiane, "who in the interval of a dance discourse to their partners on the sovereignty of the West and the tobacco duty in Virginia." Madame de Flahaut, on the other hand, hated politics. To be rid of them, she devoted those stirring times to the composition of an idyll, which is considered one of the good novels of the day. When the Revolution came she admitted that the distress which it caused her had been pre-

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ceded by a feeling of profound weariness. Her description of the snug corner of a room, "a recess with harp, piano, books, and drawing materials," in which the heroine spends her happy hours, was recognised as a reproduction of her own retreat, under a royal roof, close to the future site of the Jacobin Club, and yet far from the madding crowd. Afterwards, when times had changed, she gave proof of courage and presence of mind and of her knowledge of men. "C'est le poltron le plus entreprenant du monde," she said of Sieyès. Under the Empire she arrived at Saint-Cloud one day from Berlin, to wait upon the Empress Josephine. All of a sudden the Emperor appeared in hunting costume, evidently angry at the delay. "You come from Berlin," he said harshly; "is France liked there?" If I answer Yes, she said to herself, he will think me a fool; if No, he will think me defiant: "Yes, sire," she replied, "France is liked there, as young women are liked by old ones." At the age of four-and-twenty she had a son, and a picture of her, with the child in her lap, painted by Madame Vigée-Lebrun, "a Penelope, fair as Venus and of such retiring modesty that she concealed her name from the public," adorned the *Salon* of that year. The son was Count Flahaut, a *protégé* of Napoleon's and employed by him both in a military and diplomatic capacity, who had the well-known *liaison* with Queen Hortense, and was the father of the Duc de Morny.

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The creator of the Second Empire used to boast among his intimates of his descent, to which he could certainly lay claim on the score of talent. Talleyrand speaks often and disparagingly of Flahaut. His references to the mother in the Memoirs are of such a character as to injure his own reputation more than hers. After the death of her first husband on the scaffold she married the Portuguese Minister Souza in 1802, and lived thenceforward in Paris, where she died in 1836.

During the period in which a passionate devotion to women was the predominant feature of Talleyrand's life, he had never relaxed in his interest in public affairs, and they now assumed an aspect for which he had been so specially prepared by study and experience that from henceforth the attention of his contemporaries remains fixed upon him. Since the conclusion of peace with England, finance had absorbed all other interests to an extent such as had been unknown since the days of Law; a shrewd female observer calls it "the epoch of banking schemes and finance." Private speculation held out prospects of wealth, the allurements of which even the prudent *petit bourgeois* found it difficult to resist, while the State, with its continually widening deficits, was glad to avail itself of private resources.

In those days of "financial innocence," however, there were only three banks in Paris, and one of them

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was the discount bank founded by Turgot in 1776, the affairs of which were in a very satisfactory state. The Finance Minister, d'Ormesson, applied to it for a secret loan of six millions to the Treasury. The public got wind of the transaction, the customers withdrew their deposits, and the bank, whose cash reserve was quite insufficient, obtained from the Minister an extension of the time fixed for repayment. Talleyrand, as representative of the clergy, was one of the principal shareholders. He proposed a reconstruction of the articles of association and the formation of a new bank with the special object of improving public credit, to which he referred in a way that secured him the approbation of the new Finance Minister, Calonne, formerly Intendant of Lille, whom Court favour and intrigue had entrusted with the destinies of France.

Calonne, whom Niebuhr has compared to Egmont, conducted the affairs of his department in the spirit of a gambler. He encouraged the Court in extravagance, and promoted speculations of the riskiest character, both at home and abroad, which he influenced by means of pamphlets and newspaper articles. He had been Minister for rather more than a year when Mirabeau returned from England to Paris, in April 1785. The latter's fortunes were at their lowest ebb; he was well-nigh penniless, at enmity with his father, covered with disgrace by the divorce suit in the court of Aix, and reduced to such desperate shifts

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as stealing his sister's watch and extorting money from his mother. His hope of obtaining employment at some Court of northern Europe had been disappointed. In Paris the only houses open to the disreputable adventurer were those of two actresses, Julie Carreau, better known as Talma's wife, and the singer St. Huberti, who afterwards married d'Antraigues, one of Mirabeau's dubious friends. Grimm's correspondence speaks of Mirabeau as the "modern Aretino." The only people of any importance who still took an interest in him were Dupont de Nemours, who had known him since 1771; Chamfort, to whom he writes in a submissive strain, "as a disciple to a master"; and especially Clavière of Geneva, who had made his acquaintance at Neuenburg in 1782. Clavière took him to Panchaud, where he met Talleyrand again, who commended the Minister's financial plans to him. Panchaud being Court banker and in constant communication with Calonne, the latter's attention was drawn to Mirabeau, and he was induced to avail himself of the pen which had already given proof of its rough, sledge-hammer force. Michaud's quotation from a letter in which Mirabeau renders a similar service to the Abbé de Périgord and writes to Calonne, "You will never find a discreeter, more grateful or less ambitious man," only proves that Mirabeau misunderstood his position, as he had often done before: Talleyrand was in the Minister's confidence; he himself

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was merely tolerated, and paid into the bargain. It was in Calonne's pay, even if, as he assures us, in complete accord with his own convictions, that he brought out, one after the other, in co-operation with Clavière and Brissot, the pamphlets on the discount bank, and against the Spanish bank of San Carlos and the Paris Waterworks Company. The latter then managed to convert the Minister to their views, and Mirabeau was thrown over. The result would have been a rupture between him and Calonne at that stage, had not Lauzun, who had known Mirabeau since the Corsican campaign of 1767, and Talleyrand, who never lost sight of him, interposed and prevailed on him to go to Germany at the end of 1785, first to Brunswick and then to Berlin, with good introductions and the prospect of an official mission later on.

Both knew perfectly well what they had to expect from their *protégé*. During his imprisonment at Vincennes Dupont de Nemours had sent him the paper on "the municipalities," *i.e.* the elective provincial and communal assemblies, which he had written for Turgot. Mirabeau took a copy of it and tried to pass it off as his own on Calonne, to whom Dupont exposed the trick by producing the original manuscript. Not content with that, Mirabeau endeavoured after Calonne's fall to sell the copy as a work of Turgot's. In letters still preserved in the archives of the French Foreign Office he tries to

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justify himself to Talleyrand by throwing suspicion on Clavière. In spite of all this Talleyrand stuck to him. All Mirabeau's cyphered despatches from Berlin, where he was employed on a secret mission from July 1786 to the end of January 1787, were revised by the Abbé de Périgord, with the exception of three, which passed through Lauzun's hands. He toned them down, suppressed offensive passages, warned Louis XVI. through Prussian statesmen of an "Austrian Ministry" under Breteuil, gave a new lustre to the prestige surrounding the Duke of Brunswick's name, and by this means served up, first to the Minister, and then to the King, a diplomatic dish which they found much more piquant than the official reports of the Ambassador d'Esterno. It probably reminded them of the secret diplomacy by which Louis XV. not only controlled, but often thwarted and even misled, his own Ministers, the traditions of which were passed on to Talleyrand by Favier himself, who conducted it.

Thus began, in the awe-inspiring proximity of the dying Frederick, Mirabeau's and Talleyrand's apprenticeship to diplomacy. The one figures as an anonymous ambassador, the other as a Minister *in partibus* of a policy of peace, which in this conjuncture was not in conflict with Vergennes' official strategy. Ten years before this Joseph II. had sounded France on the proposed cession of a part of the Netherlands in exchange for Bavaria, and had met

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with a refusal from Vergennes on the ground that France and public opinion generally would not regard an extension of territory as any compensation for Austria's aggrandisement. "Something of 'L'Esprit des Lois' is penetrating into diplomacy," is Sorel's remark on this. But there were not only sentimental but good practical reasons for the answer. Since the occurrences in Poland the French Cabinet had very naturally imbibed a distaste for a policy of partitions and annexations from which it had nothing to gain. Mirabeau held the same views. His admiration for Prussia and her great monarch was all the more sincere because he thought Frederick's work could not outlive him. It is true he writes: "If Prussia falls to pieces, then the art of government will sink into its second childhood." But he considered the greatest triumph of enlightened despotism and philosophy as irretrievably lost when the king breathed his last on the 17th of August, 1786: "The first cannon-shot will shatter the whole fabric of mediocrity; where is the pilot?" In his later despatches from Berlin he lapses into the style of the pamphleteer. He did not wait there to be undeceived by the events of 1787, when Frederick's successor sent a body of troops into Holland, with the result that the patriotic party supported by France was put to flight, and an alliance concluded between Prussia, Holland, and England. Joseph II. is reported to have said: "France has

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fallen, and I doubt whether she will ever rise again." Vergennes, who died in February 1787, escaped the humiliating discomfiture of French policy in Holland. Talleyrand felt the full significance of it, and this first indirect participation in the negotiations of the two Cabinets left in his mind that mistrust of Prussia, which, although forced into the background for a time by other exigencies of French policy, always remained an essential factor of his own.

Five of his letters to Mirabeau during the Berlin mission have been preserved. Such affectionate assurances as: "J'aime bien à vous dire, mon cher comte, que c'est pour la vie que je vous suis tendrement attaché," were soon followed by recriminations of the kind which no one who had dealings with the fiery hero escaped. When Talleyrand tells him what satisfaction his efforts were giving, there comes the rejoinder: "I will not conceal from you, cher maître, how surprised I was at the expression you used: 'his services are valuable, but he spends a great deal of money.' . . . Do they consider me too expensive? Two hundred pistoles a month and an assured future, or my recall. Your friend is not a man to sit with a leg on each side of the fence. In a word, by birth I am above most of His Majesty's Ministers." The future leader of the democracy was the son of a man who used to say that the Medici were the only *mésalliance* in his family, a perfectly unwarranted state-

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ment, for, as a matter of fact, there never was any alliance between the two families. But Mirabeau's pride of rank was in no way behind Talleyrand's. When advices from Paris foreshadowed the convocation of the Notables by Calonne, Mirabeau, who had suggested the idea, in one of his later letters to Talleyrand makes use of the expression which was to determine the course of the Revolution: "Je regarde comme un des plus beaux jours de ma vie celui où vous m'apprenez la convocation des Notables, qui, sans doute, précédera de peu celle de l'Assemblée nationale." He then returned to Paris. The relations between the two did not improve after they had met. Some observations which Talleyrand had ventured to make about Madame de Nehra, a Dutch lady, who, although Mirabeau was married, followed him about everywhere in a mistaken spirit of devotion, provoked the latter to upbraid the Abbé de Périgord with "perfidie." A letter to d'Antraigues, "la fleur des drôles," the aristocratic *chevalier d'industrie*, who seems mixed up in many intrigues of the day, is still more outspoken. "My misfortunes," writes Mirabeau of Talleyrand in April 1787, "have put me in the power of this wretched, mean, greedy, intriguing creature, and, what is more, I am obliged to treat him with forbearance. The result is nothing but dirt and money. He has bartered his own honour and his friend for money. He would sell his soul for money, and he would do

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right, for it would be receiving gold in exchange for filth." What had happened to cause such an outbreak as this?

In February 1787, soon after his return from Berlin, Mirabeau, whose rage against Calonne knew no bounds, had written the pamphlet "Dénonciation de l'Agiotage," in which he accused the already tottering Minister of secretly indulging in the stock-broking speculations carried on at the expense of the State, which he publicly condemned and stigmatised. Before publishing it Mirabeau gave the manuscript to the Abbé de Périgord, "un sien ami fort intrigant," as the elder Mirabeau calls him, and asked him to submit it to Calonne. The latter was probably not much mistaken in construing this step as an attempt at blackmail, and he stipulated for certain modifications, for which he made an offer of 3,600 livres through Talleyrand. Thereupon, Talleyrand intimated that he wished to be relieved of his mission; but Mirabeau, irritated by the delay, had already started for Orléans, where the pamphlet was printed. The following lines of Voltaire were adopted as a motto:

> "Pensais-tu qu'un instant ma vertu démentie
> Mettrait dans la balance un homme et la patrie?"

The appendix contained a violent attack on Calonne and a political chapter, which, repeating former demands from other quarters, called for a constitution and representative institutions. Still Calonne

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remained unmoved. To tranquillise public opinion more than for his own protection he procured *lettres de cachet* from the Minister Breteuil, firstly against his own gang, now unmasked, especially the Abbé d'Espagnac, one of the worst of them, and then against their accuser Mirabeau. But he warned him in good time through Talleyrand, who sent him money for his flight across the frontier. A month afterwards he received an autograph letter from Calonne, inviting him to return. "It would not be worthy of you," wrote Calonne, "to sacrifice the welfare of the country to a personal grievance. I will write to you again, in conjunction with the amiable, excellent Abbé de Périgord. Our thoughts are not only occupied with you; we are thinking what we can do for Madame de Nehra."

A Minister who has a clear conscience is seldom as obliging as this, especially to a man whom Rivarol thus satirises:—

> "Puisse ton homélie, ô bouillant Mirabeau,
> Écraser les fripons qui gâtent nos affaires ;
> Un voleur converti doit devenir bourreau,
> Et prêcher sur l'échelle en pendant ses confrères."

It was hardly worth while making peace with Calonne. Mirabeau's wrath was more turned against Talleyrand, who had preferred the Minister to him.

This liking for Calonne finds expression in the Memoirs thirty years afterwards. They refer to his brilliant intelligence, to his rapid and delicate appre-

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hension: "He wrote and spoke well, his style was always clear and elegant; he had the power of embellishing what he knew and concealing what he did not know. . . . He was capable of loyalty and attachment to his friends, but he selected them more with the head than with the heart, and then attributed to affection what was really due to vanity. He was tall and ugly, active and well built, with a clever expression and pleasing voice. In his intrigues for power he had neglected his reputation. His surroundings were disreputable. The public considered him able, but immoral, and when he became Finance Minister he was looked on as a clever steward who manages the affairs of a ruined spendthrift. Adroitness makes a good impression, but does not engender confidence. A man of this stamp is thought heedless of good advice, and incapable of hard work. This was the case with Monsieur de Calonne; like all gifted natures, he was thoughtless and over-confident, and these were his leading characteristics." Talleyrand rendered a notable service to this organiser of disaster, whose energy impressed him in spite of all his failings. When Calonne had decided to convoke the Notables, he had quarrelled with the Parliaments, which withheld all money supplies by refusing to register the royal edicts. Talleyrand was of opinion that the Minister had often been in the right. The 22nd of February, 1787, was fixed for the meeting of the

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Notables; a week beforehand Talleyrand received a note from the Minister, asking him to come to Versailles and assist in drawing up the State papers to be submitted to the assembly. A similar invitation was sent to various other persons, among them Dupont de Nemours. When they all met on the 14th of February in the Minister's cabinet, it turned out that no preparations had been made, that whole piles of papers had to be waded through, and that the preliminary work, for which five months would have been available since the meeting was first mooted, would have to be finished in a week.

Talleyrand undertook the preparation of a scheme for the redemption of the debt of the clergy, and says that it was a good piece of work. It followed Calonne's ideas by adopting as a basis a general land tax and the consequent abolition of all the financial privileges of the two first Estates. Calonne, as is well known, went much farther, and submitted a programme which drew from the King the remark: "This is one of Necker's prescriptions." It really was more one of Turgot's, and when the Notables rejected the Minister's projects, the latter sent copies of the proposed measures to all the clergy and Government servants in the kingdom, who thus learned through an official channel the intended destruction of its administration, and the failure of the attempt on the part of the Crown to make common cause with the people.

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A letter written by Talleyrand at this time to his friend Choiseul-Gouffier, ambassador at Constantinople, shows what far-reaching hopes the Minister's policy had aroused in him, and how completely he had become a convert to the new ideas of reform :—

"Je t'envoie, mon ami, les discours de M. de Calonne, à l'ouverture de l'Assemblée des Notables et les mémoires qui ont été soumis aux discussions des bureaux . . . . . Tu trouveras dans cet envoi d'excellente besogne ; c'est à peu près le résultat de tout ce que les bons esprits pensent depuis quelques années. Les oppositions sont extrêmement fortes ; M. de Calonne a eu le tort de ne pas rendre publics ses mémoires dès le commencement de l'Assemblée ; le public instruit aurait contenu les Notables, qui ont mis leur gloire dans l'opposition, et qu'il est bien difficile actuellement de tirer de cette route-là.

"Pendant plusieurs semaines, Paris a reçu son opinion de l'Assemblée, au lieu que Paris instruit aurait fait à l'Assemblée l'opinion qu'elle devait avoir.

"Ce sont, comme de raison, les privilégiés qui mettent le plus d'activité dans toutes leurs attaques contre M. de Calonne, et maintenant on a fait de l'affaire actuelle une affaire personnelle. On croit qu'en culbutant M. de Calonne ce serait culbuter ses projets, et c'est bien vraisemblable ; mais il parait impossible que le roi ne le soutienne pas ; encore quinze jours, et il a victoire gagnée. Alors il se sera fait par Louis XVI. le plus heureux changement dans l'administration qu'il y ait eu à aucune époque. Des administrations provinciales et plus de privilèges,—c'est la source de tous les biens. Il n'y a rien qui ne puisse être

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fait par les administrations provinciales, et il n'y a pas de changement heureux qui puisse être fait sans elles.

"Mon ami, le peuple sera enfin compté pour quelque chose." . . . . .

This was not to be for a time. Calonne's last expedient, the conciliation of public opinion, was destined to fail through the emphatic disapproval which branded him as a more glaring abuse than any of those which he proposed to reform. Immediately after his fall came Mirabeau's attack on Necker. It was probably in concerted agreement with Talleyrand that he assailed Necker at the moment when the latter was obliged to defend the integrity of his administration against Calonne.

Chamfort and Talleyrand make merry in almost similar terms over the fools' paradise of their friends, who placed their hopes on Calonne's successor, Fourqueux, a disciple of Turgot. Soon afterwards the Queen's influence replaced him by Loménie de Brienne, Archbishop of Toulouse, of whom Talleyrand writes: "Shortly after his accession to office he made advances to public opinion, which, encountering only weakness, increased its demands daily. From the Notables came nothing but complaints, and the advice to summon the States-General. I really cannot see what more they could have done. Every concession on their part would have been valueless, for they had no authority whatever to agree to any such, and they would only

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have made themselves unpopular without any object. It was therefore a tremendous mistake to convoke them without the certainty of being able to control their proceedings. For the incompetence of the Parliaments was admitted directly their competence was called in question by the convocation of the Notables instead of the former, and so they could do nothing more. They rejected every proposition submitted to them on the ground that they had no legal power to treat. Their refusal was punished by dismissal, and this earned them popularity. Then their recall gave them a magnified importance, which they consequently endeavoured to preserve. All these experiments revealed the limits of the royal prerogative without giving it the slightest advantage, and so the Government was confronted with the alternative, either of acting alone, which was impossible on account of the deficit, or of summoning the States-General."

When La Fayette announced Loménie de Brienne's appointment to Washington, he referred to him as "the ablest and most honourable man that could have been selected." The oracle of American democracy, the otherwise so inflexible Jefferson, would apparently have made the same choice as Louis XVI., for he speaks of the Minister as "virtuous, patriotic, and gifted," and even in after years was penetrated with the merits of this "capable and reforming statesman." Talleyrand gives Loménie de Brienne a place in the

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lowest circle of the Inferno of his Memoirs, where the Duke of Orléans reigns as Lucifer. To depict the moral deterioration and social decomposition which preceded the awful catastrophe, their author says that he cannot do better than present the sum of the corruption of the age in the portrait of this one man, and thus "impress for all time on the memory of mankind the characteristics which should disqualify men from taking part in public affairs."

At this stage the question forces itself on us: If the Government was so incapable, society so deteriorated, mankind so degenerate, and the future so threatening, wherein lay the much talked of charm of this expiring world?

There were not a few who denied its existence. When Horace Walpole paid his last visit to France, his impressions were such that the poet Gray replies to one of his letters: "As an Englishman and an anti-Gallican I rejoice at the dulness and nastiness of the French, though I fear we shall come to imitate them in both. I have long been sick at the atheism in their authors, and hated them for it; but I pity their poor innocent people of fashion. They were bad enough when they believed everything." Even Madame de Staël writes in 1786, probably on a rainy day: "Paris society is becoming more uninteresting every day. One no longer wishes to shine in it, and if it were not for play there would be no excitement

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at all in life." But if you had taken her at her word you would have heard a very different story. Chateaubriand's aversion both to the ideas and to the social conditions of the eighteenth century is well known. His famous description of the female atheist is a portrait of a heroine of that day. In our own time one of the best living critics of the seventeenth century, Brunetière, has also accused the eighteenth century of being dull. But these are views of foreigners, opponents and people at a distance. Contemporaries were of a different opinion. Between the monotonous despotism of Louis XV. and the frenzied tyranny of the disciples of the 'Contrat Social' there lies an interval during which France was governed by people of *esprit*. The like of it was not seen again. A comparatively small group of highly-gifted persons, most of them of original intellect or eminent in politics and affairs, discussed with complete freedom the same problems, devoted themselves to the spread of the same ideas, and were buoyed with the same hopes. Leaders of thought in Paris, they felt themselves even more powerful in St. Petersburg and Berlin. It was they who educated princes, guided statesmen, and represented public opinion. With the exception of Rousseau's works nearly all the important books of the age, from Montesquieu down to Sieyès, originated in conversation. Afterwards, when speeches took the place of books, it was the same thing.

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Taine, speaking of the great rhetorical displays in the Constituent Assembly, calls them the performances which had already been rehearsed to an audience of ladies. "What is this inferior book that is being read here?" asked the blind Madame du Deffand as she came into a room one day. It was Rivarol speaking. Another saying, "I do not compose, I converse," is the key to the whole literature. The decay of Atticism in French writing dates from the time when it first became rhetorical with Chateaubriand. Alexis de Tocqueville remarks that if one of these men of the eighteenth century could be recalled to life, electricity and chloroform, steam and the telegraph would not astonish him so much as the monotony of modern society and the mediocrity of modern books. Such a refined culture is only possible in periods of transition, when the old has been discarded, the new not yet tried, and space is left between both for utopias, in which the eighteenth century towards its close believed with an unselfish enthusiasm that covers a multitude of its sins. Its joyous confidence infects even men who do not share in its illusions. "Qui n'a pas vécu avant 1789," said Talleyrand to Guizot, "n'a pas connu le plaisir de vivre." We can believe him, for he never lost his head.

At the first blush it strikes one as almost superficial that a man of such penetration should have begun to

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doubt the permanence of the *ancien régime* when he saw Chamfort arm-in-arm with Vandreuil and met an unknown *abbé* at the Comte d'Artois' card-table. But there is more beneath this. While all around him were raving of liberty and equality, Talleyrand never ceased to believe in the necessity of a hierarchical organisation of society. Those who knew him best called him an "aristocrat by birth, theory, and inclination." An arbitrary etiquette was to him as inexcusable as bad finance. He considered the monarchy as the apex of a social order which from henceforth was to embrace the whole nation. If the Crown mistook the part thus assigned to it, and chose to identify itself with a party, then it was lost. Democracy was knocking at the doors of the future, and Talleyrand had no objection to throwing them wide open. The best side of his character, a prudent reasonableness, recognised the obligations which the democratic movement imposed, and never haggled over the price which it asked. Besides, he coolly calculated what forces were at its back, and by what play of conflicting interests the new régime, like the old one, would be brought under control.

Next to the Duke of Orléans, no one has been more severely condemned by Talleyrand than Sieyès, "who passed off his hatred of his betters as philanthropy, and admitted no compromise; "dédaignant ce qui est connu, il veut aller au-delà." It was after a breakfast at Talleyrand's, in the course of a stroll with his guests

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in the Tuileries gardens, that Sieyès made the rejoinder to Dumont: "La politique est une science que je crois avoir achevée." Barrère utters the last words of the school: "It is your mission to begin history over again." Nothing could be more repugnant to Talleyrand's way of thinking, and his statesmanship was at the other pole. It recognised tradition, took account of experience, and appreciated the utility of compromise in politics and the mission of aristocracies in history.

Talleyrand joined in the movement with the feelings of a man who knows that he has a great task before him.

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CHAPTER IV.

TALLEYRAND BISHOP OF AUTUN AND DEPUTY OF THE CLERGY IN 1789.

1787—1789.

IN 1789 Talleyrand was five-and-thirty years of age. The conditions on which he had sacrificed his independence were about to be fulfilled, for he was on the threshold of the episcopate. The distinctions conferred upon the priest had been deserved by the man of affairs. As Agent-General in the assemblies of the clergy in 1782, 1785, and 1786, his labours had been crowned by such success that his colleagues voted him a special grant of 31,000 livres. In the meanwhile he had experienced a disappointment for which the Church was not responsible, for in 1785 he was on the point of being created a cardinal. The path to this promotion also lay through the *boudoir*.

Among the grand ladies who corresponded with Gustavus III., King of Sweden, one of the royal disciples of philosophy who wrote to Paris to find out how he was to govern at home, was the Countess de Brionne, of the house of Lorraine. Grimm refers to her as one

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of the eminent women of the day. Bachaumont calls her "La superbe Comtesse." Frederick II. received her sons, the Princes de Lambesc and Vaudemont, with great distinction in Berlin. Chamfort attributes to her a frivolous anecdote, which connects her name with that of the Cardinal de Rohan, who was her cousin. Talleyrand stood high in her favour, and it was she who made use of the influence of her royal friend, Gustavus III., and persuaded him to ask Pope Pius VI. for a cardinal's hat for the Abbé de Périgord. The Pope raised no objection to the mediation of the Lutheran sovereign, who was personally known to him, nor to the candidate himself, and the coveted honour seemed within Talleyrand's grasp, when the storm broke out in Paris which carried off among other things his cardinal's hat, never to be seen again. The affair of the diamond necklace revealed the abyss which yawned at the very foot of the throne, and Madame de Brionne sided strongly with the Rohan family. The Queen, smarting with rage and resentment, induced the Court of Vienna, by means of the Austrian ambassador, Count Mercy, to protest against the selection of a Frenchman as member of the Sacred College, on the ground that it was Austria's turn to exercise its right of suggesting a candidate. She carried her point; the nomination was cancelled just in time and was never heard of again. In later years, when the purple would have been a Nessus shirt for

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him, Talleyrand probably congratulated himself on the result. From a worldly point of view, Madame de Brionne made up to him for the hostility of the Queen. "The beauty of a woman," he writes, "her generous pride, and the just pretensions of an illustrious line which has so often neared the throne in an attitude of protection or of menace, enhance the charm of the feelings which she inspires. The recollection of this disfavour at Court is sweeter and pleasanter to me than that of many other happy moments of my life which have left no trace in my thoughts or feelings."

In the midst of this opposition to the Court Talleyrand's thoughts were occupied with the prospect of the archbishopric of Bourges, which would have been particularly welcome on account of its political importance. A second letter to Choiseul reveals his disappointment at being passed over in favour of another.

". . . J'ai été tout ce temps-ci à Rosny; j'ai porté de l'inquiétude sur ta position et du dégoût sur la mienne. Voilà l'archevêché de Bourges donné à l'évêque de Nancy, et l'évêché de Nancy à l'Abbé de la Farre; à présent, qu'est-ce qui arrivera? Je ne prévois plus d'ici à longtemps de mouvement dans le clergé; quand il y en aura, me donnera-t-on la place qui me conviendra et à laquelle je conviendrai? Rien de ce que je désire ne tourne comme je le voudrais; mon ami, je ne suis pas dans un moment de bonheur. Mais cela changera. J'attendrai, et on trouvera peut-être qu'un homme qui a trente-quatre ans, et qui a toujours été occupé d'affaires, qui a fait celles de son

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corps, tout seul, pendant cinq ans, et de qui on s'est loué pendant tout ce temps-là, mérite qu'on le traite un peu mieux.

"Je vais dans quinze jours à l'Assemblée provinciale de Champagne, j'y passerai environ un mois, et de là je viendrai perdre le reste de mon hiver à Paris, puisqu'on ne veut pas me faire employer mon temps ailleurs. Si je peux contribuer à faire faire quelque chose d'utile en Champagne, cela adoucira un peu mon oisiveté. . . . Adieu, je ne me permets pas d'écrire un mot de nouvelles, parce que je veux que ma lettre t'arrive et que tu reçoives de moi un mot qui te dise que c'est de toute mon âme et dans tous les moments de ma vie, heureuse ou contrariée, ou même malheureuse, que je t'aime le plus que tout au monde. . . . Adieu, ne m'écris que quatre lignes, mais écris-moi."

Deputed by his order to join the provincial assembly of the "généralité" of Châlons, Talleyrand found in it a welcome opportunity of promoting the public welfare. Advocated by Fénelon, proposed by the elder Mirabeau, included in Turgot's plans of reform, tried with success by Necker, abandoned after his Ministry and recently demanded by the Notables, these assemblies were at last revived by Loménie de Brienne. Dupont de Nemours, who had assisted Turgot with his pen on a similar occasion in 1774, had a share in framing the edict of 1787, which was all the more acceptable to the Economists because it was accompanied by two other edicts, one introducing complete freedom of trade in grain, and the other

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substituting a money payment in lieu of the *corvées* for the roads. Six members of the clergy, six of the *noblesse*, and twelve of the Third Estate, with a president chosen from among the two first orders, elected twenty-four other deputies for a term of three years, one-fourth of the whole assembly retiring yearly by lot and being replaced by communal and district elections, in which every one who paid ten livres in land or personal taxes was entitled to vote. These assemblies never met again, but the principle underlying them, which approached universal suffrage, did not vanish with them from public life, but determined the composition of the States-General, which, according to Turgot's plan, would have been elected by the provincial assemblies.

Talleyrand was deputed to the assembly as holder of the benefice of St. Denis in the diocese of Rheims; his successor in the post of Agent-General of the clergy, de Montesquiou-Fezensac, was among his colleagues as Abbé of Beaulieu. They met subsequently as constitutional advisers of Louis XVIII., in the Ministry of the first Restoration. Their task was no easy one, for the "généralité" of Châlons represented the old province of Champagne, which was burdened with a heavy taxation, and since the loss of its old constitution had become one of the poorest districts in France.

Talleyrand's uncle, Archbishop of Rheims and pre-

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sident of the assembly, a grave man, who was Cardinal-Archbishop of Paris at his death in 1821, was so far from being hostile to the ideas of the day that a pamphlet advocating the abolition of the celibacy of the clergy was freely circulated at Rheims in 1781 and attributed to him. On opening the session at Châlons he referred to the impending wise and just reform of taxation, "which would coincide with the extinction of the fraudulent and greedy spirit which seeks to withhold from the State what it would be ashamed of refusing in the case of its own private obligations, as if it were possible without incurring the charge of meanness and injustice to look to the State for protection in the quiet enjoyment of one's worldly goods and at the same time refuse society its just dues." The prelate's mode of expressing himself is somewhat clumsy, but his views indicate clearly that the Abbé de Périgord's ideas were not an exception in the Talleyrand family. Talleyrand was elected a member of the committee on imposts and taxes, and according to the historian of the provincial assemblies, two long and exhaustive reports, one on the *taille*, and the other on the land-tax known as the *vingtième*, were probably drawn up by him. In Lavergne's opinion they show the same many-sided knowledge of which Talleyrand afterwards gave proofs in the National Assembly. A more attentive examination of his labours previous to 1789 only

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confirms this view; and it is not unlikely that the nephew inspired the passage commending the study of economical questions with which the Archbishop concluded his parting speech. At Châlons, as in all other parts of the country, only one session was held.

The reforms which these institutions should have introduced, and for which they really did pave the way, had no time to ripen. On the other hand, they brought before the public for the first time, or enhanced the reputation of, persons who afterwards attracted much attention and for the most part became famous. Beugnot, the two Lameths, the Dukes of La Rochefoucauld, Nivernais, Liancourt, and d'Ayen, La Fayette and his brother-in-law Noailles, Molé, Rochambeau, Toulongeon, Lavoisier, Tessé, Menou, the Prince de Broglie, Dietrich, Mayor of Strasbourg, Portalis, and Mathieu de Montmorency, were all members, and showed the liberal-mindedness, the grasp of the requirements of the time, the devoted patriotism and the public-spirited treatment of political and economic problems which marked the attitude of the Monarchical-Constitutionalists during the first months of the Constituent Assembly, and rendered the only good and lasting achievements of the revolutionary era possible. The representatives of the clergy, Sieyès and the Abbé Louis, Lubersac, Bishop of Chartres, Saint Aulaire of Poitiers, La Ferronnays of Bayonne, the Archbishops Champion de Cicé of Bordeaux, Boisgelin of Aix,

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Durfort of Besançon, and Dillon of Narbonne, were not behind their lay colleagues. Some of them yielded to the frivolous influences of the time; but none were wanting in insight or in devotion to the public weal. Especially was this the case with Dillon, whose conduct at the meeting of the States of Languedoc at Montpellier, in January 1789, extorted a tribute of admiration even from Barrère. In July 1788 this prelate, who in point of personal importance was at the head of the French clergy, thanked the King for granting civil rights to the Protestants, and for removing that strange contradiction "which armed the laws against the rights of nature." "The mischief is great," says the concluding report of the last general assembly of the clergy that ever met, "but the remedies are even greater. It is your Majesty's glory, not to be King of France, but King of the French." "It is impossible," says F. Rocquain, "to separate the clergy from the tremendous liberal movement which invaded France in 1789." The apparent contradiction between the often so intolerant and unintelligent attitude of the clergy as a whole, and the warm and openly-expressed sympathy of many bishops with the ideas and demands of the day, was due to considerations not unlike those which in times of revolution make great families take up a different position from small landowners or a court nobility. The two or three hundred still powerful historic houses, which have preserved their con-

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nection with the population by means of inherited estates and unbroken local tradition, can afford to surrender the rights and privileges of their order, for even after the loss of them they remain very much what they were before. But the possessors of worthless titles and offensive prerogatives cling to these as the essence of their social position and national well-being. In the same way the clergy as an order opposed all concessions. When brought into immediate contact with the national interests a divergence appeared in its own, and the motives by which it was swayed were of a conflicting character. The *curés* sided with the Third Estate, to which they belonged. The majority of the episcopate held with the nobility. A considerable number of bishops, however, were as favourable to reform as the constitutional aristocratic minority, which supplied leaders to the movement up to the moment when it plunged headlong down the steep incline of revolutionary dogma.

There is unequivocal testimony to Talleyrand's high opinion of the value of the provincial assemblies, which he held in common with Sieyès. On the 17th of August, 1789, when the crisis was becoming acute, in the course of a speech on finance he advocated the immediate convocation of these assemblies with a view to tranquillising public opinion, providing fresh financial resources, and completing representative institutions. A report on their organisation was to be drawn up

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by the constitutional committee, of which he was a member. But the Constituent Assembly was too absorbed in metaphysical discussions to adopt such practical proposals as these. It was reserved for subsequent legislation to revert to them, and to utilise, to a certain extent at least, the fundamental idea of the provincial assemblies in the French *conseils-généraux.*

This assembly of 1787 was Talleyrand's last school of political experience before he attained complete external independence. He was vicar-general to his uncle at Rheims when his father died on the 4th of November, 1788. On taking leave of the King, shortly before his death, he asked for the bishopric of Autun for the Abbé de Périgord. It was one of the oldest in France, with an income of only 20,000 francs, but with the prospect of the archiepiscopal see of Lyons and the primateship of Gaul.

The often repeated assertion that the King granted the request only after long hesitation rests on no foundation. Louis XVI. had among his clergy dignitaries such as Dom Collignon, Abbé of Metlach, Grimaldi, Bishop of Le Mans, the Cardinals de Rohan and Brienne, who combined the deism of the Savoy Vicar with the prevailing elegant frivolity. The best preacher of the day, the Abbé Maury, was a sceptic like Bassinot, vicar-general of Cahors, whose panegyric of Louis IX. would never have been taken for the

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discourse of a priest speaking of a saint to Christians. Rivarol calls the clergy of his time "as enlightened as the philosophers," and Mercier speaks of them as "the order which has the fewest prejudices." The exaggeration is palpable, the reference being only to the group of worldly prelates. But this minority led the fashion, and Talleyrand matched very well with them. The 2nd of November is the date of the decree in which the King states that he has received satisfactory information concerning "the mode of life, the morals, the doctrine, the piety, and other virtuous and commendable qualities" of the new bishop. The public of Paris was also well informed, and private correspondence endeavoured to satisfy foreign curiosity, as, for instance, a letter written to St. Petersburg in March 1788: "The Abbé de Périgord, who has been proposed for the archiepiscopal see of Bordeaux, possesses every possible qualification except those of his order; he has been director of the discount bank, head of the *agiotage*, and confidential agent of the charitable fund. He is considered as likely to enhance the reputation of the episcopate in Guyenne, and it is said that Count Mirabeau and Monsieur de Chamfort will be of assistance to him in this respect. There is a talk even of some amiable ladies being enlisted in the task of conciliation." After his nomination to Autun the following was added: "During the period when he was Agent-General of the clergy Monseigneur furnished

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material for some chapters in the *chronique scandaleuse*, to which a sequel is expected."

On the whole, open attacks upon him were few and far between. Grimm's "Correspondance Littéraire," the Paris "Correspondance Littéraire Secrète," and contemporary letters, such as those of Madame du Deffand or Madame de Créquy, hardly refer to Talleyrand. A little later he figures in the parliamentary sketches of Chaderlos de Laclos, the secretary to the Duke of Orléans, and author of prohibited novels; the portrait is a very indulgent one, but drawn with a penetration which was afterwards called prophetic. "Amène has the charming manners which embellish even virtue. The great secret of his success is the excellence of his understanding. He judges men with indulgence, and events with calmness. He possesses the moderation which is the mark of true wisdom. . . . Amène has no idea of becoming famous in a day, but he will succeed in everything, for opportunities present themselves in abundance to the man who knows how to wait. At each step in advance he will develop a new talent, and his progress from one success to another will secure him that public approbation which calls a man to the highest posts. Envy, which always makes some detraction from merit, may reply that Amène lacks the force of character required for overcoming the obstacles which block the path of every man who devotes himself to the public welfare.

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I should like first of all to raise the question whether the expression 'force of character' is not often misused, and whether its preponderating influence in a great crisis is always a matter of congratulation. But I pause, for some of my readers might be disposed to think that I cannot distinguish firmness, personal dignity, and steadfastness from ardour, enthusiasm, and wild impulsiveness. Amène yields to circumstances and to reason, and deems himself entitled to make concessions in the interests of peace without sacrificing the principles which govern his moral conduct."

Chance was not so forbearing as Laclos. Talleyrand's predecessor in the see of Autun in the time of Louis XIV. was a certain Roquette, "homme de fort peu," according to Saint-Simon, "all sugar and honey," a friend of the influential women of the day, and mixed up in every intrigue. He was the original of Molière's "Tartuffe," and every one recognised the portrait. Marie-Joseph Chénier recollected this afterwards, and satirised Talleyrand in the well-known lines:—

> "Roquette en son temps, Périgord dans le nôtre,
> Furent tous deux prélats d'Autun ;
> Tartuffe est le portrait de l'un ;
> Ah ! si Molière eut connu l'autre !"

The new bishop was consecrated on the 16th of January, 1789, in the chapel of the seminary for

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priests at Issy. In after years Ernest Renan met, in the seminary of St. Sulpice, an eyewitness of the consecration, the Abbé Hugon, who told him that Talleyrand's demeanour during the ceremony made him accuse himself, at confession on the following Saturday, of profane doubts of the reverend prelate's piety. There is an anecdote related by Governor Morris, which shows how little value Talleyrand attached to outward propriety at this period of his life. A few days after his arrival in France the Minister of the United States accepted an invitation to stay with the Duke of Orléans at his *château* at Raincy. After breakfast, at twelve o'clock, mass was heard in the chapel, the Duchess and her guests being present in a sort of raised pew. It was a cold day, and there was a fire in the fireplace. One of the company, Count Ségur, lighted a candle and endeavoured to slip it unobserved into the bishop's pocket, which he at last succeeded in doing amid general hilarity, before all the servants, who were sitting opposite, and in sight of the country-folk in the body of the chapel. The Duchess was the only one who remained grave, and Morris was much displeased at the conduct of this singular prelate, who gave him the impression of being a "sly, cunning, ambitious, and malicious man."

A few days after his consecration Talleyrand issued the pastoral letter in which he addressed the priests of his diocese as his future electors.

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The promulgation of the edicts on taxation in May 1788, their rejection by the Parliaments, the insurrection in Dauphiné arising therefrom, the dismissal of Loménie de Brienne, the summoning of Necker on the 24th of August, 1788, brought about the solution which was almost unanimously demanded by the provincial assemblies and Notables, and by the clergy and the Estates. The meeting of the States-General was fixed by royal proclamation, while Brienne was still Minister, for the 1st of May, 1789.

In Burgundy, where the Estates still existed in name, the Bishop of Autun for the time being presided, in his capacity of head of the ecclesiastical chamber. In the Third Estate the towns only, and not the country population, were represented. The governor was always a prince of the house of Condé, who, as successor of the once so powerful dukes, possessed great authority. Altogether Burgundy, with its rich and influential nobility, was considered one of the most feudal of the French provinces. When its estates met for the last time at the end of 1787, the *noblesse* and the Third Estate endeavoured, but unsuccessfully, to obtain payment of the *vingtième* from the clergy. In the following year the *noblesse* in special meeting decided on payment of all taxes in proportion to their property, and on representation of the Third Estate by freely elected deputies, to whom was conceded the power of vetoing the resolu-

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tions of the two other Estates, but subject to the proviso that each of these latter was to remain a separate independent body. The assembly was still sitting when Talleyrand became Bishop of Autun. He neither sought nor exercised the functions of president of the Burgundian Estates, but, on the other hand, solicited the suffrages of his ecclesiastical constituency for election to the States-General.

His address to them in April dispelled all doubts as to the position which he intended to take up. Conceived in a sober and business-like tone, it demands regular sessions of the States-General, provincial assemblies, gradual education of the people in self-government on Turgot's plan, *habeas corpus*, trial by jury, freedom of trade and industry, the right to work, "the only possession of those who have no property—it will be the business of wise and far-sighted legislation to assure it." He then goes on to stipulate for conscientious performance of all the State's obligations to its creditors and for the exclusive right of the Estates to grant money supplies; he utters a warning against the economical "delusion" of a single tax, advocates freedom of speech and of the Press, inviolability of private correspondence, reform of legislation, and codification of the law. The following passage is of great significance: "The strict maintenance of the rights of property involves the assurance that everything appertaining thereto shall be for ever protected

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and held sacred. But at the same time it will be necessary to enquire whether the term has not become applicable to things which originally could only have been included in it by a violation of the laws of nature; also, whether it does not comprise things which in principle came under the category of property, but afterwards ceased to do so by reason of the removal or disappearance of the causes which lay at the root of their existence. To all genuine rights of property the principle must apply that in cases where any of these have degenerated into an abuse, the nation cannot interfere with them without paying full compensation."

Almost simultaneously with these proposals of Talleyrand's appeared the instructions which Sieyès drew up on behalf of the Duke of Orléans for the latter's representatives in the various *baillages* controlled by him. There is a great similarity between the two documents. Sieyès mentions most of the reforms demanded by Talleyrand, and adds ministerial responsibility and divorce. But of his favourite political ideas, according to which all the powers of the nation were to be vested exclusively in the Third Estate, and resistance to "the despotism of aristocrats" was considered the first duty of the States-General, and the definition of the rights of man their principal task—of all these demands made by the organiser of *égalitaire* democracy and signed by a prince of the blood, there is not a

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single word in Talleyrand's programme. The latter's views respecting the competence of the State to have recourse to legislation for the purpose of abolishing corporations or altering their objects, when the public interest requires it, seem to be borrowed from Turgot. In the article on "fondations," which Turgot wrote for the encyclopædia, he maintains that it is absurd to treat endowments, or, in other words, creations of an individual will, as sacred, when the circumstances to which they owe their origin have completely changed, and in consequence the original purposes which they were intended to serve can no longer be carried out. Turgot had applied this theory only to lay bodies, such as corporations and guilds. Talleyrand's adoption of it on the eve of the meeting of the States was a warning to the Church. The clergy of Burgundy elected him as deputy for the *baillages* of Autun, Moncenis, and Semur-en-Brionnais. Talleyrand's address was so entirely to their taste that they took the unusual step of adopting it as their *cahier*, only adding a few words in favour of the improvement of the *curés'* condition and protesting against pluralism. His colleague was Cicé, Bishop of Auxerre and brother of the Archbishop of Bordeaux, one of Turgot's oldest friends.

The Bishop of Autun's mandate was delivered to him in Paris. According to a local tradition, he left the episcopal residence on the morning of Easter Sunday,

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and only revisited it, if at all, on brief occasions. All his interests centred in the capital. Since 1786, he, as well as Mirabeau and Lauzun, had joined the "Thirty Club," "le plus hardi de tous ces clubs," as Morellet calls it, a political group which, under the name of the "Comité Duport," fell under the influence of the leaders of the parliamentary opposition at the close of 1788. It was the meeting place of Fréteau, Sabatier, La Fayette, Dupont de Nemours, Target, Roederer, the liberal Dukes de Luynes, Aiguillon, La Rochefoucauld, and of Sémonville, afterwards a diplomatist and the personal friend of "His Eminence of Autun." Pamphlets for the enlightenment of the people were published from it. One of the latest biographers of Mirabeau says that its history contains much that is obscure. Chassin describes it as the *club constitutionnel* which afterwards became the Jacobin club. At the Abbé Morellet's the Bishop of Autun conferred with Roederer, Garat, the younger Trudaine, and Lacretelle; and Morellet bears witness that at that time they discussed the great questions of the day with perfect calmness; "which proves," he adds, "how quickly politics deteriorated afterwards, and how pernicious were the effects of continual delay."

In the meanwhile a difference had arisen between Talleyrand and Mirabeau, which was afterwards bridged over by politics, but never entirely adjusted. Since 1787 Mirabeau had been incessantly engaged in

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stirring up public opinion, and endeavouring to enlist it in favour of himself. His pamphlets increased with his debts, and things were further complicated by the wife of his publisher Lejay being his mistress. He still possessed the drafts of the Berlin letters, which the Abbé de Périgord had expurgated. It is said that he offered to sell them in this original form to the Minister Montmorin, and that the latter agreed to pay a sum of money for their suppression. However, the bargain was not concluded, and in January 1789 Mirabeau went to Provence, having sold the manuscript to Lejay before his departure. In August 1788 he had written to Madame de Nehra: "Four copies on vellum of my book, 'The Prussian Monarchy,' are destined for the four persons who stand nearest to me in the world, you, the Abbé de Périgord, the Duke of Lauzun, and Panchaud." When "The Secret History of the Court of Berlin" appeared six months afterwards, which was nothing more nor less than the text of Mirabeau's letters, a whole number of living personages found themselves gibbeted in this *chronique scandaleuse*, among them Prince Henry of Prussia, who was at that moment staying in Paris. The duties of hospitality had to be observed, so far as was feasible, and the book, the anonymous author of which was known to all, was burned by the public executioner. On his return to Paris Mirabeau denied all complicity, circulated the report that the manuscript had been stolen by Madame

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Lejay, and commissioned Lauzun, whose interests were affected, but who had speedily condoned the offence, to persuade Talleyrand to take an indulgent view of it. "If the Bishop of Autun were only a political personage in my eyes," he wrote to Lauzun on the 21st of April, 1789, "I should keep at such a distance as he might think proper; and the consciousness of having done all in my power not to break with him would console me for the loss which the national interests would sustain by a rupture between us. But I love him, and cannot help entertaining a peculiar tenderness for him. My feelings towards him are those of boundless devotion and profound gratitude." Talleyrand showed himself as indifferent to Mirabeau's protestations of regard as he had formerly been to his abuse, and for a time the two men, whom circumstances marked out as allies, remained apart.

In the meanwhile a long-standing antipathy had yielded to the influence of a woman. Necker's daughter had married the Swedish Minister, Baron Staël von Holstein, in Paris on the 14th of January, 1786. From this date the Minister's house in the Rue du Bac assumed a social and soon afterwards a political importance varying with Necker's official position, being at first in opposition with him, then siding with the Government when he became Minister, and throwing its influence into the scale on the eve of the convocation of the States.

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Born in 1766, Madame de Staël was then in the bloom of youth. The firstfruits of her rising talent had already appeared, a book which, composed under the spell of J. J. Rousseau, was marked by intellectual precocity, and also revealed those stormy feelings which a *mariage de raison* had since rendered uncontrollable. Impetuous and passionate, with wonderful eyes, black curls, and full voluptuous figure, somewhat hard in manner and yet not wanting in charm, eloquent and indiscreet, excitable and enthusiastic, her exterior provoked opposition as much as her intellect. Even at that time she encountered it in a very marked degree. Throughout her whole life she had to exert the superiority of genius and tax the greatness of a heroic soul to obtain from her fellow-creatures the measure of justice and good will which falls unsolicited into the lap of colourless mediocrity. In 1789 her talents had not yet gained recognition. All that was known of her was that she was passionately devoted to Narbonne, and that she idolised her father and regarded him as the saviour of France. Since Necker had become Minister for the second time her *salon* was the meeting-place of his friends, as Madame Necker's declining health excluded her more and more from society. At her daughter's house Marmontel, Grimm, Suard, and Morellet met the younger generation of the Constitutionalists, Narbonne, Lauzun, Lally-Tollendal, Ségur, Mathieu de Montmorency, the young Prince de Broglie,

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Malouet, and La Fayette. The former had to be retained, and the latter won over. The Bishop of Autun joined them at last, on condition of preserving the right to his own opinions. He never really liked Madame de Staël at any time of his life, not even when her friendship was the means of saving him. Her intellectual restlessness disturbed his composure; he was ready to take advantage of, but never understood, the extraordinary devotion of which she was capable. He listened in silence when she compared Necker with Fénelon, and kept to his own opinion that Louis XVI. could not have taken a worse step in 1788 than send for Necker a second time. It seemed to him madness that a Minister, who afterwards declared his ideal to be a constitution on the English pattern with two chambers and a strong aristocracy, should, instead of endeavouring to frame such a constitution, confine himself to the resolution of December 27th, 1788, conceding the double representation of the Third Estate. The concession was a valueless one, if voting was to proceed, as before, by orders, and the Third Estate reverted to the old proportion of one to two. It gave the Third Estate absolute power if, as actually happened, votes were taken by heads and in one assembly.

The best of the Constitutionalists, Malouet and Mounier, Mallet du Pan, Rivarol, Cicé, La Luzerne, and above all Mirabeau himself, shared Talleyrand's

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conviction that the division of the national representation into two chambers ought to have been the necessary consequence of the decision of December 27th, and that there was no excuse for the Minister's vacillation on this all-important point. Mirabeau's position is clear from his often quoted letter of December 28th, 1788, to the Minister Montmorin: "Has the Government a fixed definite plan, to be submitted to the representatives of the nation for approval? I have such a plan. The basis of it is a constitution which would protect us from the machinations of the aristocracy, and save us from the excesses of the democracy and from the sea of anarchy into which authority with us is now plunged simply because it aims at being free from all restraint." When, however, the Third Estate constituted itself the National Assembly, he uttered the famous words: "You wish to be master of the King instead of remaining master through him." Talleyrand took precisely the same view. His plan was a Senate composed of bishops and grandees, and a second elective chamber for the Third Estate. In lieu of this he found himself with forty-seven of his episcopal colleagues confronted by a majority of two hundred and sixty *curés*. He took no part in the attempts to arrive at an understanding, in which the King and the States racked their brains for weeks together over the question as to whether the latter should verify their powers separately or in one body.

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The settlement of this point had been anticipated by Sieyès in the preceding January, and was simple enough: "The Third Estate must remain separated from the two others. The latter represent two hundred thousand individuals, and have no idea but their own privileges. But the objection will be taken that the Third Estate cannot form the States-General by itself. So much the better! Then it will be the National Assembly." This solution was adopted on the 17th of June, nominally on the motion of a long-forgotten deputy, but in reality on the suggestion of Sieyès and after a protest by Mirabeau, from whom the revolutionary character of the step drew such emphatic warnings that the opposition hurled in his teeth the retort that he had sold himself to the Crown. While this was going on at Versailles the Court was at Marly, in deep mourning for the dauphin, who had just died at the age of seven years. The Ministry was divided. Necker was for steering a course between the wild schemes of the reactionaries, who advocated the employment of force against the Third Estate, and unconditional acceptance of the resolution of June 17th. His proposal was that the King should do of his own authority what the Third Estate had just done in despite of it, and order the States to meet together. The *noblesse* and clergy, however, were to deliberate separately, as before, on their own affairs, the constitution was to be based on the system of a double

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chamber, the executive to be strengthened, the King to have supreme command of the army, all decrees of the Assembly to be subject to his assent, and the public to be excluded from its sittings for the future. In return the King engaged to abolish all existing privileges of taxation, to concede the right of approval of taxation by the States, and their participation in legislation, the principal subjects of which were to be reform of the civil and criminal law and guarantees for freedom of the person and of the Press. On the 19th of June Necker's five colleagues appeared to be agreed on this programme. On the following day two of them, Barentin and Brienne, dissented, because on mature consideration they thought the concessions to the Third Estate went too far. In the meanwhile rumours of an approaching *coup d'état* were circulated in Versailles, which assumed a more definite shape when the royal master of the ceremonies, the Marquis de Brézé, demanded the suspension of the session on the 20th of June in order to prepare for the royal session, which was fixed for the 23rd of June. The deputies replied to this request by the oath taken in the tennis-court, not to part until the constitution was completed, or as Talleyrand put it later, "till the constitution of the Monarchy was destroyed." Malouet agrees that it was "the signal for revolt."

On the 23rd of June the King appeared at the *Séance Royale*, without Necker; his address, couched in

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an imperious tone, reproduced the essential features of the Minister's programme, with the one significant exception that separate deliberation of the States was maintained. All resolutions to the contrary were declared null and void. At the close he assured his audience that he had the welfare of the country at heart and that he would promote it alone, if the assembly refused to second his efforts. The speech was received with glacial silence. When Brézé summoned the deputies to separate after the King had withdrawn, he was met by Mirabeau's famous rejoinder, that "they were there by the will of the people, and would only yield to bayonets," followed by Sieyès' interpretation of the incident, "What we were yesterday, that we are to-day: let us continue our deliberations." When the King was informed that his orders were set at defiance, he walked up and down for a few moments in deep thought, and then said angrily, "Well, if they refuse to evacuate the hall, let them stay in it," a remark which was equivalent to abdication. This was the construction placed on it by Morris, who entertained La Fayette at dinner that evening, and told him that the French were rushing to their own destruction; to which La Fayette replied that "his party had gone mad." Even Jefferson, the American envoy, who hated the monarchy, counselled a compromise, and subsequently admitted that after years of upheaval and of catastrophes of every kind the French had not

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secured more than was offered them on that 23rd of June. Mirabeau made a similar admission : " J'avoue que ce que vous venez d'entendre pourrait être le salut de la patrie, si les présents du despotisme n'étaient toujours dangereux. Quelle est cette insultante dictature, etc." The offer was adequate, but the manner in which it was made failed to inspire confidence.

Talleyrand held identical opinions. It is abundantly clear that approval of the attitude of the Third Estate never entered into his head. On the 13th and 16th of June the first deputies of the clergy had joined the Third Estate. On the 19th of June a majority of one hundred and fifty members of the clergy had declared for the union of the States, and on the 22nd of June they made their appearance, with archbishops and bishops at their head, and amid boundless rejoicings, in the church of St. Louis at Versailles, which the clergy had placed at the disposal of the Third Estate as a temporary place of meeting. Talleyrand was not among them. At that time he frequently visited the Comte d'Artois, of whom he says in his Memoirs, " je l'aimais," and with whom he had points of connection. Both of them disliked Necker, and the Prince, though without any grasp of the situation, had manifested tendencies in the direction of opposition. At the commencement of the reign of Louis XVI. his independent attitude and his question, " What can my

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brother do to me?" had provoked the answer of the aged Minister Maurepas: "Monseigneur, the King can pardon you." On the 21st of June a council of state was held at Marly, to which the King's brothers were invited for the first time. The Comte d'Artois was in favour of giving up all pecuniary privileges and of lightening the burdens of the people, but he opposed the union of the States, and behaved with such extreme violence to Necker, that the latter felt his real object was to drive him into resignation. When he did tender his resignation after the *Séance Royale*, the Comte d'Artois accosted him with the remark that he "must stay in office as a hostage for all the harm that he had done."

Such had been the succession of events from day to day when Talleyrand, being convinced that Louis XVI. and his Ministers were still blind to the terrible gravity of the situation, determined to venture on a last step. He mentions briefly in his Memoirs, and afterwards related in greater detail to Baron Vitrolles, that he went in the strictest secrecy, "with three or four friends," of whom he names only the Vicomte de Noailles and Count d'Agoult, to Marly, where they arrived about midnight. A request for an audience of the King met with the reply that the Comte d'Artois had been deputed to receive them. He was already in bed. Talleyrand went to his bedside, and expounded at great length a proposal for dissolving the present

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assembly and convoking another under a different elective system. He declared that it was hopeless to expect to save the country, the King, or the monarchy by means of concessions and prevarications. A wise and adroitly managed display of royal power was the only available resource. He and his friends were ready and in a position to undertake such a task if entrusted therewith by the confidence of the King. If, however, their aims were misunderstood, then, instead of continuing to battle with the torrent, they would let themselves be swept along by it as far as it might carry them. "C'était un acte de force, et la force, il n'y avait autour du roi personne pour la manier." Louis XVI. declined this suggestion to form a Ministry, and Talleyrand came to the conclusion that "sous peine de folie, il fallait penser à soi."

"Ask the Comte d'Artois if he recollects the nocturnal interview," he said, five-and-twenty years afterwards, to Vitrolles, in April 1814, before he sent him to Nancy, to invite the brother of Louis XVIII. to Paris. The Prince remembered it perfectly, and confirmed every particular of Talleyrand's narration. A third account of Bacourt, in endeavouring to make the incident dramatic, has completely misrepresented it. According to him, the interview took place in the night of the 17th to the 18th of July, consequently after the fall of the Bastille, and the Comte d'Artois left the country that morning with the parting words

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that "he would never blame Talleyrand's future conduct." If this version were the true one, then Talleyrand would have proposed an absurdity, for a *coup d'état* had already failed nine days before that date, and the King had not a single loyal regiment left between Versailles and Paris wherewith to attempt a second. Besides, Talleyrand was committed to the Revolution by the 14th of July. Fortunately, there is a simple mode of fixing the dates. The Court left Marly on the 9th of July and did not return there. Talleyrand made his proposal after the resolution of June 17th constituting the Third Estate the National Assembly, and before the *Séance Royale*, in all probability in the night after the oath in the tennis-court, and at a juncture when an assertion of the royal authority entrusted to an able soldier and resolute Minister would have had every chance of success. The soldier could not have been either Broglie or La Fayette. The bishop probably had his friend Lauzun, now Duc de Biron, in his mind, for he considered Lauzun as belonging not to the party but only to the social circle of the Duke of Orléans, and not initiated into the latter's political plans. Talleyrand would probably have offered seats in his cabinet to Malouet and La Luzerne, Bishop of Langres, two political allies who advocated a constitution with two chambers on the English pattern, and to Dupont de Nemours, who represented the traditions of Turgot and Panchaud in

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finance. Mirabeau would certainly have been excluded and Sieyès treated as an enemy. But it was not to be, and three weeks later a feeble reactionary Ministry, headed by Breteuil, made another attempt, which provoked the revolt of the troops, the fall of the Bastille, and the victory of the Revolution.

Long before this Talleyrand had carried his arms, or rather his mitre, into the enemy's camp, the 26th of June being the date on which he joined the ranks of the Third Estate.

The standard of pure monarchy had been lowered. That of constitutional monarchy was raised until October, and in spite of the King. From henceforth Talleyrand did not dream of making further attempts to come to an understanding with the Court. He says emphatically: "The last King of France who knew when to yield and when to resist was Henri Quatre." Thenceforward the tactics of Mirabeau are, in almost all other respects, those of the Bishop of Autun. Both of them headed the movement inside the Assembly in order to preserve their authority, and both employed all their influence outside of it in minimising the revolutionary character of their public policy. Their courses were parallel, with this all-important distinction, that Talleyrand had a huge bribe to offer to the Revolution, and that the destruction of the Gallican Church was his own personal settlement of accounts with the *Ancien Régime.*

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CHAPTER V.

TALLEYRAND AND THE SECULARISATION OF THE FRENCH CHURCH.

1789.

MORRIS, who was generally well informed, refers in September 1789 to an understanding between Mirabeau and the Bishop of Autun as a well-known fact. The publication of Mirabeau's correspondence has entirely confirmed this, but neither at that time nor afterwards did the Bishop overrate the power of the great tribune. When La Fayette on his first meeting with Talleyrand, with whom he was then only superficially acquainted, asked him whether Mirabeau's influence over the Assembly was really so great as was supposed, he received the reply that "it was not very considerable." But Talleyrand, as is well known, had a mean opinion also of La Fayette. On the other hand, whenever Mirabeau attempted to stem the revolutionary current by opposing statesmanlike ideas and practically feasible schemes to the abstract theories of the *doctrinaires*, Talleyrand was always found fighting by his side. Another point of resemblance was that might was more an object to both of them than

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right. They were prepared to sacrifice the latter rather than lose the former.

This was seen for the first time on the 7th of July, 1789, in the discussion of the important question whether the instructions from the *baillages*, the so-called "cahiers," were still binding on the deputies after the union of the States. Even moderates, like Malouet, held that, now that voting by orders was impracticable, they required to be revised by those who had given them. But to cancel the mandates altogether was in their eyes equivalent to a recourse to arbitrary power. Talleyrand thought differently, and declared in his first speech for complete freedom of action. He contended that, while the "cahiers" no doubt set forth the wishes of the electors, they could only in a very restricted sense be regarded as peremptory instructions to the deputies. Any other construction would limit freedom of deliberation and paralyse the action of the Assembly. The individual *baillages* should, as mere fragments of one great whole, submit to the decision of the majority. His motion was supported by Sieyès and Mirabeau and carried. It was fraught with the fatal consequence that the voice of the country, the freely-expressed wish of the whole of France, was stifled, first by the clubs, and afterwards by the populace, of Paris, and that the Assembly, which had been returned to establish a constitutional monarchy, reappeared before its electors with a ready-made republic.

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As regards the clergy, their instructions exhibited a unanimity which was not observable in the case of the other two orders, ecclesiastical reform, money grants, and education being the principal topics. But not one of these vital questions was settled in accordance with the wishes and suggestions of the clergy as expressed in their mandates. Their proposed measures of reform were partly revived in the civil constitution, but were also condemned to perish with it. Instead of accepting the pecuniary sacrifices which they were ready to make, the Assembly took from them all their property. The educational system, which they had hitherto managed almost exclusively, from the village school upwards to the University, and were prepared to remodel in accordance with the requirements of the time, was suddenly withdrawn from their control. This was the work of the same hand that had torn up their mandates on the 7th of July, the hand of the Bishop of Autun.

Talleyrand was not an orator in the sense of being able to carry away the masses or kindle enthusiasm. He adopted a business-like method, elegant language, and a deliberate style in addressing an assembly which was peculiarly impressionable and susceptible to rhetoric. But as a rule he did not descend from the tribune without having attained his object, and his name figures on the most important decrees of the Constituent Assembly. His English biographer, how-

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ever, is mistaken in making him responsible for the declaration of the rights of man. It was referred to a committee of five, consisting of La Luzerne, Bishop of Langres, Desmeuniers, Tronchet, Redon, and Mirabeau, the last-named being appointed reporter. When about thirty different versions had been discussed in the Assembly and the torrent of eloquence at last began to run dry, it was Talleyrand who carried the final text of the article by which was established not only the complete equality of all before the law but also the right of all to participate in making it. Two days afterwards he brought forward a motion for omitting all passages relating to religion and public worship from the declaration of the rights of man and inserting them in the constitution. Mirabeau, as is well known, wanted to postpone the declaration until after the completion of the constitution, and it is a fact that twenty-eight bureaux out of thirty rejected it before it was carried by the whole Assembly.

The Assembly recognised Talleyrand's pre-eminence by making him on the 14th of July, a member of the committee for the preparation of the constitution, together with his two clerical colleagues Cicé and Sieyès, and with Mounier, Lally-Tòllendal, Clermont-Tonnerre, Chapelier, and Bergasse. A few weeks after this began the battle in which he led the assault, and in which the completeness of his victory is only surpassed by the extent of the ruin which it involved.

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The suppression of the firstfruits of benefices on the 4th of August was the first step in the arbitrary re-organisation of the Church, and then the sequestration of Church property appeared in the orders of the day, not to disappear from them until finally settled. Archbishops and bishops, *abbés* and parish priests, outdid one another in the pictures they drew of the misery wrought by feudal oppression, and in enthusiastic renunciation of all benefits accruing to themselves from it. Those who possessed no worldly goods wished for them in order to be able to give them away; some, like the Benedictines of St. Martin-des-Champs in Paris, offered their all. Talleyrand and Mirabeau held aloof from this midsummer-night's madness, the signal for which was given by another of the Marly negotiators, the Viscount de Noailles. But they too were carried away by a movement which they were powerless to restrain. On the 6th of August Talleyrand proposed an amendment to the first article of the motion of his friend Montmorency for the abolition of all feudal rights. His object was to distinguish between charges which might be redeemed and those which the majority of the proprietors themselves were willing to surrender without compensation; but his amendment was lost, and this was his last attempt to deal with this intricate question, which contributed to the labours of three assemblies, the Convention eventually cutting the knot on the 17th of July, 1793, by

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abolishing without distinction all claims derived from feudal rights.

On the 8th of August the Marquis de Lacoste proposed that the State should take possession of the entire property of the Church; on the 9th, after a deplorable statement of the financial situation from Necker, the deputy Delandine moved that it should be subjected to a yearly payment of two million livres. "We shall be only too glad to allow the nation to raise money on mortgage of our property," rejoined Boisgelin, Archbishop of Aix, and offered four hundred millions in the name of the clergy. Taine says that the bargain would have been an excellent one for the State, for the clergy's credit was so good that it could borrow at 5 per cent., whereas the State had to pay 10 per cent., and had difficulty in borrowing even at that rate. Talleyrand then sprang to his feet. "The Bishop of Autun proposes sequestration of all the property of the Church and payment of the clergy!" exclaimed Gouttes, *curé* of Argelliers, and continued: "I do not believe that we priests have the right to alienate our property in this manner, but we can say with St. Ambrose that, while we cannot give it away, we can permit it to be taken from us." The remark was afterwards appropriated by many members of the French clergy, among them by Barral, Bishop of Troyes, afterwards Archbishop of Tours.

Gouttes added that he did not wish to retain the

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tithes, for priests had been commanded to live by the work of their own hands. On the following day the deputy Chasset brought in a motion for its abolition. Mirabeau hereupon declared that the tithe had never been property in the strict sense of the word, and he was the first to speak of paying the clergy a salary, "des officiers de morale et d'instruction," as he called them. Sieyès then uttered his famous protest, "You wish to be free and do not know how to be just," and warned the Assembly against allowing it to be said that they were doing good wrongly. He contended, with perfect truth, that the proposed measure was a breach of faith, because the Assembly had on the 4th of August agreed to redeem the tithe. It was a charge on the land, a "redevance," which was always deducted in fixing the purchase money or rent, and was consequently not borne by the owner or occupier of the soil. If the tithe were abolished in their favour, it was equivalent to making them, the rich, a present of over seventy millions, and depriving the clergy of more than half of their total revenue of a hundred and sixty millions. On the 11th of August Talleyrand demanded the adoption of Chasset's motion, whereupon the Assembly voted the abolition of the tithe, subject to the understanding that the requirements of religion should be provided for in some other manner. It was Dupont de Nemours who at this stage first proposed a budget of public worship of a hundred millions.

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Up to this point the majority of the constitutionalist committee under Mounier's lead had endeavoured to found a constitutional monarchy, while Sieyès, Chapelier, and their party sought to establish democracy with the Crown as a figure-head, and opposed the strengthening of the now powerless executive demanded by Mirabeau and his constitutionalist following. The idea of a second chamber had been entirely abandoned. Mounier's Senate as well as the King's absolute veto were rejected. "The Assembly planned a constitution as a soldier plans a campaign; all other mistakes are traceable to this." Mounier, Bergasse, Lally-Tollendal, and Clermont-Tonnerre gave up the game as lost, and left the constitution committee. With them disappeared the spirit which, with Montesquieu for its source, had inspired the reformers of 1789. "All is lost," wrote Mirabeau; "the King and the Queen are doomed to perish. Le peuple battera leurs cadavres." It was a mere chance that the prophecy was not fulfilled on the 6th of October at Versailles.

Talleyrand's attitude in the constitution committee and in the Assembly with respect to the constitutional question was one of apparent passivity. In September, after the discussion on the Royal veto, which terminated with the defeat of the Crown, the constitution committee was renewed in a revolutionary sense, and of the old members only Sieyès, Chapelier, and Talleyrand were re-elected. The latter bided his time

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till the 10th of October, and then, four days after the Assembly had moved from Versailles to Paris, brought in his motion for sequestration of all Church property by the State.

On this occasion it was not a hostile deputy, a fanatical disciple of the social contract, an inexperienced and enthusiastic priest with a single-minded devotion to reform, that dealt the blow. It was a man of the world, well versed in affairs, and a bishop to boot, who offered the impoverished State the wealth lying ready to hand which might save it from bankruptcy. Rejection of such a tempting proposal was out of the question.

Talleyrand stated his arguments in support of the measure on two occasions, firstly, on the above-mentioned 10th of October, and afterwards on the 9th of November, in a speech which was printed but not delivered. Since the surrender of the tithe by the clergy he considered the Church's property lost, being of Turgot's opinion that after deduction of it the remainder was not of great consequence. The tithe, he calculated, amounted to eighty of the one hundred and fifty millions of the total yearly revenue of the French Church. In future the remaining seventy millions would be the only income available. It would be no loss to the clergy, therefore, if, instead of leaving them in this situation, the State sequestrated all the property of the Church, and in return set

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apart two-thirds of its total revenue, *i.e.*, one hundred millions, which would probably be reduced by the death of sinecure-holders and the suppression of convents, etc., to eighty millions, for payment of the clergy and for the services of religion, a sum exceeding the French budget of public worship of the present day by twenty-five millions. Then comes his plan for dealing with the property of the Church. He clearly foresaw the danger, which subsequently did arise, of a fall in the value of the land by reason of this enormous forced sale, and proposed to meet it by giving the creditors of the State the option of purchasing Church property, and in case of exercise of such option making them pay in cash, or by cancelling their Government bonds, or by leaving the purchase-money on mortgage, they paying the State interest. Talleyrand estimates the total capital value at 2,100,000,000 livres, and submits a plan of administration, according to which the State, after fulfilment of all its obligations to the clergy and payment of the floating debt, would be able to save the amount required for purchase of the judicial appointments and for the arrears of the abolished salt-tax, would pay the interest of the debt contracted from time to time by the clergy on behalf of the State, and create a sinking fund for redemption of the tithe with the balance of 35,600,000 livres. Parish priests were in future to have a yearly stipend of not less than twelve hundred livres, with rent-free

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house and garden. Convents were forbidden to admit fresh novices until it was settled which of them were to be suppressed and which retained. The accuracy of Talleyrand's figures has been disputed, first by Necker, who speaks of his financial estimates as "wretched." In modern days Taine, following Arthur Young, has contended that the property of the Church was really far more valuable, and that in particular the revenue derived from the land, which paid $3\frac{3}{4}$ per cent. before 1789 instead of $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. as it does now, was much higher. Treilhard also put the total value at four milliards when he addressed the Assembly on behalf of the committee for Church affairs. To which should be added that all these figures must be multiplied by two, to arrive at the value of money in the present day.

Passing on to the legal aspect of the matter, Talleyrand adopts the view which he had long before enforced, that the landed estate of the Church was never property in the correct sense of the word, but was assigned to the clergy by way of remuneration for the performance of certain duties. The clergy never had the right of disposing of it or alienating it, and it is for the nation to decide how far the above duties still correspond with the objects and wishes of the founders. The latter have by their endowments relieved the nation from obligations which it would have had to undertake if the endowments had not been made. But everything

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which is given for the nation may be said to be given to it. The endowments were made for the benefit of the whole community, and the nation has the sole right of dealing with everything that appertains thereto. They were destined for the Church and the poor; but, as has been correctly remarked, the clergy are only the teaching members of the Church. The whole body of the faithful in a Catholic country is only another term for the nation.

In times of distress the King as well as the superior authorities of the Church have always used their right of mortgaging or selling Church property in order to relieve the necessities of the State. The nation can act in a similar manner at the present juncture when the State has need of the whole property of the Church. The former is the real owner, not in the sense of being able to dispose of it at discretion, but with the limited functions of carrying out the original purposes of the pious founders and performing the duties prescribed by them. If every holder of a benefice is assured of a suitable competency, then the surplus may be devoted to the sick, to hospitals, and to education.

The above summary presents the principal points of Talleyrand's argument. His speech of October 10th does not contain a word of sympathy either for his colleagues or his Church. In his second speech he refers to himself as "almost the only member of his

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order" who professes principles so antagonistic to its interests. In his capacity of ecclesiastic he felt a certain compunction—"la sorte de peine que j'éprouve"—but as a citizen he would have the courage of his opinions. In his peroration he adopts an encouraging tone: the clergy should resign themselves to the inevitable sacrifice while the moral grandeur of their surrender was still recognised. A priest of the Church could not lose in importance if he joined in the work of national unity and laid the foundations of an improved social order by means of such a truly religious act.

Mirabeau's "Courrier de Provence" assented approvingly to the Bishop of Autun's plan, and on the 12th of October the deputy for Aix brought in a more stringently worded motion of two short paragraphs, which declared the whole estate of the clergy to be the property of the nation, subject to the obligation of the State to provide in a suitable manner for the requirements of public worship, the subsistence of the priests, and the care of the poor. The stipends of the parish priests were fixed on the scale proposed by Talleyrand. The Assembly passed the motion in this form by a majority of 568 to 346 votes.

"The liberties of the nation," wrote Mirabeau about this time, "had three foes to encounter, the clergy, the nobles, and the parliaments. The Church in its present form is no longer in harmony with the spirit

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of the age; the pitiable condition of our finances would have sufficed to destroy it. The *noblesse* is a permanent institution, which must be reckoned with and kept in check by a coalition of Crown and people."

There is often an unconscious tragedy in dates. The decree nominating Talleyrand Bishop of Autun was signed on the 9th of November, 1788, and the confiscation of the estate of the Church was carried on the same day of the following year.

Talleyrand's intellectual development and surroundings, the age and the society in which he lived, stamp his action in this question not as an abrupt and isolated resolve, but as the product of the whole inner growth of the man. In his eyes the Church was merely an institution which could not be preserved in its existing form. This proposition once established beyond dispute, prudence suggested that he should carry out the sentence himself rather than leave it to be executed by others. It is only just to bear in mind that moderates like Malouet, Clermont-Tonnerre, Montlosier, and many others, held much the same view as Talleyrand with regard to the right of the Church to its property. And the strange way in which the majority of the clergy themselves defended their position may be pleaded as an excuse for their antagonists. "We restore to the benefactor (the nation) what we have received from his generosity," paid priests like the Abbé Dillon; others, such as

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Iallet and d'Eymar, offered three-fourths of all their belongings. The speeches and pastoral letters of the archbishops of Aix, Bordeaux, Vienne, and Narbonne, the utterances of the bishops of Angers, Troyes, Chartres, Rodez, Orange, and Langres, are vivid illustrations of this self-denial. The Gallican Church, on behalf of which they spoke, was a national Church, and felt itself such. During the long struggle for their material existence not one of its members ever introduced the Pope's name into the debate, so foreign to their minds was the idea of looking abroad for help in their own internal concerns.

On the other hand, Talleyrand has not thought fit to make any reference to the moral significance of the decree of November 2nd. The effect of the decree was that the clerical order, which had hitherto treated with the State like a sovereign power, did not even obtain freedom within its own sphere, as in America, but sank into a position of dependence on the State, its priests becoming the latter's salaried functionaries. The Bishop of Autun was better qualified than most of his colleagues to appreciate not only the intellectual danger involved in the change, but also the precarious nature of the material guarantees offered the clergy as compensation for the injury done to their interests. If the clerical spokesmen of the Right, Maury, Montesquiou, and Cazalès, interpreted the confiscation of November 2nd as a menace to property

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in general, there was a party in the Constituent Assembly which by no means shrank from the inference.

As early as the month of May the parliamentarian Fréteau had warned his colleagues not to devote so much time to abstract questions, "as war had been declared between rich and poor." Since June Dupont de Nemours had constantly but in vain reminded the Assembly of the most important of their duties, protection of property and of the person. In August another economist, the Abbé Morellet, declared that the Revolution was becoming hostile to property. About the same time, but too late, came Sieyès' protest against the construction which had been placed on his *dictum*, that "he did not want to destroy property, but only change the holders of it." Four days after the decree of November 2nd Talleyrand had to protect his work, which was already threatened, from interpretations of this kind. He stated that after the proposal to abolish feudal rights, the country people burnt the *châteaux* in order to destroy the archives, and that now churches, convents, libraries, and sacristies were being broken into, their contents taken away, and the forests devastated. It was necessary to take severe measures to prevent such excesses. They were promised, partly ordered, and never carried out. On the very same day Talleyrand and Mirabeau experienced a much greater disappointment. Both of them wanted to become

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Ministers, both thought they had strengthened their claims by their attitude in the Church question, and both had with the same object watched the various stages of the financial crisis with the eye of an expert. Confronted with the alternative of Necker's retirement or a disgraceful bankruptcy, they had both given their support to the detested Minister, because they knew that the prestige still attaching to his name could alone stave off the imminent risk of a complete collapse, and thus save the national honour, while his own fall was only a question of time. On the 27th of August Talleyrand spoke in support of the projected special loan of eighty millions, and moved for the appointment of a finance committee and the convocation of the provincial assemblies. On the 26th of September Mirabeau, seconded by Talleyrand, delivered the famous speech in which he enforced the duty of the State towards its creditors in terms of thrilling eloquence. From that moment the idea of supplanting Necker became daily more and more clearly defined. Immediately after the events of October 5th and 6th, Mirabeau drew up lists of Ministries for La Fayette and the Queen, in which Talleyrand was to take the portfolio of Foreign Affairs or Finance, in the latter list with the note "sa motion du clergé lui a conquis cette place." Necker was to be Prime Minister, while Talleyrand now held that his removal must be demanded as a *sine qua non*. Morris, in the course of a conference at the Countess de

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Flahaut's, considered that the Bishop of Autun was amply justified in insisting on his claim to Necker's place, but thought it a great mistake to treat with Mirabeau, who was too discredited to be of any service. On the other hand, Monsieur, Comte de Provence, whom La Fayette was sounding as to the proposed Ministry, made Talleyrand's exclusion one of the conditions of its acceptance. All these combinations were frustrated by the resolution of November 7th, directed against the formation of a parliamentary Ministry. Mirabeau, at whom it was chiefly aimed, resumed his old position of wire-puller; the "coalition of all the talents" was never formed again, and Talleyrand turned his attention to matters of more practical importance.

"In his financial statements," says Mignet, "which were remarkable for perfection of style and thorough grasp of the subject, he propounded the plan of a sinking fund, for facilitating financial operations, and the observance of strict economy, with a view to inspiring confidence, as the means whereby he hoped to improve the national credit, which he very happily called the best security in the world." On the 26th of November he was elected a member of the committee for enquiring into the condition of the discount bank, and on the 4th of December he spoke against Necker's proposal to convert this creation of Turgot and Panchaud into a national bank with the right of recouping itself for its ninety-one millions advanced to the State by

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issuing notes on bad security and with no definite term of repayment. He remarked that the time had gone by for artificial fiscal combinations, alluding to Necker's operations; the inadequate relief afforded by such measures only deferred the crisis, to re-introduce it in a more dangerous form. All these ultra-clever expedients are now exhausted, and simplicity must take the place of genius. The nation is in the same position as a private individual as regards its creditors, and nothing injures its credit so much as promises which it is unable to keep. Talleyrand adopts the saying of the Marquis de Montesquiou: "Just as disorder was the ruin of despotism, so it would be the ruin of freedom." In a similar train of thought Mirabeau referred, on the 27th of August, to the deficit as being the real treasure of the State, the public debt having been the germ from which alone liberty could spring. It was wrong to accept the benefit without paying the price demanded for it.

Talleyrand's speech was the first protest against the impending mischief of the assignats, which it was powerless to prevent. On the 19th of December the Assembly adopted Pétion's motion for the sale of Crown lands and Church property up to the value of four hundred millions, for which the first interest-bearing assignats were issued with a forced currency. This was the commencement of the sequestration of the property of the Church, and of the financial catastrophe, the

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course of which Talleyrand's knowledge of the subject enabled him to predict with accuracy.

A few days afterwards the Assembly ordered the arrest of the unfortunate Marquis de Favras, who was accused of a plot against Necker, La Fayette, and Bailly, which has never been quite cleared up, and died on the scaffold without making any confession. When the alleged conspiracy first became known, Monsieur, Comte de Provence, was suspected of complicity. In his helpless consternation the Prince looked round him for a defender, and according to Morris found one in the Bishop of Autun. Talleyrand makes the future Legitimist King, for whom he drafted the Charter in 1814, say in his defence to the Assembly: "Since the day when, in the second meeting of the Notables, I spoke on the great question which had not then received a solution, I have never ceased to think that a great revolution is at hand, that the King by his aims, his virtues, and his supreme authority is destined to be its leader, and that it can only conduce to the welfare of the nation if it adopts the supremacy of the Monarch as the bulwark of liberty and liberty as the foundation-stone of the Monarchy." The matter ended by the panic-stricken Prince calling himself "a citizen of Paris" and submitting his private accounts to the Assembly.

Soon after this incident Talleyrand reverted to one of his old measures, and carried the abolition of the

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royal lottery. His argument, closely knit and breathing a lofty humanitarian spirit, gives no indication of the fact that this severe censor of public morals was himself a habitual gambler in private life.

In 1790 he advocated the granting of equal political rights to the Jews, the special object of his speech being the maintenance of the privileges by which the Portuguese and Spanish Jews settled in Southern France had long ago attained a position of almost complete civic equality. In this he was successful, and subsequently he took part in the debates on this hotly-disputed question.

Another measure carried by Talleyrand was a corollary of the division of France into departments. Sieyès, whose political doctrines were borrowed from Mably, had devised this territorial re-arrangement in imitation of Harrington, whose scheme for an English republic developed in "Oceana" included a similar plan involving the suppression of the counties, a reform which was mooted also by Cromwell. The revision of the map of France was more effective than all the decrees of the Constituent Assembly in breaking down the resistance of the provinces and placing them under the heel of the *doctrinaires* of the Revolution. The immediate practical result of this centralisation was the necessity of introducing uniformity of standards in trade throughout the country; between Lyons and La Rochelle there were as many as fifteen different weights

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and measures. The project for bringing order into this chaos, elaborated by Laplace, Monge, Condorcet, and others, and submitted by Talleyrand, was borrowed from Turgot, who had no time to carry it into execution. Scientifically a child of Lavoisier, it has been styled "the application of the principle of the Revolution to material standards of value." Talleyrand's hope of extending it beyond the borders of France and of persuading England in the first place to adopt it afterwards furnished him with a welcome pretext for his mission to London.

Two more speeches of Talleyrand's, on the 22nd of November and the 12th of December, 1790, dealing with registration fees and recoinage of small money, conclude this portion of his legislative labours, which were of far-reaching consequences, for they contributed to the foundation of the system of taxation which in its main outlines has remained in force in France up to the present day, and, at the time of its introduction, served the purpose of extending the idea of equality from persons to property.

In marked contrast to this practical work comes an unwonted contribution to the declamatory rhetoric of the Constituent Assembly. The gloomier and the more menacing the reports from all parts of the country became, the more urgent grew the need of concealing the stern reality from the public view by a mirage of hopes for the future. And its effect would probably

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be enhanced if it proceeded from the lips of a man whose temperate and restrained style had hitherto produced such a marked impression. Talleyrand was commissioned to render the country an account of the labours of the Assembly in the form of an address of the constitution committee. His report depicts the revolt against centuries of prejudice and injustice, against oppression and falsehood. He expounds the complete programme of the Revolution and pleads its cause in accents of earnest hope.

The address calls the rights of man "the law of the law-giver"; the King is congratulated on the acceptance of "the true principles of monarchy." The provinces are told that the "loss of their special privileges has made them richer," that "a troublesome administration" has disappeared for ever, and that with the new division of France into departments love of the fatherland will take the place of local patriotism. A problem hitherto considered insoluble has been solved, and the rights of every individual and of every community in France have been regulated in accordance with their relations to the State. The purchase of appointments, inequality of taxation, interference with liberty and oppressive privileges, have all disappeared. Even the finances are painted in the rosiest hues in this best of all possible societies: "they stood in need of vast reforms; the endeavour to bring about these reforms has been unremitting; ere long you will

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enjoy the fruits of them." Only wilful blindness can object that the work of destruction has been immense, the proceedings precipitate, the deliberations disorderly, the plans impracticable, and that mankind is incapable of improvement. Why attempt to reply to such paltry objections? The would-be Minister of yesterday expresses his satisfaction that "the influence of Ministers has been diminished, the people armed, and the powers of the Assembly exceeded." Still greater reforms are in store; an army of citizen soldiers will shortly be created; a clergy composed of citizens, "neither rich nor poor," a pattern and example to all, will turn the hearts of all to religion, while the reorganisation of the legislature and the reform of education and instruction will usher in the glorious reign of freedom. Already the Monarch has embraced the cause. Discarding the errors of his youth and the teachings of his early surroundings, he has become King of the French; he is attended, not by courtiers, but by his people. His heart is worthy to rejoice in the example of the virtues which flourish under the ægis of liberty.

The Assembly received this eulogy of their labours with "frantic applause," and ordered it to be read from every pulpit.

If this optimist manifesto is compared with Talleyrand's attitude outside the Assembly, with passages from the contemporaneous correspondence of Mirabeau

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—"We are threatened with complete disintegration, and have grown so blind that we do not even ask for a remedy . . . civil and religious war is on the point of breaking out at twenty different places in France" —then the solemn expression of the actor becomes a grimace, and we seem to hear a well-known voice say:—

> "The fashion always was, my friend,
> (Art, as you know, is old and new)
> By hocus-pocus to pretend
> That truth is false and falsehood true."[1]

The Assembly rewarded the thoroughness of the Bishop of Autun's devotion by electing him President by 373 to 125 votes, which latter were given to Sieyès. It was in the second half of February that Talleyrand entered on the office, which Mirabeau did not hold till a year later. By an irony of fate it was during his presidency that the debate took place on the measures to be adopted for restoring order and security in the country, the condition of which he had just depicted in such glowing colours, but which Montlosier described as "a prey to the right of the stronger:" "que les brigands qui dominent ma patrie entendent ces paroles et qu'ils frémissent," exclaimed

[1] "Mein Freund, die Kunst ist alt und neu:
Es war die Art zu allen Zeiten,
Durch Drei und Eins und Eins und Drei
Irrthum statt Wahrheit zu verbreiten."
Mephistopheles, Goethe's "Faust," Part I.

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the eloquent deputy for Auvergne, in the well-known style of the day. But the brigands declined to tremble, and had not the slightest reason for so doing, for the newly-elected municipalities, which had been made responsible for the maintenance of order in the future, possessed neither the power nor the independence necessary for their task, and were controlled by the clubs, which in their turn were ruled by the mob: "quand le peuple est roi, la populace est reine," said Rivarol. The agitation was organised by the Breton Club, which, with the Duport - Lameth - Barnave triumvirate at its head, had met in Paris since the month of October, and by means of the so-called patriotic societies maintained a staff of agents and correspondents in the departments. It has been compared to a mine which might blow up France at any moment.

As a counterpoise another Club was founded in 1789, under the patronage of Mirabeau and presided over by Sieyès, in which the moderate element was represented by the Minister Montmorin, the deputies Condorcet, Chapelier, Dupont de Nemours, Talleyrand, Clavière, and Duroveray, the municipality of Paris by Bailly, and the National Guard by La Fayette. But it proved a failure, and the Jacobin dictatorship obtained an easy victory over the disunited defenders of the constitution.

A lull now ensued in the contest, for Paris was

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preparing for a festival. On the 14th of July, 1790, the anniversary of the fall of the Bastille was celebrated on the Champ de Mars. A report by Talleyrand to the Assembly had started the idea, while Mirabeau opposed it, ostensibly because "he did not wish the stern seriousness of the Christian religion to be marred by profane pageants"; in reality, because he knew the danger attending the assemblage of large masses of men. Two hundred and fifty thousand persons volunteered to transform the plain into an amphitheatre by constructing terraces. Officers and workmen, school children, actresses, soldiers, Carthusian monks, hairdressers, butcher-boys armed with knives, breathing vengeance against aristocrats—all thronged together to carry out the patriotic work; fashionable women raised enthusiasm to a pitch by the grace with which they wheeled their barrows; parish priests and mayors brought up their flocks; from all parts of France came the members of the confederation. On the morn of the eventful day all was ready. Some four hundred thousand men passed under the huge triumphal arch. An open gallery ran from one side of the Champ de Mars, which now formed a valley-like depression between two mounds of earth. In the centre stood the Royal throne, behind it the tribune for the Royal family, in front the seats for the members of the National Assembly. Right and left, in dense array, were drawn up the troops of the line

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and deputations of the National Guard from all the provinces. Opposite the throne, and surrounded by scaffolding, on which burnt incense in vases of antique form, rose the altar, surmounted by a cross, and adorned by symbolic figures, among them that of the Constitution, which from afar resembled the Blessed Virgin, as Talleyrand, the celebrant, resembled a high priest. Around him were gathered two hundred priests in white robes and decked with tricolour scarves, while three hundred trumpeters and twelve hundred bandsmen accompanied the religious service with strains of military music, and forty pieces of artillery thundered forth their salvoes at the most impressive moments. At the end of the service the King, his arms extended towards the altar, took a grave and solemn oath to observe the still incomplete constitution, which was repeated by the electrified masses. According to a verbal tradition communicated to Sainte-Beuve it was during these proceedings that cynical remarks were exchanged between the Bishop of Autun and one of his deacons, the Abbé Louis, afterwards Finance Minister of the Restoration: according to another version he whispered, "Ah ça, ne me faites pas rire," to the great ornamental personage of the occasion, the Marquis de la Fayette, the general commanding the National Guard, as the latter was ascending the steps of the altar to take the oath. None who were present ever forgot the moment when

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Talleyrand blessed the new standard of France, of which La Fayette had proclaimed that it would go round the world. "Only a priest who feels that God does not desire to be worshipped by slaves could approach the altar on such a day," says the "Correspondance Littéraire." It rained in torrents, but nothing could damp the general enthusiasm. Dancing was kept up till late in the night on the Champ de Mars and on the site of the Bastille; an eyewitness narrates that he saw knights of the order of St. Louis and ecclesiastics join in it. Who could spare the time for calm reflection, or pluck up courage to call the burlesque by its proper name?

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CHAPTER VI.

THE CIVIL CONSTITUTION OF THE CLERGY AND THE REFORM OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION.

1790—1791.

TALLEYRAND had not taken part in the debates of the Assembly since February 1790, although they were chiefly concerned with financial and religious subjects. A committee of fifteen members had been sitting on the Church question since the 20th of August, and in February Treilhard submitted to it his report on the suppression of the religious communities. This brought the question into a new and acute stage. Hitherto men had been able to argue that the material interests of the Church had nothing to do with its spiritual duties; they had even gone further, and had connected the loss of its temporal possessions and outward dignities with certain long-cherished hopes. What the leaders of Catholic reform had often and in vain condemned, pluralism, the continued existence of convents which no longer fulfilled the objects of their founders, the bestowal of rich benefices on non-residents—all these abuses were

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now abolished, and yet there were still men in the Constituent Assembly who believed in their power and their mission to reform the Church as well as the State.

All these stifled convictions and baffled hopes now clamoured for expression. For days and weeks the National Assembly had to listen to disquisitions on ecclesiastical history, quotations from Holy Scripture and from the Fathers, bulls of Popes and dogmas of Councils, and treatises on the canon law. The Gallicans demanded the restoration of the rights and privileges which the Concordat of 1516 had abandoned to the See of Rome. The Jansenists contended for the ideal of Church government which long persecution had glorified in their eyes. A political assembly was to deal with problems which synods and councils generally fail to solve; men who were ready to die for their faith bandied words with those who had sworn the destruction of Christianity; Gallican parliamentarians and Jansenist theologians discussed ecclesiastical reforms with Voltairians and deists; Mirabeau, who had reproached Frederick the Great with his tolerance of Silesian Catholics, and attacked Christianity for ignoring the rights of nature, and Robespierre, who maintained that priests had to provide "pour le bonheur des hommes," were eager for the suppression of celibacy; Barnave and Garat proclaimed in the name of the rights of nature that the oath was not binding on their conscience, and ruthlessly expelled

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monks and nuns from their homes. Instead of the desired reforms came destruction, against which the victims struggled in vain. At last the proposed suppression of all religious houses and prohibition of priestly vows cleared the air, though at a heavy cost, and put an end to a situation which for months had been little better than a huge misunderstanding. Since the appearance of Treilhard's report the committee on Church affairs had split into two camps. The minority, which had resigned with a protest against the decree as an encroachment on the sphere of conscience, was replaced, through a vote of the Assembly, by other members, for the most part of much more advanced opinions, and it was they who, deliberately exceeding their powers, invaded the domain of the Church, and framed the civil constitution of the clergy.

By a series of decrees the one hundred and thirty-one old French dioceses were now abolished, and eighty-three new bishoprics formed, with areas corresponding to the Departments and completely independent of papal jurisdiction. The electors of the Department were to appoint the bishop, those of the district the parish priest, and the latter his vicars. It was not necessary to be a Catholic or even a Christian to have the right of voting; attendance at a mass was the sole qualification. The bishops were forbidden to apply to the Pope for canonical institution; they could

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only report their nomination to him. In every case in which they objected to the election of a *curé* or of any priest, whatsoever his office, an appeal lay from their decision to a tribunal of laymen. If an "ecclesiastical functionary" was absent from his post for more than fourteen days without special permission, he forfeited his stipend. Every priest had to swear adherence to the civil constitution of the clergy by the solemn oath which he took to observe the greater constitution of which it formed part. The same rule applied to all laymen, who lost their elective rights and became ineligible for all offices if they refused to take the oath.

These enactments left the clergy no choice between schism and disobedience to the law of the land. The theory which presided over the birth of the Revolution guaranteed them their liberties; the traditions of an all-powerful State, which forced them into its official hierarchy, demanded their submission. If they refused, they were penniless; if they took the oath, they ceased to be Catholic priests. The same policy which made them look to Rome for protection of their religious convictions and so changed the national into an ultramontane Church, kindled the flames of civil war throughout the country. As early as May 1790 several southern provinces rose in arms against the interference of the National Assembly with the inner organisation of the French Church. It was a

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protest against the decrees of April 11th and 17th, fixing the payment of the clergy in money, without any grant of land, which up to that time they had still hoped to receive. Not one single fragment of all the real and personal property which the State devoured was secured to meet the obligations which it undertook. The milliards were swallowed up by the deficit, to reappear in circulation in the form of assignats, and the Church had to look for its daily wants to the budget of the State, which spent and squandered with one hand what it took away with the other.

The growing conviction that hostility to religion itself lay at the root of the measures against the clergy induced Dom Gerles, a Carthusian monk and enthusiastic adherent of Christian democracy, to propose the issue of a manifesto by the Assembly in favour of the Catholic religion as that of the French people. Mirabeau, pointing from the tribune towards the window of the Louvre, where a shot by the King had given the signal for the massacre of St. Bartholomew, replied that they should beware of mixing up religion with politics. The Assembly called to mind the principle of toleration, which prohibited a privileged Church, and rejected Dom Gerles' motion at the very moment when they were on the point of creating a State religion to be upheld by persecution.

Deputies of the Right, who met under Malouet's leadership in the "Club des Impartiaux," protested

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against the decision of the Assembly, and published a manifesto in favour of the Catholic religion and of securing the revenues of the Church by a land grant, which received numerous signatures in all parts of France. The clergy of Autun looked in vain for the name of their bishop among the signatures, and a brief correspondence ensued between them. It is with the most profound regret, wrote the clergy, that we miss the name of our spiritual pastor and deputy. We beg Monseigneur to add his name to the list of our names, and then present the petition to the National Assembly as the most honourable and authentic record of his patriotism. If there is a principle, replied Talleyrand, which is sacred to mankind it is that which makes an inviolable sanctuary of the conscience. No earthly power, to use the words of Fénelon, may seek to pierce the impenetrable barrier which guards the freedom of the heart. I entreat you therefore to extend to me your approval if I decline to carry out your wishes. I cannot see what would be gained if I submitted to the legislative body your protest against its decrees, and especially, as you desire, as evidence of your patriotism. I prefer to leave the legislature in ignorance of it.

It was easier to write ironical letters to the clergy of Autun than to shut one's eyes to the fact that with the new turn which things were taking the Gallican Church would be destroyed and public credit left in its old predicament. No one knew this better than

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Talleyrand. He uttered words of warning to the Assembly: "Je serais inconsolable si de la rigueur de nos décrets sur le clergé il ne résultait pas le salut de la chose publique." With the same object he spoke on the 13th of June in favour of the Duke de la Rochefoucauld's proposals regarding the procedure to be observed by the departments and districts entrusted since March with the sale of the Church lands, now declared national property, and protested against the unfair advantages given to holders of new assignats, at the expense of the other creditors of the State. Where cash payments, which were only possible in a very few cases, were not made, assignats alone were to be taken in payment, a measure the mischievous effect of which Talleyrand demonstrated in detail. His aim also was to facilitate the purchase of the national property by all creditors of the State, and transfer it as rapidly as possible from the administration into private hands. A special class of these creditors were the holders of benefices, who in addition to their stipend were entitled to an annuity by way of compensation. Talleyrand implored the Assembly to reconcile them, as well as all former holders of abolished offices, to the new order of things by compensation in the shape of a grant of land.

On the 18th of September he spoke even more earnestly against the impending issue of two milliards of new assignats. Most of his arguments are addressed to

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the special knowledge of fellow-experts, but his appeal to the sound common sense of the general public is not less convincing. The nation, he remarks among other things, has not increased its wealth by offering the sequestrated Church property for sale, and consequently the assignats do not represent any new source of riches; they are simply an instrument, a token of exchange, and not a valid payment. Society, in its collective capacity, has decided on making a fresh distribution of its property amongst its members, the result of which will be that a portion of its debt will be paid off. If the transfer takes place slowly and gradually, then no special measures are required to facilitate it; they are only necessary because the change of ownership is effected suddenly. The issue of the assignats can only be a successful operation in cases in which they pass direct out of the hands of the creditors of the State into the treasury in payment of the national property acquired by them, with the result that a forced currency is not required. The latter must bring about a rise in prices and a fall in wages, while the State, instead of reaping any advantage, would lose in its double capacity of debtor and creditor. "I admit that within our frontiers you will be able to prevent paper-money from losing in value, but you will not be able to prevent the appreciation of the precious metals. You can compel people to take an assignat of one thousand livres in payment

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of a debt of one thousand livres, but you cannot make them pay one thousand silver livres for an assignat of that figure. But this is the gist of the question, and on this point the whole scheme will break down."

None of these warnings were heeded. The Assembly adhered to its financial measures, which were condemned by all authorities on finance, and sanctioned the elective principle, and consequently the sovereignty of the people in Church government, by its vote of July 12th adopting the civil constitution of the clergy.

The parliamentarian Duval d'Eprémesnil was not the only one who held that the Assembly had transformed itself into a schismatic and presbyterian council. Calmer minds, such as the archbishops Cicé and Boisgelin, endeavoured even at this stage, with the support of the King himself, and taking their stand on some wise and useful provisions of the civil constitution, to bring about an understanding with the French episcopate as well as with the Pope. They had all the better prospect of success, because the latter had in the only rescript which had been issued on French Church matters avoided not only expressions of blame but also all direct interference. He expressed himself more plainly in a private letter to the King, but could not prevent the latter, who was torn by conflicting advice, from sanctioning the decree on the 24th of August. The first line of resistance of the Catholic hierarchy consisted in ignoring it. The dismissed as well as the

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newly re-appointed bishops continued to exercise their office as before. The population in Brittany, in Alsace, and especially in the south of France, in Nîmes, Montauban, and in Provence, sided with their clergy. The conviction that the lands of the Church, which had hitherto been well managed or let at a moderate rent, would either fall into the hands of speculators or be withdrawn from the present leaseholders by the new owners, contributed to increase the ferment among the country people, and the National Assembly was besieged with petitions from all sides, one set appealing for protection to religion in danger, and the other denouncing "the ultramontane bishops and priests." All over France the officials, the clubs, and the political agitators of every description backed the Assembly, which took no notice of the very conciliatory protest of the bishops, carried out in Finisterre the election of the first constitutional bishop of Quimper on the 31st of October, and stopped payment of the stipends of all contumacious bishops and priests. Finally, on the 27th of November, it decreed the dismissal of all priests who had not taken the oath to observe the constitution within the next fourteen days, and their prosecution as disturbers of the public peace if they performed the functions of their office in spite of such dismissal.

The ultras on both sides were not displeased to see the principles of the Revolution pushed to their extreme consequences. "We only want three or four

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more such decrees," said the Abbé Maury to his friends of the Right, who counted on a total collapse to pave the way for the reaction. Maury saw clearly that Mirabeau, in dragging the Assembly deeper and deeper into the policy of religious persecution, was playing a similar desperate game, without knowing anything of the contents of his communications to the Court, which prove it. "Apologies are no longer admissible," rejoined the leader of the Left: "we are defied by criminals, who let loose civil war upon us, de véritables parricides, who gloat over the sufferings of their country." A hundred and thirty-one archbishops, bishops, and coadjutors refused to take the oath. Not a few of them were actuated more by *esprit de corps* in making this sacrifice than by religious conviction. "We behaved like true gentlemen in 1791," said Dillon, Archbishop of Narbonne, "for it cannot be said of the majority of us that religion was their leading motive." Burke, who knew how to appreciate nobility of character, bears witness that the French clergy rose high above the common level, and that in a time of tremendous degradation they restored the moral balance by a display of heroic virtues.

In the period which elapsed between the decree of November 27th and the condemnation of the civil constitution by Pius VI., the attitude of the clergy was not so clearly defined. About two-thirds of the priests followed their bishops. The remainder yielded

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to intimidations and threats, to the wish not to be parted from their flock, to solicitude for their material interests, and also to the hope that a *via media* would be found, in consequence of which many priests took the oath under reserve of the rights of the Church, and were then entered in the lists simply as "jureurs." In February 1791 Lanjuinais writes that the outlook is favourable, and that the oath is being taken by most of the functionaries of the Church. Shortly afterwards, when all hope of a compromise had to be abandoned, many retracted and were replaced to a great extent by renegade monks and disfrocked priests from all parts of Europe. In the Assembly itself the oath was taken by sixty-five ecclesiastics, among them eighteen future constitutional bishops. On the 23rd of December the unfortunate Louis XVI., confronted with the alternative of revolt combined with massacre of the contumacious priests and outrage to his own conscience, yielded to the pressure of the Assembly, and by his sanction invested the decree of November 27th with the force of law. On the 28th of December Talleyrand took the oath to the civil constitution, alone among the thirty bishops who were also deputies; on the 2nd of January he was followed by Gobel, Bishop of Lydda *in partibus*. Of the bishops of the French Church only three members of the French episcopate took the oath, Loménie de Brienne, Cardinal Archbishop of Sens, Jarente, Bishop of Orléans, Lafont de Savines, Bishop

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of Viviers, and then two bishops *in partibus*, Miroudot of Babylon, and Loménie of Trajanopolis, a nephew of the Cardinal.

The clergy of Autun now listened to the voice of their pastor for the last time. "The decrees," he wrote, "which govern the civil constitution distinguish most carefully between dogma and questions which do not appertain to dogma. They constitute, in almost every respect, a return to the most sublime laws of the Church." "We possess full power to make changes in religion," was the simultaneous declaration of the advocate Camus on the other side, who a few years before had been appointed counsel for the clergy in their assemblies on Talleyrand's recommendation, and exercised paramount influence over the Constituent Assembly in Church matters.

The next step, the consecration of the two newly-appointed bishops, Expilly for Finisterre and Marolles for the Department of the Aisne, met with difficulties. Talleyrand announced his willingness to perform the ceremony with the assistance of Gobel and Miroudot. The 24th of February was fixed for it, and everything seemed ready, when Miroudot at the eleventh hour lost his head and threatened to withdraw. Talleyrand, informed by Gobel, with quick presence of mind hurried to his vacillating colleague. He told him that Gobel was on the point of abandoning them both, that his own resolution had been taken, and that

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rather than be pelted by the mob and encounter the disgrace attaching to defection he would lay violent hands on himself. As he said this he played with the hammer of a pistol, which he had taken out of his pocket in the course of the conversation. It was late in the afternoon of the day preceding the 24th. Miroudot was taken in; the first fear was driven out by a second, and on the following morning he was at his post. Morris completes the story. On that 24th of February he was invited to dine with Countess Flahaut, and found her ill and in bed. On the evening of the day before she had received an envelope addressed to her containing Talleyrand's will, leaving everything to her. She recollected some remarks which had fallen from him in the course of recent conversations, was filled with forebodings of evil, passed the night in tears, and ordered him to be searched for everywhere. Not till the following morning did it transpire that he had been intimidated by threats, and had slept out of his house in fear of the vengeance of the clergy. The missive to the Countess, which was to have been delivered only in case of the worst happening, had reached her prematurely, and Miroudot was not the only man who suffered the pangs of terror on that occasion.

In Talleyrand's Memoirs all these events are wrapped in that diplomatic silence which at the time of the Restoration it seemed prudent to observe with respect

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to his attitude in the religious question under the Constituent Assembly. He only remarks that in 1790 France was in danger of becoming presbyterian if nobody could be found in the episcopate to invest a constitutional prelate with the bishop's office, "for in that case France might have been lost for ever to Catholicism, the hierarchy and rites of which are in harmony with the monarchical system." This observation made in 1816 was for the benefit of Louis XVIII., and had the advantage of serving as a weapon to the clerical *entourage* of the Comte d'Artois against the detested Jansenism, of which they held the same opinion as Chamfort: "Le presbytérianisme ne peut signifier parmi nous que le jansénisme."

In the meanwhile the archiepiscopal see of Paris had become vacant by the flight of the threatened Juigné, and public opinion fixed on Sieyès as his successor, who declined with the remark, that "he had never preached or heard confession;" then on Talleyrand, who declared that the mere idea of being a competitor with Sieyès filled him with pride, and in comparison with Loménie or Jarente still ranked among the less compromised candidates. But he was sufficiently compromised to make the mere mention of his name provoke an outburst of indignation.

All his life he was extremely sensitive to criticism, and especially so at a time when his whole future depended on his popularity. Besides, it by no means

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entered into his plans to rivet the chains binding him to his order more closely by becoming Archbishop of Paris. Since the commencement of the Revolution his preoccupation had been to take the earliest opportunity of striking them off. In a letter addressed to the *Moniteur*, dated the 8th of February, 1791, he not only disclaimed all intention of becoming Juigné's successor, but also defended himself against the accusation, "among other numerous calumnies," of having won large sums of money at the gaming-table, but admitted that his winnings at the "chess club" had amounted to 30,000 francs in the short space of two months. He could not justify his conduct. "The passion of gambling," he writes, "has become alarmingly prevalent in society. I never had any liking for it, and therefore if I have yielded to temptation, I must blame myself all the more severely, both as a private individual and as a legislator, for as such I am aware that the virtues of freedom must correspond with its principles, and that a regenerated people must observe the strictest morality. The attention of the National Assembly must be directed to abuses which injure the community by promoting inequality of fortune, and they must be combated by every means consistent with the eternal foundation of all social justice, the security of property. I therefore blame myself, and make open avowal of my shortcomings." . . . This display of contrition had its practical side. While

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Talleyrand thus declined ecclesiastical honours, he declared in the same letter that he considered it a high honour to have been made a member of the assembly of the newly-created Department of Paris. "In a free state," he continues, "the citizens of which have recovered the right of election—*i.e.*, the true exercise of their sovereignty—to become a candidate for a post is equivalent to an invitation to our fellow-citizens to scrutinise our claims to it, and to clear them from all suspicion of resting on intrigue. In this manner we challenge the judgment of all impartial men, and give even our opponents the opportunity of doing their worst." Talleyrand had been elected on the 18th of January, simultaneously with Sieyès and Mirabeau. On the 31st of January came Danton's election, which paved the way for relations between him and Talleyrand, relations which soon assumed political importance.

On the 21st of January, 1791, two days after his election, Talleyrand addressed a letter to the administrators of the district of Autun, informing them that he had resigned the bishopric of the new department of Saône-et-Loire, because he found the obligation to reside for the future in Paris incompatible with the exercise of its functions.

The new administrative body, which Talleyrand had joined, plays a unique part in the history of Paris during the revolutionary æra. It stood alone in endeavouring to give expression to the real views of a

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population cowed by the terrorism of a minority. This was the case after the flight of the King, on the 22nd of June, 1791, when it protested publicly against the incitement to rebellion which its own member Danton issued in the club of the Cordeliers, and a year afterwards, on the 12th of June, 1792, before the first invasion of the Tuileries. The report then submitted by the administration of the Department to the Minister Roland contained an unvarnished account of the situation and of the consequences that would ensue if no authority intervened at the eleventh hour to bring the misguided masses under the arm of the law and close the Jacobin Club. Talleyrand, too, in the Church question repeatedly appealed to the moral influence of his colleagues, which they were ready to exert up to the last, and it was not their fault if his appeal died away unheard.

On the 2nd of April, 1791, the Constitutionalists met with the severest blow of all—Mirabeau's death. Up to the very end he had endeavoured to play the double game of maintaining his authority over the Assembly by encouraging the worst revolutionary decrees, and at the same time by his communications to the Court and all the means of agitation at his disposal, of promoting a reaction against a position which he felt to be untenable. His own policy consisted of unity of taxation, liberty, but not license, of the Press, religious toleration, ministerial responsibility, equality of all before the law, and sound finance. When in lieu of this

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programme he had to witness the disorganisation of the army, contempt of the law, the helplessness of the executive, and the country in the hands of the Jacobin faction, then the only resource left seemed to him to be a revision of the constitution and rescue of the King from the yoke of the demagogues of Paris. In January 1791, he thought, like Maury, that the best course was to let the suicidal policy of the National Assembly have free scope. They must have strange spectacles on, if the refusal of twenty thousand priests to take the oath did not open their eyes. His last letter, dated from the Chamber, which was at that moment discussing the project for a regency, predicts the end of the monarch, "if time cannot be gained." But he had shot his bolt, and had long since, especially by his attitude on the Church question, forfeited the confidence of the Court. The stupendous attempt to save the monarchy in spite of the sovereign, liberty in spite of the Jacobins, and the Revolution from itself, was interrupted by death. Among those who surrounded his death-bed, occupied in destroying or securing documents, was the Bishop of Autun, whose presence kept the priest at a distance. "On a bien de la peine à arriver jusqu'à vous," said Talleyrand to the dying man; "je suis venu comme le peuple de Paris trois fois par jour à votre porte, et il y a deux heures que j'y attends de vos nouvelles avec lui." "Ah! je le sais bien," replied Mirabeau, "pour le peuple c'est toujours un grand

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jour que celui où l'on meurt." Then he added: "On dit que la conversation est nuisible aux malades; ce n'est pas celle-ci; on vivrait comme cela délicieusement, entouré de ses amis, et même on y meurt très agréablement." Then turning to Frochot, the young deputy who was eyewitness and reporter of the foregoing, he uttered the famous words: "J'emporte avec moi le deuil de la Monarchie; après ma mort, les factieux s'en disputeront les lambeaux." The interview with Talleyrand lasted two hours. This dramatic moment, in which the great tribune of the Assembly dropped the reins of his disputed power into the hands of its adroitest politician, has been criticised in very different ways. One of the most remarkable comments is that of Lamartine, who writes with reference to this scene: "Monsieur de Talleyrand n'était au fond qu'un Mirabeau à demi-voix. Partout où j'ai eu à en parler ou à en écrire, je l'ai fait avec indulgence, admiration et respect. Plus j'ai vécu, plus j'ai apprécié cet ami de Mirabeau, qui l'appréciait comme moi et qui lui laissa en mourant toutes ses grandes vues sans sa grande parole."

Talleyrand has not breathed a word of the feelings which may have contended within his breast on that 2nd of April. But he undertook the task of transmitting the last message of Achilles to the Assembly. He referred to his own personal grief "more intense than the public mourning. . . . Death was present every-

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where but in the mind of the man threatened by it, who remained mindful of his public duties up to the end. As a last legacy I bring you the words 'qui ont été arrachés à l'immense proie que la mort vient de saisir.'" The speech itself, which he had to read, in which Mirabeau advocated equal division in all cases of inheritance in the direct line of succession, was not composed by the latter, but partly by the former Swiss pastor Reybaz, and partly by Mirabeau's secretary, Maret, afterwards Duke of Bassano and Talleyrand's *bête noire*. By a strange irony of chance it contained the profession of faith of an atheist, who looked upon death as complete annihilation, and that of a politician, who proposed to subject "the profound depravity of human nature" to legal restraint. The barefaced calumny of Michaud, who states that Mirabeau died of poison administered by the Bishop of Autun as an accomplice of the Palais-Royal plot, is beneath serious notice.

After Mirabeau's death Talleyrand was the most eminent exponent of his policy. The Assembly elected him his successor in the diplomatic committee, and Morris and he discussed the question whether it would be advisable to take the opportunity of making a declaration of policy at the funeral. The idea was abandoned, but from henceforth Talleyrand was suspected of keeping up communications with the Court, in spite of his having signed an address of the Department to the King on the 19th of April, in which

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the latter is reproved, in the style of the day, for showing a preference for contumacious priests, and surrounding himself with enemies of the constitution, instead of identifying himself with the glorious Revolution in the face of Europe as king of a free people and appointing Ministers worthy of his confidence.

This document was preceded by another which aimed at securing the tolerance in religious matters which practically was no longer attainable. At Eastertime, the 9th of April, the Paris mob had broken into some convents, and had used threats to the non-juring priests in the churches where they were performing service. Two days afterwards, Talleyrand, supported by some of his colleagues, carried a measure intended to uphold liberty of conscience as opposed to excesses of this kind. This resolution of the Department of Paris, passed on the 11th of April, allowed the non-juring Catholics, the *non-conformistes,* as Talleyrand calls them, to meet in the old church of the Theatines, and also conceded them the right of acquiring all places of divine worship not required for the official cult.

As recently as the 28th of March Talleyrand had given unmistakable proof of adherence to the constitutional Church by consecrating Gobel to the archbishopric of Paris. If he now risked his popularity in order to vindicate the right of freedom of worship for his Catholic co-religionists, it was because he was convinced that the Revolution was abandoning its own

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principle by plunging down the steep incline of proscription, which terminates in the abyss where the dogma of the Jacobin joins hands with the code of the Inquisitor. It was politic of Talleyrand, that, instead of opening a debate, he induced the administration of the Department to pass this, from a legal point of view, unimpeachable measure, and left its legality to be decided by the National Assembly. Before this could be done a fresh rising had taken place on the 18th of April. The King and his suite had intended to proceed on that day to St. Cloud, to attend an Easter service conducted by a non-juring priest, but had been prevented by force, whereupon the struggle between the official Church and the "réfractaires" broke out anew in the provinces. On the 7th of May these events were discussed in the Assembly, and Talleyrand made a memorable speech. It was not, he said, a question of tolerance. The word sounded like an insult after the guarantee of complete freedom of conscience. The people must be made to understand that refusal to take the oath disqualifies for all offices salaried by the State, and places Catholic nonconformists on the same footing as all other dissenters. More than this was never intended on behalf of the creed of the majority of Frenchmen. The exercise of religion is free, and every French citizen, the King included, can choose whichever he likes. If it were not so, then religious freedom would be a mere name. "Lorsque de grandes passions

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tourmentent les hommes," he said, in a warning tone, "il ne faut pas les comprimer trop fortement, de peur de les rendre trop violentes." He repudiated the imputation of schism. Although the brief of March 10th described the constitutional Church as a schismatic one, the Pope had neither the right nor the power to sever a Church, which protests against schism, from Rome. If, misled by ultramontane views and perfidious counsels, he entered on a course of condemnation, then the liberties of the Gallican Church and the history of the aberrations of Rome would supply effective arguments to confute him. In the meanwhile they would remain firm in their adherence to the Romish see, and consolidate freedom by setting a great example of moderation.

As Talleyrand had foreseen, this time the Assembly was obliged to ratify the measure of the Department of Paris. Its law of May 7th, which allowed nonjuring priests the exercise of religious functions, was the last victory won in the name of liberty of conscience. Subsequent events made it a dead letter. The rising tide of revolution swept away the law, and the Legislative Assembly proceeded from silent connivance to open persecution. When that took place Talleyrand was no longer a deputy, and the Church had excommunicated him.

Pius VI. had condemned the civil constitution by his brief of March 10th, 1791, which was secretly delivered

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by the papal Internuncio Salamon to all the metropolitans still remaining in France. A second brief of April 13th required all priests who had taken the oath to make a solemn retractation within fourteen days on pain of suspension, declared the episcopal consecrations which had taken place illegal, sacrilegious, and void, and placed Talleyrand, who had performed them, in the list of suspended bishops. He refused to make the required retractation, and so incurred the pains and penalties of the Church. No direct excommunication was launched against him afterwards. According to Michaud he wrote to Lauzun at the time: "Vous savez la nouvelle; venez me consoler et souper avec moi. Tout le monde va me refuser le feu et l'eau, ainsi nous n'aurons ce soir que des viandes glacées et nous ne boirons que du vin." It was as layman and as "l'ancien Évêque d'Autun," the title given him from June in the official reports of the Assembly, that Talleyrand dealt the Gallican Church his second and far more deadly blow, which, as a consequence of its expropriation, but by virtue of another principle, deprived it of the education of the young. The principle was the secularisation of instruction.

The question had occupied public attention since Turgot's time. When the wishes of France were made known through the "cahiers," or instructions conveyed to the deputies by their electors, it turned out that the re-organisation of public instruction was demanded far

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more strenuously by the two first orders than by the Third Estate. The immense significance of the change can be more fully appreciated now that an entirely new light has been thrown on the condition of education in the France of that day by the publications of the Abbé Allarin, of A. Duruy, Maggiolo, Buisson, Silvy, and others. The figures given in the old statistics have nearly all proved to be too low. Before 1789 primary education was provided for mostly by the religious establishments, and it is supposed that forty-seven out of one hundred men and twenty-six out of one hundred women had learned to read and write in the twenty to twenty-five thousand schools of this kind which were scattered over the thirty-seven thousand French parishes and received a yearly grant of nine hundred and thirty thousand livres from the State. There were often special endowments for the stipend of the teacher, who in poorer districts kept the school open only in the winter, worked in the fields in the summer, and received a payment of four or five sous a month for each child if his salary was insufficient. Sometimes the *curé* himself or his vicar had to teach in the school.

The provision for higher education was on a much better footing. The latest researches of Silvy show that nine hundred of these schools were in existence. Many of them had such large endowments that forty thousand out of the seventy-two thousand scholars received an education which was entirely or partly

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gratuitous. At the present day this is the case with only five thousand out of seventy-nine thousand pupils in French *lycées*. It is not necessary to attribute this extraordinarily favourable result to the beneficence of former generations. Circumstances had combined to make the expenditure slight and the income very considerable. Most of the teachers were priests or monks, and as such restricted to a mode of life, which, even if they were lukewarm and fond of their ease, cost a good deal less than the support of a family. The stipend of a professor at that time varied from four hundred and fifty to twelve hundred livres, and the colleges were so numerous that pupils could either live at home, or lodge with friends or relations in the neighbourhood, in which case they could be boarded from home. The result was that the cost of instruction amounted to about three hundred francs a year, while the board and lodging of a boy not living in the college did not exceed two or three livres a month. But the education was in the hands of ecclesiastics, to which a generation which had learned its ideas on this subject from "Emile" could not submit. The universities did not oppose the movement, and many of the colleges openly supported it. The first projects of reform submitted to the National Assembly came from Oratorians, Villiers, Delmas, Pâris, and Daunou. Desrenaudes, vicar-general to the Bishop of Autun and afterwards his private secretary,

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who must have had something to do with Talleyrand's proposals, also belonged to the society of priests of the Oratory. Previous schemes of La Chalotais, Guyton de Morveau, and Roland include a system of national instruction to be given by lay teachers, but the idea of a centralised monopoly by the State does not enter into them. Roland's plan was the only one which placed the University of Paris at the head of the twenty provincial universities and provided for inspection of schools, for a kind of normal school for training teachers, and for State supervision over private educational establishments. Reform of the educational system of course formed part of the programme of the Constituent Assembly. But it was entrusted to the constitutional committee appointed on the 14th of July, 1789, as a component part of the constitution, and placed in the hands of Talleyrand. The preparation of the draft was a long and difficult task, and Talleyrand had to warn the committee repeatedly not to spoil the scheme as a whole by premature attempts at piecemeal legislation. After the 4th of August, the loss of the tithe, the suppression of many religious communities, and the completion of the civil constitution of the clergy, the position became most critical, for the endowment of most of the Church schools had also disappeared, the teaching staff were required to take the oath, and in a very brief space of time many schools and colleges were closed, without any provision

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having been made to replace them. In consequence, spontaneous anarchy spread to the department of education, with the final result that during the ten years that elapsed between 1789 and 1799 the number of students in the eighty-eight central establishments opened by the State sank from seventy-two thousand to seven or eight thousand, the primary schools existed only on paper, the thread of tradition as regards both secular and religious instruction was broken, and a whole generation had to content itself with such crumbs of education as might be picked up at home or by a lucky chance. Talleyrand's suggestion, made on the 13th of October, 1790, that "the King should be petitioned to enforce the continuance of their accustomed studies by the young during the ensuing year, and then give orders for the preservation and maintenance of the churches, monuments, art treasures, libraries, manuscripts, etc., now declared national property," remained a dead letter, like most of the decrees of the Constituent Assembly. His appeal in 1790, "qu'il ne faut rien détruire sans le remplacer promptement," was indeed *vox clamantis in deserto.*

The main outlines of his report on the proposals made with regard to education were already marked out. The National Assembly had decided that instruction should be universal but gratuitous only in respect of such knowledge as is indispensable to all.

Mirabeau was the last to take a line of his own.

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His posthumous papers, probably composed by the Genevese Reybaz and published by Cabanis, entrust the supervision of all schools to the administrative authorities of the departments. The idea was a most revolutionary one, for it placed education at the mercy of political passions, but his plan did not include either obligatory or gratuitous instruction.

Talleyrand's scheme, developed in a lengthy speech on the 10th of September, 1791, substitutes moral teaching for the catechism, and constitutional rights for dogma. It educates the child as the future sovereign, and puts in his hand the rights of man instead of the Gospel. Instruction in "the elements of religion" is retained in Talleyrand's school. The three grades of the administrative hierarchy, the commune, the district, and the department, serve as counterparts for the threefold division of primary school, lyceum, and University, crowned by the Institute and its inspectors as controlling authority. Freedom of instruction, gratuitous primary education, cultivation of the fine arts, national festivals and dramatic performances at the expense of the State, give an artistic finish to the design, in the harmonious proportions of which the hand of the mathematician Desrenaudes is supposed to be easily recognisable. Talleyrand only praises his skill in picking the brains of other people, and mentions, not him, but Lavoisier, Laplace, Lagrange, Condorcet, Monge, Vicq d'Azir, and La Harpe

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as the men whose advice he sought in carrying out his task. It is not very difficult to determine their share in it. Condorcet contributes his favourite doctrine of perfectibility, reserving his idea of a universal language for another occasion. The physician Vicq d'Azir has a clearly-outlined vision of the establishment of a Ministry of Public Health connected with the faculty of medicine.

In the introductory portion of his report Talleyrand himself refers with rhetorical exaggeration to the barbarism of the state of things which he had set himself to reform. With the frivolous irony of a Voltairian he provides the ecclesiastical schools of the future with a plan of instruction in theology, "which is no science," and a programme of Christian morals, "which teach complete equality." Women are placed on an equality with men in regard to political rights as well as means of education, and then, "for the sake of the happiness and well-being of both sexes," the right conceded in theory is withdrawn in practice. This explains how it was that Mary Wolstonecraft came to write the "letter to the late Bishop of Autun," which deserves to be preserved as a model of unconscious absurdity, dedicating to Talleyrand the book in which the rights of women are for the first time advocated.

The reading of Talleyrand's report occupied three days, the 10th, 11th, and 25th of September; by the 30th the Constituent Assembly had disappeared from

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the scene, leaving the completion of the task to its successor, the Legislative Assembly.

The latter never took it up, and Talleyrand's report was consigned to oblivion as a literary production for the space of ten years. Of his advisers Condorcet was the only one who became, on the 28th of October, 1791, a member of the new education committee, which went its own way and propounded its wild schemes without rseorting to the aid of experience or taking account of circumstances. The plan which Condorcet submitted to the committee established a republic of *savants* divided into five classes, "for the perfecting of human reason in general," to be paid by the State, but not controlled by it. All instruction was to be entirely gratuitous—this on the eve of bankruptcy—and the same for both sexes; religion no longer appears, and the school is atheistic. Lanthenas afterwards constructed an edifice on the same foundations under the Convention. The schemes put forward by Lakanal and Sieyès were not possessed of greater vitality than his. It was not till the year IV. that the former Oratorian Daunou succeeded in passing the decree of the 3rd Brumaire, which failed, not through its own intrinsic inadequacy, but for lack of the necessary funds and the required staff of teachers, and, above all, owing to the absence of confidence in a régime which had lost its ideal of duty as well as its religious convictions.

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It was not reserved for the discredited survivors of the Convention, or the used-up nonentities of the Directory, to settle this question; the iron grasp of Bonaparte fastened on the rising generation, and out of the soft material of youth moulded the Frenchman of the Empire, who, whether soldier or priest, official or *savant*, was pressed into the service of the masterful genius who organised his system of instruction as he did his army, and proclaimed with the infallible instinct of the despot: "L'éducation publique c'est l'avenir et la durée de mon œuvre après moi." In 1802 and 1806 Talleyrand's ideas reappeared under Napoleon's sway, and in the plan of the Imperial University, which combined all public instruction, from the primary school up to the Institute, into one harmonious whole, and placed it under one centralised government. Conceived in the style and sentiment of 1789, and designed as a bulwark against the encroachments of tyranny, in the hands of the First Consul and Emperor his proposals proved an unrivalled instrument of arbitrary power. The idol of the Revolution, that ideal of equality, which absolute Monarchy had long ago called into being, and even Talleyrand's rhetoric honours with a passing tribute, placed a whole people under the heel of the last of the Cæsars, while the despotism of *égalitaire* centralisation has outlived the despot.

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CHAPTER VII.

TALLEYRAND'S MISSIONS TO LONDON.

1792.

BY a final suicidal decree the Constituent Assembly had prohibited its members from seeking election to the next three Legislative Assemblies, and from taking office for two years after its dissolution. The disqualification came upon Talleyrand at a juncture when the foreign policy of France was exercising a preponderating influence on its internal concerns.

As far back as the end of 1790 the conduct of foreign affairs had been to a great extent in the hands of the diplomatic committee and its reporter Mirabeau. His views are well known. Exchange of territory and extension of frontiers he opposed as mere expedients of arbitrary authority. A system of alliances, based on mutual economic advantages, was to replace the dynastic policy of feudal Europe. Mirabeau's stepson relates that the recommendation of an alliance of this kind between France and England was the dying man's legacy to Talleyrand. The latter succeeded him in the diplomatic committee, and it was through his

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influence that the Constituent Assembly made the abandonment of foreign conquest a fundamental law of the State.

As late as the autumn of 1791 this policy seemed to have every prospect of success. Montmorin, the King's Minister and friend, supported it from conviction, and from motives of moderation, as the tradition of Vergennes and the best safeguard of the Monarchy. The Constitutionalists, who were committed to peace, had, after the flight to Varennes, replaced the King, who was at first suspended and then pardoned, on the throne, put down the insurrection, and proved that in 1791 only a dwindling minority of Frenchmen was in favour of a republic. They persuaded Louis XVI. to take the oath to the constitution, which he had shortly before declared to be unworkable, an opinion shared by those who had framed it. The revolutionist Barnave and the conservative Malouet agreed that, if it was impossible to govern with it, then the conflict must end by strengthening the executive, unless the country was to become a prey to anarchy. There was no difficulty in getting Louis XVI. to issue a formal condemnation of the emigrants at Coblenz, where the Queen was detested, his own authority set at naught, and intrigue had assumed the proportions of rebellion. As regards the attitude of the European powers, the three greatest historians of the Revolution, Sybel, Taine, and Sorel, have demonstrated convincingly that

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both Russia and Prussia were not directing their attention to war with France but to Polish affairs, that the Empress Catharine wished to entangle Prussia in the conflict in order to have a free hand in Poland, that the Emperor Leopold did all in his power to avoid warlike measures against France or to reduce them to a minimum, and that England's aims were not less peaceful, provided Antwerp and Amsterdam were not threatened. As long as France did not obtain access to the Dutch frontier by the conquest of Belgium, Pitt, who was bound by treaties to Holland, remained a resolute adherent of peace. In the words of his latest biographer, he held aloof "with ostentatious ignorance" from French complications: and, besides, it was not the interest of England to check the process of disintegration which had set in in France. This had already borne fruit in the autumn of 1790, in the settlement of the dispute with Spain, and had at the same time led to the termination of the family agreement of 1762, a result due simply to the refusal of the Constituent Assembly to render any assistance to its ally Spain. A successful war would have been less advantageous to England than a neutrality of this kind. The Emperor Leopold took his stand on the unwarlike attitude of France when rejecting the impatient demands of the princes in Coblenz for armed intervention and his sister's entreaty for an armed congress. The few weeks that elapsed

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between September and November 1791 sufficed to scatter all these hopes of peace to the winds.

By the side of the official policy of the Constituent Assembly there had existed another, the advocates of which held that a propaganda of the Revolution and a crusade against the old feudal monarchies, with the object of bringing freedom to the nations, was a necessary consequence of the declaration of the rights of man. Anarcharsis Clootz reduced it to a caricature; La Fayette was coquetting with it when the Revolution broke out in Belgium; Brissot, the author of the apophthegm "la propriété c'est le vol," preached it in the Jacobin Club; Sieyès dilated in 1790 on all the advantages of a rupture with England, and the Constituent Assembly transformed all these tendencies into action by uniting, in virtue of the new principles of 1789, the papal *enclaves* of Avignon and the Venaissin to France, "by desire of the majority of the population," but at the cost of a frightful massacre. As is well known, it was the only one of all the French annexations which England was to recognise at the Congress of Vienna! This took place on the 13th of September. A few weeks afterwards the Legislative Assembly, or, to speak more correctly, the Gironde, was in power. The Constitutionalists had dwindled down to a small minority; the Centre, which held the same views, yielded to intimidation. Robespierre was master in the Jacobin Club; Danton was the leader of the Paris

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demagogues, and, great as was the mutual hatred and distrust of the various groups, all were united in one common aim, the destruction of the Monarchy, an object to be compassed, according to the Gironde, with all the greater certainty by a policy of religious persecution at home and war abroad.

On the 8th of November was passed the resolution decreeing the penalties of death and confiscation of property against all emigrants who had not returned to France by the 1st of January, 1792. On the 29th of November the Assembly demanded the removal of the emigrants from the frontier, the cessation of their armaments, the reorganisation of the diplomatic service, and the formation of an army, in order to carry out, if need be, by force, what could not be effected by negotiation. On the same day it required all priests to take the oath, whether in receipt of a stipend from the State or not, and made all who refused to take it liable to suspension, loss of stipend, and expulsion.

Its next step was to ask the Directory of the Department of Paris for a list of suspected priests—the future proscription list—and to assist in criminal proceedings against them. The Directory refused both. Several of its members went further, and in a special petition addressed to the King begged him to counteract the intrigues of the emigration and the reaction, but to withhold his consent to the decree against the priests of November 29th. The petition was signed by

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Beaumetz, Desmeuniers, La Rochefoucauld, and Talleyrand. It referred with a forced optimism to the situation in Paris and the state of the public mind as "aussi rassurantes que Votre Majesté peut le désirer," but contained the following passage in reference to the religious troubles: "Un siècle entier de philosophie n'aurait-il donc servi qu'à nous ramener à l'intolérance du seizième siècle par les routes mêmes de la liberté? . . . Puisqu'aucune religion n'est une loi, qu'aucune religion ne soit un crime." Louis XVI. vetoed the decrees which would have forced him to send his brothers to the scaffold and condemn his priests to poverty and exile, but had to look helplessly on while forty-three departments defied his authority with impunity.

On the 21st of November Montmorin, unable to resist the repeated attacks and insinuations directed against him, resigned. He was succeeded by De Lessart, a mediocrity. The leading spirit now was the new Minister of War, Count Louis de Narbonne. A diplomatist of the old school, the negotiator of the Austrian alliance of 1756, Bernis, now ambassador in Rome, wrote the following contemptuous remarks when he heard of the appointment: "Nous verrons s'il suffira de boire du vin de Champagne, de déshonorer des femmes et de faire des dettes pour remplacer Monsieur de Louvois." On the other hand, Narbonne was one of the trio designated by Mirabeau as possessing his confidence, the other two being Talleyrand and Lauzun. In 1790 he was in

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command at Besançon, where by dint of tact and firmness he succeeded in quelling the religious disturbances without bloodshed. He then escorted the aunts of Louis XVI. safely to Rome, a service which gained for him the sympathies, if not the confidence, of the King. As Minister he now determined on playing a desperate game.

The Constitutionalists, now called "Feuillants" after their new club, were opposed to war, because they feared what the Gironde hoped, and, like the latter, held that a defeat in the field would lead to the fall of the Monarchy. Nor had the moment arrived for the Jacobins to identify themselves with war: they still shared Robespierre's apprehension that the reorganisation of the army and restoration of discipline might serve to consolidate the royal power. War above all and before all was, on the other hand, the constant cry of Brissot, Condorcet, Isnard, and Madame Roland, all spokesmen of the Gironde, for only by war could the constitution fall and the King along with it.

At this point Narbonne carried out his surprise, and went over to the Gironde, taking the Feuillants with him. If war was the order of the day, then it was better that the King should take the initiative and risk the consequences. If his enemies, the Jacobins, were right, then he might be saved by war and settle his account with the Gironde; if he remained inactive he was lost. The 4th of December was the date of Narbonne's

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appointment. Ten days later the King declared himself on the side of the nation as against the foreigner, summoned the Elector of Trèves to disband the army of emigrants within fourteen days, and ordered one hundred and fifty thousand men to be raised and divided into three corps, under Rochambeau in Lille, Luckner on the Rhine, and La Fayette in Metz.

The demonstration was directed against the Emperor. Narbonne reverted to the tradition of the old Monarchy, the opposition to the House of Austria which had been suspended in 1756. He was in hopes that he might by this means at the same time predispose the anti-Austrian Prussophil England in favour of France, and so pave the way for the alliance which, combined with the *rapprochement* with Prussia, formed the key-stone of his policy. To carry it into effect the assistance of an adroit diplomatist was required. Narbonne thought at once of Talleyrand, who, all official channels being barred to him, thus found the desired side path leading back into public life.

His star was not in the ascendant when this turn of affairs came. To escape from the difficulties of his new position he had thought of the ambassadorship in Vienna, and then of that in Constantinople; the latter did not become vacant, because his friend Choiseul declined the Ministry offered to him, and Talleyrand was so detested in Vienna that a secret mission thither of his confidant the Abbé Louis in

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August failed because it had been connected with his name. Even his relations with Narbonne had recently been somewhat clouded by reports as to his intimacy with Madame de Staël, who addressed to him the passage in "Delphine": "Midway in your life you met the young woman who offered you her first friendship, a sentiment well-nigh as deep and heartfelt as a first love." Her feelings towards him, which were of a passionate nature, as was always the case with her, had been misconstrued, and she had to exert all her peculiar power of conciliation to put the two men on their old terms. A further difficulty of Talleyrand's position was that his tolerant views in the religious question had lost him his popularity without propitiating the royalists. After Mirabeau's death it was not he but Cabanis, the mouthpiece of Sieyès, who was entrusted with the task of keeping up communications with the Court. Danton was then in the pay of the Court and of the Duke of Orléans, and towards the end of the year declined further offers of the King with the cynical remark that it was too late: "Nous le détrônerons et puis nous le tuerons." Even Montmorin preferred to deal with A. de Lameth and Duport rather than with Talleyrand. In a postscript appended by the Austrian ambassador Mercy to a report made by Pellenc to de la Marck about this time, the Bishop is spoken of as one of the "trois grands scélérats de l'Assemblée constituante." When shortly afterwards

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Frederick William II. heard of the bad reception which the Constitutionalist negotiator had met with in London, he made no secret of his delight. The hatred of the Royalists was on a par with that shown in Peltier's lines, the "Actes des Apôtres," where Talleyrand was gibbeted as follows:—

> "Froidement du mépris il affronte les traits ;
> Il conseille le vol, enseigne le parjure,
> Et sème la discorde en annonçant la paix.
> Sans cesse on nous redit qu'il ne peut rien produire,
> Et que de ses discours il n'est que le lecteur.
> Mais ce qu'un autre écrit, c'est lui seul qui l'inspire,
> Et l'on ne peut du moins méconnaître son cœur."

The last lines are an allusion to the fact that Desrenaudes, Dupont de Nemours, and others were considered to be Talleyrand's coadjutors, as Dumont, Duroveray, Clavière, Reybaz, Sémonville, Talon, Pellenc, Lamourette, and Maret had been Mirabeau's. After the publication of the address of the Department of Paris to the King the invectives of the Royalists were followed by the insults of the demagogues. The Paris Commune had elected Pétion mayor in place of Bailly, and had made Manuel procurator, Roederer syndic, and Danton Manuel's substitute. Thereupon the Paris sections demanded the impeachment of the authors of the address.

The motion was unsuccessful, but the menace remained. "La nation est une parvenue et comme telle insolente," remarked Talleyrand to Morris. He

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had never thought of escaping from his awkward position by emigration. He condemned not only the first political emigration, for which the Comte d'Artois had given the signal against his advice, but also the second departure, or, to speak more correctly, flight of the nobles to the army at Coblenz and abroad, as he considered such a step only justifiable when life was in immediate peril. "Do not emigrate," he said to the Countess de Brionne; as the danger became serious for her: "Neither Paris nor your *châteaux* are suitable residences for you. Go to some small provincial town, and endeavour to live there unobserved." "Fi, Monsieur d'Autun," was the reply, "paysanne tant qu'on voudra, bourgeoise jamais." His own rule of conduct was to hold himself at the disposal of events. He says in the Memoirs: "Pourvu que je restasse Français, tout me convenait; la Révolution promettait de nouvelles destinées à la nation; je la suivis dans sa marche et j'en courus les chances. Je lui vouai le tribut de toutes mes aptitudes, décidé à servir mon pays pour lui-même."

When the Feuillants resolved to fight the enemy with his own weapons and re-establish the throne in the camp, they found Talleyrand ready to join in the experiment. He consented without hesitation to a policy which has been compared to that to which he prompted General Bonaparte eight years afterwards,

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and by means of which he himself restored the crown to the brother of Louis XVI. in 1814. The parts were allotted in Madame de Staël's *salon*, under the roof of the envoy of Gustavus of Sweden. Young Custine, son of the General, was sent to Brunswick *viâ* Berlin, to enlist the influence of Prince Henry of Prussia in favour of an utopia, the idea of which could only have occurred at a time when men who stood on the threshold of a five-and-twenty years' war still fancied themselves working at the formation of a brotherhood of peoples. The Duke of Brunswick, the darling of the philosophers and—a notable point to the adherents of the English alliance—the husband of an English princess, was to be won over to the cause of France and take the supreme command of her armies. His hatred of Austria was well known, and it was considered a great move in the game to deprive the other side of its best general. "You will be told," wrote Narbonne, "that the French constitution, which you would have to engage to maintain, is very defective; but, such as it is, it undoubtedly marks a great epoch in the history of the human mind, and it is not fair to pronounce a verdict upon it so long as it has only been seen working in the midst of the commotions of civil war. For civil war is really upon us, although the words themselves have not yet been uttered. The French people is ready to perish under the ruins of this constitution."

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Strange to say, the Duke of Brunswick was far better informed than Narbonne on this very point. The latter was not aware that the Duke had simultaneously with his assurances received a communication from Sieyès, which, in direct contravention of the constitution, actually held out a prospect of the French Crown in case of victory. The Duke declined all these tempting offers by referring to his engagements to Prussia, and subsequently contributed to the success of the French arms only by his procrastinating strategy. While this was going on in Brunswick Barbé-Marbois was ordered to tranquillise the small German courts, and make them understand the advantages of an alliance of the nations. Barthélemy was sent to Switzerland with the same object; Talleyrand and Biron compared their experiences of the days of Mirabeau's mission to Berlin in discussing the best mode of bribing the *entourage* of Frederick William. "If we can get the King of Prussia on our side, we are masters of the situation," wrote Talleyrand; "in that case the constitution will assert its vitality and confidence will revive. The attitude of Prussia will decide that of the Emperor."

These attempts failed owing to the divisions prevailing in the counsels of the Crown. De Lessart, influenced by Barnave, who, moved by her tragic fate and the contemplation of her grief, had become

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attached to the Queen after the Varennes incident, clung to the hope of maintaining peace by means of an armed congress. He sent Count Ségur as ambassador to Berlin to obtain neutrality instead of an alliance. But Ségur was disavowed behind his back as an agent of revolutionary propaganda by the secret diplomacy of Louis XVI. under Breteuil, and at the same time another secret emissary, named Jarry, in the employ of Talleyrand and Biron, submitted a request for an alliance instead of neutrality to the Ministers in Berlin. It was now too late for the one as well as the other.

The Emperor had made the Elector of Trèves disband the army of emigrants, but had at the same time declared that he would come to his assistance if he were attacked by France notwithstanding. On the 20th of January, 1792, Noailles, the French ambassador in Vienna, reported that there would be no war if France did not declare it.

Robespierre, who had changed his mind, now turned the scale. He too wanted war, he declared defiantly to the Gironde; not a campaign conducted by cabinets, controlled by kings, and under the command of a Narbonne or a La Fayette, but a triumphal march of the nation for the liberation of peoples. The Gironde, suspected and menaced, replied to his challenge by another, and informed the Assembly of the plots of Austria and the "Austrian committee." The Jacobins

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attacked the Monarchy, the Girondists threw over the Queen, and provoked the treaty between Austria and Prussia of February 7th, 1792, by demanding from the Emperor, who had just done their bidding and dispersed the gatherings of emigrants, a solemn promise to abstain from all hostilities until the 1st of March, with the intimation that refusal or silence would be considered tantamount to a declaration of war.

This 1st of March was the day of the Emperor's death. On the 16th Gustavus III., the only disinterested friend of the French Monarchy, fell by the dagger of an assassin, and the young Emperor, Francis II., was confronted with a question the settlement of which threw even French affairs into the background.

The Empress Catharine, who had concluded peace with the Turks at Jassy on the 9th of January, now directed her troops towards Poland, while her diplomatists in Berlin offered Prussia a share of the spoil if the latter would consent to the third and last partition. Prussia was bound to Poland by the treaties of March 29th, 1790, and February 7th, 1792, the latter guaranteeing the integrity of the Republic. Austria at the same time demanded from Prussia a guarantee of the Polish constitution of 1791, and recognition of the Elector of Saxony's hereditary title. The Austrian proposals were declined, and those of the Empress

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accepted. Thus was consummated the *gran rifiuto*, by which the two great continental powers destined to combat the Revolution entered on a course which was not less revolutionary than that of their French opponents.

While these events were following each other on the Continent, Talleyrand, who was selected for the most important of the missions, had arrived in London on the 24th of January, where Hirsinger, the French *chargé d'affaires*, had orders to support him in every way. He was also the bearer of a letter from De Lessart to Lord Grenville, which stated that the ex-Bishop of Autun was visiting England on his own private affairs, but that his profound knowledge of the political situation rendered it desirable that the Foreign Secretary should confer with him. Talleyrand was accompanied by Lauzun, Duc de Biron, whose pretext for the journey was the purchase of horses for the army, and had letters of introduction from Dumont to the Opposition, especially to Lord Lansdowne. Hirsinger took Talleyrand to Pitt, who confined himself to formal politeness, but did not forget their old acquaintance in 1783. On the 1st of February Talleyrand was presented to the King, who took hardly any notice of him; and on the following day the Queen turned her back upon him, which was the signal for the intentional slights put upon him by the fashionable world. Under the impression of his first conversations with the Liberals,

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Talleyrand had written to Paris that "a *rapprochement* with England was by no means hopeless." A few days later he was obliged to admit that fair words and plausible statements were an inadequate foundation for it. "We address the powers of northern Europe with one hundred and fifty thousand men at our back. A naval demonstration is the only language which England understands. . . . A bare neutrality, unaccompanied by any formal declaration thereof, is of no use to us."

These first reports were written under the impression that he might succeed in influencing the Government through public opinion, supposed to be favourable to the French, and through the Opposition in Parliament, and then win over the Cabinet by means of offers of territory. The cession of the island of Tobago was mooted in France. According to well-informed persons, such as Baron Staël and Morris, the surrender of even some French fortresses was to be held out as a guarantee. But Burke had long since roused the English conscience in accents of thunder, declaring that it was liberty which was menaced in France, and bidding his fellow-countrymen repudiate all comparison between the Revolution of 1688 and that of 1789 as an insult to England. According to Macaulay, nine-tenths of those who had a roof over their head and a coat to their back were violently anti-Jacobin. The anti-Austrian pro-

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revolutionary policy of Fox could only hope for success if supported by public opinion, which showed itself daily more averse to it, and in January—February 1892 the French *chargé d'affaires* described Pitt's influence as "well-nigh absolute." Talleyrand was instructed to press for a declaration of neutrality even in case France should find herself compelled to advance into the Austrian Netherlands, "as a military precaution against the aggression of the Emperor." He was also ordered to ask for explanations as to the line which George III. in his capacity of Elector of Hanover intended to take with his thirty or forty thousand troops in the impending conflict.

His first interview with Lord Grenville, on the 17th of February, was a lengthy one. He referred to his own position, to the calumnies with which he had been assailed, to his devotion to a monarchical constitution and to the cause of liberty and equality. He said that he had come as the representative of a policy which had always regarded England as the natural ally of France. But, he added, England should be under no illusion as to the state of affairs in France. Nothing could now stifle the spirit of freedom which had arisen there. England, he urged, should rise superior to petty considerations and recognise this fact, and think only of the future, with its common principles and interests for both coun-

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tries. To promote this object Talleyrand proposed a treaty with mutual guarantee of the *status quo*, in India as well as in Ireland, the former of which was threatened with war, and the latter with internal commotion. Lord Grenville listened to him attentively, assured him that England's intentions were thoroughly peaceful and that she was well disposed towards France, but stated that he had no power to negotiate with a person who had no authority whatever to treat himself. Talleyrand interpreted this remark in an optimist sense as guaranteeing a neutrality *de facto*, and sent assurances of a most tranquillising character to Paris.

In the meanwhile he met with annoyances in London of an altogether unforeseen kind. Biron had been gambling and had lost enormous sums, and could only be released from prison with the greatest difficulty. At the same time the English Press, especially the *Times*, published a series of attacks on Talleyrand, which were inspired by his opponents in Paris, and made his position in society all the more difficult by representing him as in constant intercourse with Thomas Paine, Horne Tooke, and men of similar opinions. Observant and silent, he managed to shelter himself behind a barrier of frigid reserve, and his pallor and taciturnity excited general remark. The news from Paris was not of a

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nature to compensate him for his worries in London. "We are on the eve of complete dissolution," wrote Narbonne; "mistrust has reached its extreme limit, and the war which we once had such good reason to dread is probably our last glimmer of hope."

Under these circumstances the success of Talleyrand's semi-official mission was almost hopeless, but the energy with which he clung to his forlorn hope excites our admiration. "If we do not appear to believe in our Revolution ourselves," he wrote to De Lessart, "how can we inspire confidence in others?" "Je vous exhorte à vous tuer ou à vous unir; il n'y a que cela de sûr et de loyal." In long and eloquent despatches he endeavoured to give his incapable chief an idea of what he himself understood by diplomacy. He never mentions Louis XVI. With English politicians he alluded to the Revolution as a fact which nothing could ever upset. On the 8th of March De Lessart summoned him to a conference at Paris; on the 10th of March he arrived there, accompanied by Dumont and Duroveray, and at the barriers the travellers were informed that Narbonne had been dismissed by the King, and that De Lessart was to be impeached on the motion of Brissot. "People were surprised," writes Dumont, "that the King was in a position to disgrace any one." The cause was an intrigue, in which Madame de Staël was mixed up, with the object

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of placing Narbonne at the head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Gironde had frustrated his plans for the reorganisation of the army, and Louis XVI. refused to proceed to Metz with his adherents, under the protection of La Fayette, for the purpose of framing a constitution and declaring a war in accordance with his desires. The Feuillants had thus played their trump card, and their Ministers succumbed to the denunciations of the Gironde, which now supplied the King with his new advisers. Clavière of Geneva, the friend of Mirabeau, became Finance Minister; while General Dumouriez, Gensonné's friend, received the portfolio of Foreign Affairs.

The latter had served his apprenticeship as agent of the secret diplomacy of Louis XV. In private life he was, like Narbonne and Biron in their sphere, an adventurer of abilities, for whom the Revolution was above all things a career. He detested Austria, was bent on war, and removed the scene of it to Belgium. Sorel notices how Dumouriez, trained in the old tactics of French statecraft, simply used the political traditions of the Monarchy under Louis XIV. to promote the propaganda of the Revolution. He had been in Belgium in 1790, and knew from his own personal observation that the burghers of Brabant, confronted with the choice between Austria and the Jacobins, would rather draw the sword for the former than the

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latter. Accordingly, Belgium was not to be conquered, but placed under a French protectorate as a federated republic. In this way, so Dumouriez hoped, England might be brought to recognise the *fait accompli*, and a rising in Holland would be avoided. He sent young Custine once more to Berlin, to demonstrate the necessity of the traditional alliance with France against Austria. Other agents were instructed to win over the German Courts and assure the neutrality of Sweden and Denmark. The territory of Milan was dangled before the eyes of the King of Sardinia. Spain would keep quiet if England only remained neutral, and that Talleyrand answered for. He found Dumouriez's ideas in harmony with his own: "absolument à la révolution, toujours à l'idée d'attaquer. Tout ce qui nous tourmente dans l'intérieur l'y porte." Sieyès introduced the Bishop to Brissot and the Gironde. The young Marquis de Chauvelin was appointed ambassador in London at his suggestion. The *littérateur* Garat, "un écolier en vacances," as Talleyrand calls him, Duroveray of Geneva, and a young Swabian theologian, by name Reinhard, who had become a Frenchman, were given him as colleagues. The real plenipotentiary was Talleyrand.

In De Lessart's despatches he had felt the want of a certain "noblesse de style." He now, as it would appear, drafted the instructions by means of which Dumouriez hoped to win over the English cabinet to

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the French proposals for an alliance. In them France offered a provisional guarantee of the possessions of each country, a common continental and colonial policy, the conclusion of a commercial treaty, and the cession of Tobago. In addition to this Talleyrand was the bearer of a letter from Louis XVI. to George III., which laid stress on the value of the alliance as a means of "dictating peace to Europe." A second ultimatum, couched in a tone of aggressive insolence, was addressed to Austria; and on the 20th of April appeared the declaration of war which had been extorted from Louis XVI. It was intended for the kings, as Merlin de Thionville triumphantly remarked; with the peoples of Europe France wished for peace.

Talleyrand and the members of his mission still lingered in Paris. "M. de Talleyrand s'amuse, M. de Chauvelin boude, M. Duroveray marchande," said Dumouriez to Dumont, and threatened to appoint other plenipotentiaries in their place. On the 29th of April, while the army of the North was crossing the Belgian frontier, the French negotiators arrived in London. The day before Pitt had tranquillised the openly expressed apprehensions of the public with the semi-official assurance that peace was not endangered either at home or abroad. Two days after Chauvelin had delivered the confidential letter of Louis XVI., French journals published the text of it in London, which

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naturally produced the most intense annoyance there. In vain Talleyrand implored his fellow-countrymen to be guided by reason, and warned them of the danger of insulting the English Ministry every day in the papers, the clubs, and from the tribune, of publishing confidential documents, of counting on a revolutionary rising in London, and confounding the English opposition with the Revolution. His own greatest difficulty was that, as on the occasion of his first mission, he was obliged to confine his intercourse to Fox, Sheridan, and their friends, with whom Chauvelin compromised himself with utter want of tact, and in a style which would never have been tolerated so long in any other place.

In spite of all this, he was able to report one success. While the French offensive campaign opened with disgraceful defeats, while Dumouriez's negotiations failed in Berlin, could not even be begun in Turin, and were declined in Madrid, in London, on the 25th of May, a royal proclamation appeared, prescribing measures in conformity with the neutral position of England. A note of the same date from Lord Grenville to Chauvelin regretted the war, promised observance of existing treaties, and expressed a wish that the friendly relations between the two countries might be maintained by respect on the part of France for the rights of England and her allies. This was not an alliance such as Dumouriez had hoped for, but at all events

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it was an assurance of neutrality on certain defined conditions, and the only bright spot in the chaotic confusion produced by French diplomatic intrigue. Talleyrand had attained his object by exceeding his instructions, and by meeting the English Cabinet, whose efforts were directed to the maintenance of peace, with assurances which excluded all idea of proselytism and propaganda: "How," he wrote home on the 23rd of May, "can we stigmatise Austria's intervention in our affairs as a breach of international law, if we do not ourselves refrain from all such proceedings in our dealings with friendly or neutral Powers, and especially with England, which has always observed the rules of conduct which should govern relations with a friendly neighbouring state, and has never interfered in our domestic troubles?"

The Government in Paris was unable to appreciate this wise advice, and besides would not have had the power of acting upon it. Instead of contenting himself with the success achieved, Dumouriez became very uneasy, and demanded further explanations as to the attitude which George III. proposed to take up in his capacity of Elector of Hanover, in case of a declaration of war, as to England's intentions if Holland were to intervene in Belgium in opposition to the French, and finally as to the meaning of the expression "England's allies" used by Lord Grenville, although

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there was no doubt that they referred to Prussia and Holland.

As regards Prussia, the French Government was prepared to meet her in every possible way, and it was not Dumouriez's fault that all his friendly advances in Berlin came to nothing. As for Holland, Talleyrand replied that it was not expedient to press for explanations of a too categorical kind; that Holland's treaties with England and Austria, in regard to Belgium, were of a purely defensive nature; and that there was no risk so long as France abstained from all provocation. Instead of this a Batavian legion was armed in Paris, and the revolutionising of the Netherlands encouraged. The demagogues demolished the edifice which the diplomatists were laboriously constructing; the idea of an invasion of Holland as the most effective weapon against England, the future cry of Danton, "Prenons la Hollande et Carthage est à nous," began to take indistinct shape, and Dumouriez found himself swamped by the Revolution. In Paris, where the royal family was waiting for the entry of the Allies as a liberation from the oppression of traitors and rebels, the old pedant Roland was administering to the King reproofs composed by his wife, and the Gironde endeavouring to extort from him a prohibition of the summons of the Federates to Paris, and a condemnation of the nonjuring priests.

Dumouriez, who had arrived at the conclusion that

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the Girondists, who had attained power by means of revolution, were no longer able to control it, now advised the King to dismiss his Ministers, which was done on the 14th of June. On the same day he took over the portfolio of War, in order, as Narbonne had done before him, to redeem the failure of his diplomacy by military successes at the expense of Austria in Belgium, and gild the declining monarchy with the lustre of victory. Two days afterwards he had ceased to be Minister, and on the 20th of June the Gironde, with the support of the Jacobins, replied to the King's veto of their decrees and his rejection of their dictatorship by inciting the mob to invade the Tuileries and the Assembly.

It was no longer possible to deceive foreign countries as to the state of France. On the 5th of July, Chauvelin wrote to the stop-gap who had taken Dumouriez's place, that it was difficult to obtain anything from foreign powers so long as no one could tell who was master in France. On the same day Talleyrand, in order to study the situation, proceeded to Paris, where he could speedily assure himself that the real master was Danton, and that he had been wasting his time in London.

With the cry of "La patrie en danger" the Assembly insisted on war to the knife, long before the manifesto of the Duke of Brunswick had raised fanaticism to the boiling-point. The King, abandoned and submissive,

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maintained his rejection of the latest demands of the Gironde, who discussed his deposition after having once more failed in an endeavour to force their domination on him by means of a Ministry selected by themselves.

Talleyrand's share in the events of these last weeks of the Monarchy was not a passive one. The Mayor of Paris, Pétion, one of the most contemptible mountebanks produced by the Revolution, had brought about the insurrection of June 20th by culpable complicity, and had been suspended for it by the Department of Paris. When the Assembly pronounced him innocent, in spite of the grave charges against him, its President, the Duke de la Rochefoucauld-d'Anville, and eight of its members tendered their resignations. Among the latter was Talleyrand, who relates in his Memoirs that on the following morning, the anniversary of July 14th and the Federation, while he was passing the Tuileries with his colleagues, a gracious greeting from the Queen drew on them the insults of the populace. He too was preoccupied at that time with the idea of saving the royal family. Like Malouet, Roederer, Morris, and others, he was in the secret of one of the many plans for flight made in those days. His idea was to take the King and his family to Rouen, where the Duke de la Rochefoucauld-Liancourt was in command, and from there to England. When Pétion on the 8th of August informed the Department

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of Paris that he could not answer for the safety of the Tuileries, Roederer communicated the fact to Talleyrand, who at that moment was acting on a jury in the Palais de Justice, and received the laconic note "on le saura" in reply. The royal family could not make up its mind. They were then in treaty with some of the Girondists, and, according to La Fayette, also with Danton, and in consequence thought themselves safe. On the 10th of August, when the artillerists of the National Guard threw away their cartridges instead of firing on Danton's mob, Beaumetz, a friend of Talleyrand, and Roederer, the syndic of the Paris Commune, advised that the royal family should be brought into the Assembly for greater security. Talleyrand, who guaranteed the authenticity of these details subsequently, was not in the *château*, and the story that he suggested in writing to the President of the Assembly that the royal family should be taken to the Temple is equally devoid of foundation. Michaud, who makes the accusation, relies on Roederer, who expressly states that the responsibility for this step rests with the Commune.

A few weeks more, and no calumny was needed to place Talleyrand's attitude in a more than dubious light. On the 10th of August the Commune had the King, the capital, the Assembly, and the Gironde at its feet, and gave the reins of power into the hands of the new Minister of Justice, Danton. The deputy for Arcis-sur-

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Aube was under three-and-thirty, his face marked with small-pox, thick-set in figure, corrupt, turbulent, and as unstable and violent as Mirabeau. What the latter had been in the Constituent Assembly, that the former became in the Cordeliers' club and at the head of the executive in 1792. A mob favourite and born tribune of the people, he was yet the only one of his colleagues who possessed an instinctive faculty of government, and retained statesmanlike ideas in the midst of the chaotic work of destruction. Like Mirabeau, who wanted constitutional monarchy and could only create anarchy, so Danton wanted peace and saw himself forced instead into an internecine struggle.

On the 18th of August, when the dust had hardly settled in the wrecked apartments of the royal *château*, the provisional government issued an apology for the rising of August 10th in the form of a circular addressed to the Powers, and especially to England. The King, so it was stated in this document, had not been able to conquer the prejudices inseparable from his education, and trust in his real friends. The enemies of freedom had been bribed with his gold, and his intrigues had undermined the foundations of the constitution; a vast plot, with its headquarters in the Tuileries, threatened the existence of our revolution and the success of our arms. It was only in face of this counter-revolution that the people, summoned by the tocsins and joined

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by brave *fédérés* from all parts of France, had marched on the royal residence, where the treachery of some cowardly satellites compelled them to act in self-defence. The Assembly was an eyewitness, and had almost been a victim, of all this perfidy. No course was left to it but to suspend the King in the interests of his own personal safety, to assume power in the name of the public welfare and summon a national convention. Its moderation had earned the gratitude of the nation; anarchy had been defeated and France now consisted of only one party. The provisional government took this opportunity of assuring the English people and its rulers of their confidence and esteem, and of reminding them how under similar and even more terrible circumstances they had assumed the sovereign power and met with the approval of Europe.

The French publisher of this document, M. Pallain, speaks of it admiringly "as a specimen of the finest language that was ever heard in the Foreign Office." He does not add that it was also one of the greatest insults that has ever been deliberately offered to historic truth. Its author, who was no less a person than Talleyrand, has been refuted more completely by events than by the most trustworthy evidence. "Courtisan du destin," writes Lamartine, "il accompagnait le bonheur, il servait les forts, il méprisait les maladroits, il abandonnait les malheureux." There is no other possible explanation of the abrupt change

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of front which turned the signer of the protest against the rising of June 20th into an apologist of that of August 10th. The Monarchy was played out, the policy of the moderates was lost. With the masterly assurance peculiar to a man who has not a conviction in the world, Talleyrand now ranged himself on the side of Danton. He had ventured to stigmatise the despairing resistance of eight hundred loyal Swiss to twenty thousand furious assailants as "the treachery of cowardly satellites." His destiny dragged him deeper still, into the bloody torrent of the September massacres, with which Danton inaugurated the Terror. The Commune's attempt at government had already cost one thousand three hundred and seventy-eight human lives, among them two hundred and fifty priests, three bishops, forty-three children, and one negro. Talleyrand's friends had been either massacred, such as De Lessart, Clermont-Tonnerre, La Rochefoucauld-d'Anville, and Montmorin, or were outlawed and had taken flight, such as Narbonne, Beaumetz, Jaucourt, Lally, and, in fact, all the *constitutionnels* of 1789. The only one left free and unharmed was Talleyrand, who returned to London on the 14th of September with a passport of the executive government obtained by Danton's influence. Barrère saw him in Danton's apartment on the morning of his departure, "en culottes de peau, avec des bottes, un chapeau rond, un petit frac, et une petite queue." In reply to an enquiry he stated that

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he was going on a mission for the Executive Committee. His passport contained the following: "Laissez passer le citoyen Ch. M. Talleyrand . . . . allant à Londres par nos ordres." On the 23rd of September, in an official letter to Lebrun, who had in the meanwhile been appointed Foreign Minister, he denied that he had been entrusted with any mission. Chauvelin confirmed this in a despatch dated the 6th of November. Talleyrand's Memoirs only refer to negotiations for introducing a uniform standard of weights and measures as the object of his mission, but do not conceal the fact that "after the crime of August 10th," as he then styled it, his one idea was to get out of France.

But this third journey to London was also dictated by political aims. Like Mirabeau, Narbonne, and Dumouriez, Danton wished to arrive at an understanding with England. But he wanted it in his own fashion, by means of the parliamentary opposition supported by the demagogues throughout the country, and through the fall of Pitt, which was to be brought about by the annexation of Belgium and the invasion of Holland.

Talleyrand, of whose advice Danton wished to avail himself, who repudiated the means employed by Danton, but was agreed with him as to the end in view, wrote in a reserved tone: "The 10th of August has altered our position, and has perhaps secured

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the freedom and independence of France, and at all events has removed and punished traitors in the camp. But it has impaired our power of action, and from henceforth the course of events cannot be calculated. We must take up new ground, that is, abstain from action and confine ourselves to parrying the attacks meditated by our opponents." Danton lent a ready ear to these counsels of moderation. By means of his personal friend Noël, whose instructions once more betray the hand of Talleyrand, he renewed Dumouriez's offers in London at the beginning of September, adding to them proposals for joint action on the part of both countries in the interest of their trade with South America. It was known that both Danton and Talleyrand, in order to keep Spain in check, had been won over to Dumouriez's favourite scheme of revolutionising the Spanish republics, a plan for which the creole Francesco Miranda was then endeavouring to obtain from the English opposition the support which had been refused by Pitt. In addition to this Noël was to ask for a British guarantee to a French loan, and hold out the hope of abstention from all revolutionary propaganda, especially in respect of Holland.

But Danton was making promises which he could not keep, and relying on combinations which revolutionary fanaticism again frustrated. After the 10th of August the English ambassador at the Court of Louis XVI.

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had been recalled, and after the September massacres George III. prohibited his Ministers from holding any intercourse with Chauvelin and Noël. These atrocities had aroused such indignation in England that Chauvelin, completely discouraged and threatened with recall into the bargain, informed his government that he was shunned as a Jacobin, begged them to treat the King and the Queen with consideration if they wished to save the liberty of the country, and said that no diplomatist could negotiate on behalf of the detested Commune of Paris.

Talleyrand, who had not hastened his journey, did not arrive in London till the 23rd of September, three days after Dumouriez's victory over the Prussians at Valmy, the meeting of the Convention in Paris, and the proclamation of the Republic. In a letter addressed to Lord Grenville he gave a most formal disclaimer of any official mission, and stated that he had come to seek peace and freedom in the society of their best friends, but that the latter would always find him ready to give information respecting affairs in France, especially the recent terrible events, of which he had been almost an eyewitness. No information, however, was asked for, and Talleyrand can hardly have regretted that the English Ministers, in completely ignoring him, rescued him from an intolerable dilemma. Danton, having been elected a deputy of the Convention, was, in consequence, obliged to retire from

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the Ministry, and Lebrun remained at the head of the new Cabinet, one of the most incapable in Europe, in which the new War Minister Pache, Madame Roland's confidential friend, gained the appellation of "disorganiser of victory." It was only subsequently with the Jacobins that Talleyrand found it expedient to refer to the mission, which he so flatly disclaimed in London and passed over so completely in his Memoirs, and to state in 1799: "Je fus envoyé à Londres pour la deuxième fois le 7 Septembre, 1792, par le conseil exécutif provisoire."

The last paper which Talleyrand sent to the Paris government was his memorandum to Lebrun, "on the present relations of France to the other states of Europe." It takes its stand on the principle that the policy of a free people must discard the traditions of despotic governments also in respect of foreign affairs. The old-fashioned ideas of precedence and supremacy, the ridiculous pretension to dictate to others, must give place to the only ambition which is justifiable, that of being master in one's own house. "Le règne de l'illusion est fini pour la France. On se séduira plus son âge mûr par toutes ces grandes considérations politiques qui avaient, pendant si longtemps et d'une manière si déplorable, égaré et prolongé son enfance. . . . Tous les leviers de l'ancienne politique sont rompus ou près de l'être, et ceux qui existent encore ne sont plus à l'usage de la France. . . . La France doit rester

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circonscrite dans ses propres limites; elle le doit à sa gloire, à la justice, à la raison, à son intérêt, et à celui des peuples qui seront libres par elle."

The first consequence of this change of system is a rearrangement of alliances. For the future only those which are concluded with the object of repelling external attack can prove durable. England is reminded, with an opportuneness characteristic of the age, that the treaty with Holland in 1788, "made in favour of a ruling family and of the Batavian aristocracy, and inspired by a false conception of commercial interests," had cost her immense sacrifices of blood and money, "simply in order to prevent another people from being free after its own fashion." This singular description of the relation of the Netherlands to their deliverers of the illustrious House of Orange is followed by an enumeration of emancipated nationalities and states, such as Savoy, Belgium, and Liège. Liberated by the French Republic, they would conclude with her a fraternal alliance "of the weak with the strong, for the protection of their mutual interests." Alliances of another kind, conventions of a more transitory nature, were in view, firstly with Prussia for the maintenance of peace, and then with the Porte for the opening of the Black Sea. In this way Talleyrand arrives at the gist of his remarks, the relations of France to England. The treaties between Austria and the Bourbons, family compacts aimed at the subversion of liberty, must give

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place to a national alliance concluded for its protection. Up to a recent date this policy and he himself, as the exponent of it, had been denounced by royal agents, "de la liste civile," even from the tribune of the Assembly. The Monarchy had now fallen in France, and an alliance was no longer needed, but in its stead an understanding by means of a convention in the interests of the commerce of both countries. Its object would be the independence of their colonies. England should beware of being beguiled by old-fashioned mercantile prejudices, and should concede this independence before it is extorted by the force of circumstances. The example of the United States proves how the trade between that country and England had benefited by the declaration of independence. Their emancipation would be followed as a necessary consequence by that of the Spanish colonies, Peru and Mexico. The hostile attitude of Spain during the rising in San Domingo was a sufficient justification for the intervention of France, which moreover was only directed against an usurpation. The combined French and English fleets should open the Pacific Ocean and the southern seas to free trade. Such a result would be obtained with comparatively little expense. After a revolution it was necessary to open fresh trade routes and provide a new sphere of activity for the passions which had been aroused by it.

Talleyrand reserved to himself the task of working

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out the details of the scheme, which was to remain a secret. The peace of Bâle in 1795, the treaty with the Porte, which opened the Black Sea to French vessels, and which he himself was destined to sign on the 23rd of June, 1802, and the revolutions in Spanish America, gave a prophetic character to his proposals in these respects. England, on the other hand, naturally enough declined to make the surrender of her supremacy which Talleyrand had thought possible, but consolidated and extended it mostly at the expense of France, attaining a height of power beyond her wildest dreams by the foundation of new empires and new colonies in Africa, in India, and in Australasia.

But the most crushing blow to Talleyrand's projects for the future was first given by his own country. His programme, bearing date the 2nd of November, 1792, which assumed the renunciation of the policy of conquest of the old monarchy as a matter of course, came in the midst of a series of decrees of the Paris Convention, which, presenting one of the most remarkable examples of political atavism recorded in history, reverted to the policy of Louis XIV., and made it serve the aims of the Jacobin propaganda, thus proving that the system, but not the instinct and genius of the race, had changed in France.

The first of these decrees, dated the 24th of October, ordered the struggle to be continued until the enemies of the Republic were driven across the Rhine, there-

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by altering the war of resistance to invasion into an aggressive campaign for the liberation of neighbouring nationalities. A second, dated the 19th of November, published after Jemappes and the conquest of Belgium by Dumouriez, that of Savoy and Nice by Montesquiou, and the occupation of Geneva, offered the armed assistance of France to all peoples who wished to gain their freedom. But of far greater significance, although quite irreconcilable with the two first-named, was the third, of December 15th, which compelled all countries occupied by French troops to accept French institutions. This measure gave the rein to persecution and transformed the campaign undertaken for a Jacobin propaganda into a regular war of conquest. In Belgium annexation to France was demanded only by a minority which dwindled daily under the tyranny and extortions of the French army and its commissaries. On the Rhine, where the invaders had indulged in hopes of a military promenade through the ecclesiastical states, "la rue des curés," as they were contemptuously called, enthusiasm abated in presence of the sobering experiences of Custine's administration. The situation was worse in Geneva, where the democracy invoked the assistance of the federal troops of their menaced country against the constitution of the Convention and the French occupation, while in Paris the political ideal of Louis XIV., "the Alps, the Rhine, the Pyrenees, and the sea,"

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became the watch-word adopted by the disciples of the "Contrat Social" in defence of natural right.

The dispute about the navigation of the Scheldt was now not needed to make England abandon her passive attitude. The victories of Dumouriez had once more inspired the English revolutionary party with confidence. Fox hailed Valmy as a triumph for the good cause. English congratulatory deputations appeared at the bar of the Convention, and Danton's diplomatic friends in London, with Chauvelin at their head, in the intoxication of success played the part of revolutionary agents and intrigued under the eyes of the English Government with the insurrectionary committees in Ireland, while optimists of the stamp of Grégoire raved about an alliance with the future British island-republic. The invasion of Belgium had commenced, when Lord Grenville, writing on the 7th of November, the day after Jemappes, stated that the war with Austria was a life-and-death struggle for France, that the former would probably be forced into neutrality to its own advantage, that he did not know himself what course Spain would take, that Sardinia and Italy would defend themselves as best they could, probably very inefficiently, that Portugal and Holland would follow England, but that England would remain passive. As for Pitt, both Chauvelin and Noël testified, as Talleyrand had done before them, to his well-nigh invincible love of peace. The appointed tasks of his

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life, the settlement of the finances, the development of national prosperity, the promotion of domestic reforms, were all lost the moment that he was driven into war. There were other motives also at work. The only great disappointment which his policy had hitherto experienced was connected with an attempt at a military demonstration on behalf of the Turks against Russia. In March 1791 Pitt had been forced into a humiliating diplomatic retreat, owing to the refusal of the country to follow him. This episode had increased his aversion to warlike intervention on the Continent. Like so many English statesmen before and after him, he was unfamiliar with foreign affairs: "little versed in foreign politics, . . . in all matters that relate to our foreign interests he wants information," writes his admirer, the agent William Augustus Miles, in 1788, and repeats his opinion in 1794. At the outset he was completely at sea as to the real significance of the movement in France. This is the only explanation of his reduction of the forces of the country as late as 1792, and his declaration in parliament that peace appeared to be safe. Lebrun's English agent, Mathews, testifies even in the summer of 1793 that Pitt was not one of the irreconcilables. But fate left him no choice. It is stated that after the outbreak of war he expressed the opinion that it would be of short duration and confined to a couple of campaigns, and that Burke rejoined that it would

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be long and perilous, but was an unavoidable necessity. On the Continent the English statesman was doomed to meet with all the disappointments attending the coalition, the desertion of some, his own defeat and that of others. "An incapable war-minister," is Macaulay's verdict on Pitt, to whom he refuses the merit of the naval successes. But the great Minister did more than lucky generals and victorious admirals can do. Almost a generation before the rising in the Tyrol and the resistance of Spain his heroic will braced a whole people to the struggle with arbitrary power and aggressive conquest, and led them through every stage of the enforced contest along the path which ended in a world-wide supremacy. In this struggle the continental campaigns were mere episodes; the world's fate was decided on the high seas. The possession of her opponent's colonies and the annihilation of their fleets gave England the means of carrying on the war at their expense, and the final result was, to use the words of a French historian, that the millions demanded from the English as war taxes and subsidies were gladly paid as insurance premia for the continuance of the national prosperity.

When the English ambassador at the Hague, Lord Auckland, informed the States-General on behalf of his Government, on the 16th of November, that they could count on England's support in case of attack, it was not known that a decree of the Convention bearing the

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same date had opened the Scheldt, the closing of which rested on treaties, the last being that of 1788, and on Pitt's own guarantee. Fox was prepared to help the Opposition even over this difficulty. On the 7th of December he informed the ambassador Chauvelin: "Nous ne voulons point de guerre avec la France, s'il n'y a point d'aggression faite contre la Hollande, et si cette guerre ne doit avoir lieu que pour l'ouverture de l'Escaut, nous serons assez forts pour l'empêcher." But in the course of the same conversation he gave him to understand that he and his party would rally to the Government without a moment's hesitation if the intrigues of a few thousand Irish rebels succeeded in inducing France to interfere in Englaud's domestic affairs. Maret, now an agent of Lebrun, was the last French negotiator who interviewed Pitt and had an opportunity of noting his aversion to war. But Lebrun's proposals were rightly considered as mere pitfalls, with the object of making the English Cabinet appear irreconcilable, while the Paris government had made up its mind to declare war.

Talleyrand's last communication, which is preserved in the archives of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and was brought to Paris by Lebrun's agent Benoit, was made about the middle of January, and referred even then to the possibility of successful negotiations in London if the Government would only think better of its policy with regard to Holland. But at this

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point the King's head fell, sacrificed to the *raison d'état* of the Revolution, and a decision which the most outrageous provocation had not succeeded in bringing about was now demanded by the nation itself. Under the stunning impression produced by the deed of January 21st the population of London put on mourning, and received the King with a cry for war. Chauvelin did not dare to show himself in public, and on the 24th of January was ordered to leave London within a week. The Convention rejoined with a declaration of war on the 1st of February, and an order to Dumouriez to cross the Dutch frontier, which took place on the 17th, and England began the struggle on behalf of law and order in Europe and in defence of her own power, which was to last three-and-twenty years and end with Waterloo.

From this moment there is not a trace of any further relations between Danton and Talleyrand. His diplomatic *début* in London had failed, but the fault did not lie with him or the statesmen with whom he negotiated. If the alliance which he had come to cement had gone the way of the other torn-up treaties which had formed the basis of public law in Europe since the Peace of Utrecht, the responsibility rested with the Isnards and the Condorcets, the Brissots and the Cambons. It was no business of Talleyrand's to defend their work of destruction ; his task consisted in reconstructing the edifice which they had pulled to pieces.

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He had gone to England with all the sympathies of a disciple of Montesquieu for the English constitution, and of an adherent of Turgot and the Geneva school for the doctrines of Adam Smith and the economic policy of England. Like so many others, he had but an imperfect knowledge of what he admired so warmly. His attitude in the Constituent Assembly, the personal reputation which preceded him, the instructions which he received, and the difficulties of the mission itself—all combined to make him seek the intercourse and the support of the Opposition. In the eyes of the Government he was so suspected that they only negotiated with him under reserve, and, at the close of his mission, considered him sufficiently dangerous to be expelled the country. But Talleyrand had not been many months in London when he arrived at the conviction that his own opinions were not so much in harmony with the violent advocacy of revolutionary France displayed by Fox and the Opposition, as with those of the vast majority of the nation and its political leaders. No one knew better than Talleyrand how grossly the British democracy was deceived when it looked for respect for the rights of others from the Jacobins, or exalted their cruel tyranny as the dawn of a new era of freedom. Personally he was most intimate with Lord Lansdowne; but his view of the situation in Europe no longer agreed with the latter's but with that of his great adversary Pitt. If anything

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could have astonished Talleyrand's *sang-froid*, it must have been the coolness bordering on apathy with which the English Cabinet witnessed the invasion of Belgium. But it was just this dogged clinging to the last possibilities of a peaceful solution which was calculated to impress him, who sought the reputation of a man of peace, in the highest degree. What he observed and learned at that critical time laid the foundations of his subsequent invincible confidence in the power and the vocation of England and the value of her alliance. This alliance he endeavoured to bring about at Lille and at Amiens. From the time of his mission to London dates his constant and firm conviction of the impossibility of ever entangling England again in a war of Cabinets for exclusively dynastical interests, or of plunging the nation into a foreign conflict against its will. The fanaticism of revolutionary *doctrinaires* frustrated his policy in 1792 and 1797; and afterwards the Imperial Jacobin forced on him a rupture with England and the blockade of the continental ports. But Talleyrand was a master of the art of waiting; his intellect possessed the steadiness which was wholly lacking in his character. When at last the time came in which he could carry out his own policy, and not that of others, he picked up the thread which had been dropped, and concluded the alliance of 1815 with a practised hand. He lived long enough to found the monarchy of 1830 by repeating the experiment which

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had been successful at the Restoration. The English alliance, with the object of securing the peace of Europe, was Talleyrand's legacy to posterity. His apprenticeship to diplomacy in London deserves the praise which he himself bestowed on Choiseul when he commended him for having had "tant d'avenir dans l'esprit."

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CHAPTER VIII.

EXILE (ENGLAND AND AMERICA).

1792—1796.

TALLEYRAND had reason to congratulate himself that the silver streak of sea lay between him and his own country. The memorandum to Lebrun had hardly reached the Minister, when a decree of the Convention, dated the 5th of December, impeached its author and thus placed him on the dreaded list of *émigrés*. The cause of this was a letter from the Intendant Laporte to the King found in the *Armoire de fer*. Laporte stated, on the 22nd of April, 1791, shortly after Mirabeau's death, that the Bishop of Autun had in writing and afterwards by word of mouth suggested that the King should put his influence and good-will to the test, and let him know in what way his services could be of use. This was all, and subsequently it was asserted that Talleyrand had bought back compromising documents from Danton. On the 15th of December the *Moniteur* published a strong protest signed "D.," probably from Desrenaudes, followed on the 24th of December by Talleyrand's own defence.

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The anonymous friend appealed to the loyalty of Lebrun, who had received proofs of Talleyrand's patriotic devotion to the Republic in the shape of his despatches, and especially a memorandum which had recently reached him. The memorandum was confidential, so that Desrenaudes' knowledge of it raises a presumption that he had something to do with its composition. Talleyrand himself flatly denied all personal relations with the King. The latter, he said, was no doubt acquainted with the address of the Department, in which liberty of conscience was defended, and the King's religious and personal freedom placed on a level with that of any other French citizen. But it should not be forgotten that he, Talleyrand, had at the same time drawn up the other address of the Department, the republican spirit of which had been acknowledged by all patriots.

The Convention did not think it worth while to reverse its decision. The Royalists were indignant at the tone of the apology, which threw over the King at the very moment when his life was at stake, and when the nation was divided into the two hostile camps of a Republic born of the Revolution on the one side and a Monarchy resting on ancient tradition and precedent on the other, and on the eve of the tremendous struggle which was destined to absorb all parties and all persons and involve them one after the other in one common ruin.

We now know, however, and from Talleyrand himself,

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that confidential communications passed between "the Bishop" and the Court, and, as was surmised, through the medium of Laporte. When he was ordered to leave England at the end of January 1794, he gave a sketch of his work in London in a letter addressed to Lord Grenville, which refers as follows to the object of his first mission, in January 1792: "The King above all, whose dearest wish was the maintenance of peace, in the interests of Europe and especially of France, the King set great store by the neutrality and the friendship of England. He commissioned Montmorin, who always possessed his confidence, and subsequently Laporte, to communicate to me his wishes in this respect. The constitution prevented the King from investing my mission with an official character when he gave me his orders, and this want of official authority was treated by Lord Grenville as a bar to all political negotiation with me. I therefore demanded my recall from M. de Laporte, and returned to France." Talleyrand's tactics were always the same. To the Cabinet in London he presented a royalist, to the Convention in Paris a republican mandate. The consequence was that in London he was even thought capable of having devised his impeachment and banishment to save his own person. Both at that time and subsequently the charge of having taken part in Orleanist conspiracies followed him like an evil spectre. On the 14th of June, 1792,

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Ribes, a deputy of the Right, had accused him from the tribune of the Legislative Assembly of complicity in the plot of the Orleanist faction against the King and the constitution, the Girondist Guadet speaking in his defence. The denunciation was made with the object of undermining Talleyrand's position in London, for people had not forgotten there that in October 1789 the Duke of Orléans in his usual frivolous way had conceived the passing idea of becoming Grand Duke of Brabant, and of gaining the consent of Prussia and England to the scheme, out of hatred to Marie Antoinette. Fersen, the most chivalrous and devoted of all the adherents of the Queen, was so firmly convinced of Egalité's and Talleyrand's joint guilt that he proposed to Count Mercy, in February or March 1793, to buy over Talleyrand and then Dumouriez by his means, in order that the latter might surrender the Orleanist Princes to Austria, and so force Danton to liberate the Queen and her children in exchange.

This suspicion of being concerned in an Orleanist conspiracy, which attached more strongly to Biron than to Talleyrand, dated from the days of his intimacy with Mirabeau. It has been repeated over and over again, and from very different quarters, but has never been confirmed by proof. Mirabeau's chief accuser was Mounier. But Mallet du Pan, who was influenced by him, had to admit years afterwards that, in spite of the minutest investigations, he had not been able

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to discover a trace of Mirabeau's guilt, although there was no doubt that the latter had considered the possibility of an Orleanist succession to the throne. Mirabeau's biographer, Alfred Stern, is also of opinion that the so-called proofs adduced against Mirabeau come to nothing. Sorel thinks that the part played by the Duke of Orléans during the Revolution was quite a subordinate one. "J'ai été personnellement lié avec le duc d'Orléans," says Roederer, "et je crois que, s'il y a eu une conspiration d'Orléans, il n'en était pas." In his Memoirs Talleyrand has adopted a method of his own of disclaiming all complicity with the Palais-Royal. The man of the world, whose *sang-froid* was undisturbed by insults, the sceptic, who disdained to bandy words with his opponents, the impersonal narrator, who could relate the stormy events of his life with such dispassionateness, has here for once gone out of his way to pen a tremendous invective, the subject of which is the Duke of Orléans. To brand him it was sufficient to give a sketch of his character.

Born on the steps of the throne, of vast wealth, of strong constitution, well versed in all bodily exercises, so ignorant as to be unable to write his own language correctly, malignant, ungrateful, cold-hearted and calculating, of precocious depravity and convinced that all expression of feeling was ridiculous and every moral scruple a weakness, he never in his life knew what it was to love a friend or a woman. One of his

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surroundings dies just as he is going to dine with him: "Lauzun," he says, on hearing the news, "let us go to dinner, as nobody else is coming, or we shall be too late for the opera." His intimacy is the ruin of men and the disgrace of women. The Marquise de Fleury, the Princesses of Bouillon and Lamballe, were his victims; but, because he was the man who compromised their honour, they were pitied instead of being condemned. The only person who played a permanent part in his life was Madame de Genlis, who at the same table and with the same pen composed a prayer-book for the daughter and a speech in the Jacobin Club for the father. His personal bravery was questioned, and his greed made him stoop to acts of violence. No courage was needed to take up an attitude of opposition, which was assumed with impunity by any petty district in the country, and by the courtiers themselves under the very nose of the monarch. His hatred of the Queen had been fostered by small points of etiquette and social exclusions. This was the character of the man, whom a spirit of blind revenge had enlisted in the cause of the Revolution. "That," adds Talleyrand, "was the secret of the latter half of his life." After the Duke's well-known protest in the Royal Session of November 19th, 1787, after his instructions to the electorate, which were drawn up by Sieyès, and the rising in the Faubourg St. Antoine, marked by the murder of

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Révillon on the 28th of April, 1789, who was in the Duke's pay and instigated by his agents, no important event of the Revolution, according to Talleyrand, could be traced to his influence. Talleyrand concludes thus : "After his criminal vote he was a nonentity, his occupation was gone, and he fell back into the ranks, and as that was not his natural place, his fate was humiliation and political extinction. . . . The Revolution had no authors, no chiefs, and no leaders. It was disseminated by writers, who in an enlightened, intrepid, and progressive age waged war against prejudices, and in doing so undermined the foundations of religious and social order ; it was accelerated by incapable Ministers, who increased the financial distress and the popular discontent."

So far Talleyrand. The chapter on the Duke of Orléans was probably sketched in London. It bears every trace of having been written at the time. We know that after 1830 its author, rather than suppress it, gave directions that his Memoirs should not be published for another generation. During this interval proofs of his and Mirabeau's complicity have been sought for but not found. His offence was the same as Lauzun's : he did not belong to the Palais-Royal party, but to its social circle. This was quite enough to make the Royalists condemn him and place him under a stricter social ban.

The second band of *émigrés* that gathered in England in 1793 did not, like the first on the Rhine,

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seek salvation in conspiracies and consolation in banquets and fêtes. They had learnt how to bear the inevitable with dignity, sometimes with cheerful resignation; they lived in attics and endured cold and hunger, without appealing to the compassion of their friends or wasting their time in idle complaints. Anything beyond a mere passing reference to material privations they would have scouted as a mark of low origin and ignoble disposition. Aristocratic women, bred in a life of luxury, earned a living for their families like the humblest of their sex, and the behaviour of the eight thousand exiled priests contributed not a little to overcome the English prejudice against Catholicism. But while an example of heroic courage and invincible constancy was set, the right of indulging in contempt and hatred of their fellow-citizens, who were supposed to be responsible for the catastrophe, was not abandoned. Even a Royalist of Malouet's unblemished reputation did not escape suspicion. Cazalès and Rivarol, both members of the Right, quarrelled at the Lord Mayor's dinner; Lally-Tollendal was stigmatised as "la lie du peuple." Montlosier and the Comte d'Artois wrangled in public. In the eyes of the orthodox party the Jacobins were hardly more culpable than the Constitutionalists, and those who had endeavoured to bring about an understanding with foreign powers were considered double traitors. Under these circumstances Talleyrand could not count on

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indulgence or even on common fairness. His most lenient critics agreed with Morris: "He is not exactly of a criminal disposition, though certainly indifferent between virtue and vice. He would rather do right than wrong, and would not, I believe, perpetrate a great crime."

Those who enjoyed Talleyrand's intimacy, however, yielded to the spell of his personal charm, and did not judge him severely. Dumont describes how irresistibly fascinating he could be among his intimates "in the confined space of a carriage," and how he could even at times move his hearers to tears. The German physician Bollmann gives evidence to the same effect. He was induced by the grief and the entreaties of Madame de Staël to save her friend Narbonne on the 2nd of September, at the risk of his own life, and had accompanied him from Paris to London, where the house of the Countess de la Châtre in Kensington, who afterwards married Talleyrand's friend Jaucourt, was the social rendez-vous of the Constitutionalists. Bollmann, who saw a great deal of them, admired Narbonne's brilliant gifts, but found Talleyrand far superior to him, "of imperturbable ease and repose, refined and charming . . . one could listen to him for years." The little money that he had, the proceeds of the sale of his library, he shared with his companions in misfortune, and Madame de Genlis, among others, refers with gratitude to the generous offer of assistance

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which he made her in those days of need. Madame de Staël could call him "the best of men, a misunderstood character," without fear of contradiction. In January 1793 she came from Coppet to England, and made the country-seat of Juniper Hall in Surrey a home for her friends. Miss Fanny Burney, afterwards Madame d'Arblay, lady-in-waiting to the Queen, and the authoress of novels the healthy and pointed realism of which has been commended by Burke and Gibbon, Sheridan and Macaulay, has left memoirs, in which Talleyrand is often mentioned. She relates how he discussed a project with Madame de Staël of fighting the Jacobins, how he worked with her at the first plan of her book "Sur l'Influence des Passions," and corrected her when she recited passages from "Tancred" or other tragedies. When they went out visiting in the neighbourhood he sat on the box of the small one-horse carriage, and let down the window, when necessary, in order to join in the conversation, and he assured the authoress of "Evelina" and "Cecilia" that the perusal of her books made up to him for his disappointed ambition. When Madame de Staël had to leave England in the early summer he wrote to her as follows: . . . "Personne ici tout-à-fait selon mon esprit ou selon mon cœur, et avec cela je vois que j'y resterai encore plusieurs mois, ne fût-ce que pour réfuter l'ouvrage de Madame votre Mère sur le divorce; c'est la seule chose à laquelle je suis décidé."

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There is little reference in these letters to the events of the Terror. Talleyrand was not a man to indulge in idle regrets. Not till the 28th of September, when, in consequence of the insurrection of the southern provinces, Toulon had been surrendered to the English by the Royalists, and the resistance of La Vendée had made civil war a just cause, did he write to Madame de Staël: "Mon vœu serait que les districts des départements méridionaux, qui ont déjà fait connaître leur attachement à cette constitution de 1789, rappelassent à Toulon ou ailleurs les députés de la Constituante. On aurait une assemblée et c'est l'essentiel: car il n'y a qu'une assemblée qui puisse avoir longtemps une popularité assez forte pour aller en avant . . . Cela ferait avant tout les affaires de la France et ensuite ferait les nôtres, car notre rôle d'émigré tranquille ne peut pas honnêtement nous convenir longtemps encore." . . . "Nous avons deux mois à attendre," he adds, following the same train of thought, on the 3rd and 8th of October: "si nous nous pressons, nous nuirons à nos affaires! . . . Attendre et dormir si l'on peut. C'est à cela que je me destine d'ici au mois de Mars." And then he surveys the situation in the true spirit, but with all the illusions, of 1789: "On dit toujours que les constitutionnels n'ont point de parti en France. La France est leur parti, car c'est précisément l'amour des Français pour la constitution qu'on a employé pour la détruire. C'est en disant que le roi ne voulait pas

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être constitutionnel, que les puissances belligérantes voulaient détruire la constitution, qu'on a animé le peuple et qu'on a fait le 10 Août. Ainsi le peuple n'aurait pas songé à devenir républicain s'il n'avait pas été trompé."

Talleyrand's advice and the constitution shared the common fate of being impracticable. The Constitutionalists had aimed at monarchy in 1789, and had established a republic. The Monarchy now repudiated all connection with them as an affront. The Comte de Provence, the Regent of the emigration, sent confidential agents into La Vendée to enquire whether "l'armée catholique et royale" was taking the field for a constitutional monarch or the king of the old French monarchy, and at the same time protested against the occupation of Toulon, because the English admiral, in taking possession of the town in the name of the King of France, had not sufficiently distinguished between the royal cause and that of the constitution. The Comte d'Artois left his adherents in the lurch and would not come to La Vendée, because the English refused to recognise, not only the integrity of the kingdom, but also the *Rey neto* of the *ancien régime;* and the Comte de Provence, who had been summoned by the Royalists of Toulon, for the same reason came only as far as Turin, where he waited in vain for an English passport, which was not delivered to him. All this took place while Paris was plunged

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in the Terror and the Girondists were being led to the scaffold, while the Queen was guillotined and Robespierre was commencing his dictatorship. If anything could save the Queen, wrote Talleyrand to Madame de Staël, on the 3rd of October, it was her book; but the appeal to mercy was unheeded, and a few days after the execution Talleyrand wrote the memorable words: "C'est une maison finie pour la France que la maison de Bourbon. Voilà de quoi penser." At the other end of Europe one of the noblest and most faithful adherents of the Royalist cause, the Duke of Richelieu, who had entered the Russian service, came to exactly the same conclusion. The Monarchy, he wrote to Rassumoffsky, would in all probability be restored in France, but not with a Bourbon: the attitude of the Comte de Provence was incomprehensible. While the continental powers, as in 1792, were neglecting the aims of the coalition for their own interests, and showing themselves equally incapable of utilising their own victories and the Royalist risings on French soil, the war between England and France was assuming an internecine character. In Paris the humiliation of defeat was goading the spirit of resistance into frenzy. Pitt was to be placed beyond the pale of human intercourse, and was branded in the meanwhile as "an enemy of the human race." The Convention called on the peoples of Europe to destroy the modern Carthage, and renewed the navigation acts against

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England, which in its turn had adopted strict measures since the month of June, with the view of establishing a complete blockade of the French coasts. Pitt, who had refused to see Talleyrand for more than a year, had a long conversation about this time with Narbonne, who was placed under the same ban as the latter. "Paris," said the English Minister, "is nothing better than a gang of criminals engaged in decimating a horde of slaves; the war with France is a life-and-death struggle for civilisation; the welfare of Europe and of society compels us to pursue it until we have destroyed the evil root and branch. . . ." In reply Narbonne ventured to warn the Minister. There was still honour, he said, in the Republican camp, and such a policy would beget a desperate resistance. As for present feeling in France, he could vouch that the overpowering sense of danger would render her invincible, and that the tyranny endured at home would in no way affect her patriotic enthusiasm abroad. He would not refer to her shortcomings, her weak points of defence, her unreliable elements; no one would betray the secrets of French resistance, although they were patent enough. Talleyrand expresses precisely the same conviction: "Il me semble que deux ans de guerre avaient assez démontré que, contre les étrangers, tout le monde est soldat en France, et les honnêtes gens qui détestent la Convention, et les scélérats qui sont dévoués à son service, parce que les étrangers se

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sont toujours présentés ou comme voulant conquérir le territoire, ou comme voulant détruire la liberté. Il faut se presser de prendre un autre moyen ; j'ai éte frappé de ce que dit sur cela Mallet du Pan, qui effraye les puissances en annonçant qu' à la haine des étrangers il se joindra en France des habitudes militaires impossibles ensuite à détruire et très près de se former par l'impossibilité de faire aujourd'hui un autre métier que celui des armes."

Narbonne's words, Mallet du Pan's warning, and Talleyrand's letter lie between two memorable dates. On the 14th of August, just as the French armies were being repulsed at all points, Carnot was elected a member of the committee of public safety on the motion of Barrère, and appointed organiser of the army—organiser of victory, as he was about to be called. On the 29th of October an unknown Corsican officer of the age of five-and-twenty was placed in command of the artillery at the siege of Toulon, which was re-conquered on the 18th of December. France thus resumed the offensive and Bonaparte made his *début* in history.

Six weeks afterwards Pitt put in force the provisions of the Alien Bill against Talleyrand. This measure had been passed in January 1793, and gave him power to place all foreigners in England under strict supervision, and, if necessary, expel them the country. At that time Talleyrand had applied to the Duke of

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Tuscany for an asylum in his States, which had been refused with a reference to the declaration of neutrality of 1778, renewed a short time since. He was now ordered to leave England within five days. He subsequently made the *émigrés* responsible for this decision of the Ministry, which selected him from the list of prominent personages as a scapegoat. Ill-humour at the unfavourable turn in military affairs, the subjection of La Vendée and the suppression of Royalist risings, may have had something to do with it. Against Talleyrand himself no charges can be discovered; in the course of 1793 he had become almost forgotten. A letter addressed to Madame de Staël shortly before his departure merely states: "Un ordre du roi m'enjoignait de quitter ses États dans l'espace de cinq jours. J'ai lu l'ordre et j'ai dit, sans faire une réflexion, et je crois même sans avoir montré le plus léger trouble, que j'exécuterai les ordres qui m'étaient signifiés. Il n'y a pas un seul motif, un seul prétexte à l'ordre que j'ai reçu, et cela est vrai, parole d'honneur, de moi à vous. . . . Je vous prie de ne pas me parler de regrets, il y a ici nécessité, et ensuite travaillons au retour." . . . "Aucune personne," he adds on March 1st, "à quelque hauteur d'aristocratie que je l'aie choisie, n'a pu obtenir de réponse ou plutôt d'explication sur l'ordre que j'ai reçu de quitter l'Angleterre. Apparemment que l'empereur et le roi de Prusse craignent les gens qui pêchent à la ligne

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pendant l'été et corrigent les épreuves d'un roman pendant l'hiver. C'est à cela qu'a été employée cette tête active, dont le séjour en Europe est si inquiétant." Angling was not usually Talleyrand's pastime; the novel which he was correcting was "Adèle de Sénanges," composed by the Countess Flahaut during her exile at Hamburg, and translated into German by Theresa Huber, George Forster's widow. The sale of his books, "une bibliothèque considérable," as he stated to Lord Grenville, had left him with £750 out of France. "What can I do with that?" he remarks, adding that at the age of thirty-nine he had to begin life over again: "Car c'est la vie que je veux; j'aime trop mes amis pour avoir d'autres idées, et puis j'ai à dire et à dire bien haut ce que j'ai voulu, ce que j'ai fait, ce que j'ai empêché, ce que j'ai regretté; j'ai à montrer combien j'ai aimé la liberté que j'aime encore, et combien je déteste les Français." "I hoped," he wrote to Lord Lansdowne, "that the French would prove themselves not wholly unworthy of liberty. Clubs and pikes are the ruin of energy, and a school of dissimulation and baseness. Once a people has learned the wretched habit, it has no other wish but to change its tyrants. Forgive the discouragement of a man who has been a witness of everything and has seen through everything."

He went on board ship on the 3rd of February, 1794, but the vessel anchored off Greenwich. Pitt's colleague

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Dundas, on hearing of this, sent one of his friends on board, and invited him to spend the time before the start at his house. But Talleyrand replied that after what had happened he declined to set foot on British soil again, and remained on board for three weeks. His farewell to the official world was the memorandum to Lord Grenville on the objects of his mission to London mentioned above. The unjust persecution, of which he was the victim, filled him with a kind of proud satisfaction. To bear his share of the common misfortunes was a welcome consolation. A series of tremendous storms, which threatened to throw him on the French coast, brought him to English shores again at Falmouth. When he arrived at the mouth of the Delaware after a passage of several weeks, he found a ship just about to set sail for Calcutta. He would have preferred to go there rather than "set foot on the vast country which has no memories of the past." But there was no room for him on board, and so he continued his journey to Philadelphia.

A letter of introduction from Lord Lansdowne to Washington produced a courteous reply and an expression of regret from the latter that he was unable, for obvious political reasons, to receive Monsieur de Talleyrand-Périgord, whose personal character he respected. Washington at that time was exerting all his influence to prevent a quarrel but also a *rapprochement* between revolutionary France and the young republic.

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Talleyrand himself admitted that Jacobinism, just as the diplomacy of Louis XVI. had done before it, was menacing Washington's achievement by its support of the anti-federal party, an admission which did not prevent him from doing the same thing in 1798.

Washington's offer to see Talleyrand privately was declined with the remark that when the front door was closed to him he disdained to come in by the back-stairs. But chance compensated him by bringing him into contact with the statesman whose political genius welded the thirteen states of America into one nation. Alexander Hamilton, "le général Hamilton," as he is called in the Memoirs, the founder of the "Federalist," the handbook of liberty, according to Laboulaye's expression, the creator of the great conservative force in the machinery of the Union, represented ideas which must have been all the more interesting to Talleyrand because they had been familiar to him ever since Mirabeau's time. The state constructed on federal lines at the close of a revolution, the executive of which Alexander Hamilton invested with such extensive powers that he did not escape the reproach of having aimed at making a king more than a president of a republic, this state, with the substitution of monarchy for republic, was what floated in the mind of Mirabeau: "I adhere more than ever to my idea," he wrote on one occasion to his confidant Mauvillon, "that a great state can only be well governed as a federation of

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small separate states, the federal centre of which is a representative assembly with the monarch for president."

Mirabeau constantly reverted to this idea. After the fall of the Throne, when the executive was at the mercy of factions, the Gironde, confronted with war abroad and anarchy at home, took up the cry of federalism in quite another sense. In America it was a bond which held the various states together, an equivalent of centralisation; in the France of 1793 its principal signification was liberation of the provinces from the tyranny of the capital and the clubs, coupled, however, with a weakening of the central authority. The danger of making the country into a second Poland instead of a model state on the American plan was averted by the nation's instinct of self-preservation. A like conviction, that the policy of the Gironde would destroy the unity of the Republic, made the youthful Bonaparte a Jacobin and provoked a reaction in favour of despotism. France, in order to escape the process of disintegration which threatened her, sent the Girondists to the scaffold, and submitted, firstly to the tyranny of Robespierre, and then to the cæsarism of Napoleon.

Talleyrand has rendered homage to the political genius of Alexander Hamilton with the words "cet homme avait deviné l'Europe." He considered him, taking him altogether, not only as the greatest statesman of the

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Union, but as the most remarkable of all his contemporaries, Napoleon not excepted. When he left the United States he asked Mrs. Hamilton for a portrait of her husband, and after his death it was found in his bedroom with an inscription to the effect that the two men had entertained a mutual regard and esteem for each other. It has been noted that their public career presents some striking analogies. Both were engaged in the task of framing a constitution, and both selected finance and public instruction as the sphere of their labours. The one achieved what the other in vain attempted, Hamilton having restored public credit and enabled the state to fulfil all its obligations to its creditors.

But in one point Talleyrand, who was barely three years older than his friend, was superior to him. As a disciple of the Economists he was an advocate of free trade, while the American statesman remained a moderate protectionist, and maintained that America required only two great inland markets, the one for the North, the other for the South, and that with them its trade would develop with steadiness and regularity. Talleyrand, who found the interests of agriculture sacrificed to those of industry in the United States, was not over zealous in his defence of the Economists' doctrines, but clung to the hope that it would eventually be possible to remove the Custom-house barriers and unite all trading countries by means of

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a liberal policy. Philanthropic ideas, he says, commend themselves with peculiar force to an outcast. His correspondence with Lord Lansdowne in 1795 and his papers written in America, "On the advantages to be derived from the acquisition of colonies in the present circumstances," and "On the commercial relations between England and the United States," have practical objects in view. The letters to the English statesman describe the separation of England and the United States as a final one, but warn him not to take passing symptoms for permanent effects. The Americans' dislike of the mother-country is only on the surface; in the heart of the nation both inclination and interest are on the side of England. *Habeas corpus* and trial by jury are the foundations of liberty in both countries; the citizens of the United States have remained Englishmen; both are influenced by the same laws and the same constitutional usage, by the same language and the same literature; the two different titles of republic and monarchy are only incompatible in appearance, and Talleyrand here shows his penetration in referring to "the monarchical element in the constitutional machinery and the executive of the Union." Two years after the English government had issued the decree of November 6th, 1793, ordering the capture of all vessels sailing to or from French ports under the neutral flag, and a new war with the United States seemed imminent on

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that account, Talleyrand observes, in almost identical language with Alexander Hamilton, that gratitude is not a characteristic of nations, that the present dissatisfaction would soon pass away, the position of America tending to make her dependent on England, which alone possessed large capital, vast productive power, and the required credit, with the result that the English exports to America had doubled in the ten years succeeding the war, from 1784 to 1794. For in the United States, he continues, making a fortune or adding to it is the ruling passion, to which even religious feeling is subordinated, the latter, although sincere, being thoroughly free from fanaticism. The Constitutionalist of 1789 does not forget to point out that freedom of worship is the best safeguard of society and free trade the great school of toleration.

Talleyrand's second paper reminds his fellow-countrymen of the necessity of founding new colonies to replace those they had lost, and above all of calming the passions aroused by the Revolution and finding fresh fields for their activity. He quotes Macchiavelli, "Every violent change presents the possibility of making another"; and Montesquieu, "A free government is a government in a perpetual state of motion." A great revolutionary crisis, he adds himself, leaves behind it men whom misfortune has made prematurely old and weary; the problem is to renew their youth. Time and good legislation can effect changes in the

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right direction, but they are not sufficient in themselves, for the influence of legislation is limited, and time obliterates good and bad without distinction. A wise policy must be adopted, with the object of supplying us with what the Americans have in the vast uncultivated plains of a new continent. Colonies are a spur to energy and a fresh goal to ambition, and they soften the hostile feelings produced by the course of events. "It is not so easy as one would think to cherish eternal hatred . . . and, on the other hand, the art of putting men in their right place is one of the very first conditions of good government; its hardest task consists in finding room for the discontented classes."

The practical solution proposed by Talleyrand harks back to Choiseul's policy. The latter, like d'Argenson, Mirabeau the elder, and Turgot, foresaw the separation of the American colonies from the mother-country, looked forward with apprehension to the partition of Poland, and, by way of counterpoise, endeavoured to pave the way for the cession of Egypt, "the Holland of the East," the conquest of which had already been suggested to Louis XIV. by Leibnitz. The abolition of slavery, argues Talleyrand further, will sooner or later involve a new system of cultivation for all colonial products; a wise policy demands that we should prepare for such great changes, and turn our attention to regions which supply the markets of the world with

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these products, and are therefore best adapted to compensate us for the loss of our old colonies.

These State papers unquestionably betray an inkling of the future, a premature perception of the rise of the working classes, of the approaching paramount importance of economic interests, of the good understanding which the latter were destined to bring about between the great trading nations of the world, and of a policy of peace. But the advantages which the statesman derived from contact with a new world did not compensate the exile for the loss of the old one. In his conversations with Hamilton he sought and found oblivion of the events in France, to which he himself, since the 10th of August, denied even the right of serving as an example for future generations. But the stiffness of Boston society, accompanied though it was by a certain aristocratic polish, by no means made up to him for the loss of that other society, to the refined corruption of which he had contributed, and Washington's puritan friends inspired him with as much *ennui* as respect. He is even said to have exclaimed, no doubt in a fit of ill-humour: "A democracy! what is it but an aristocracy of blackguards?"

He did not remain long in Philadelphia, but accompanied by Beaumetz, who had shared his exile in London, and then crossed the Atlantic with him, he turned his back on the luxury of the cities, where

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the want of taste grated on him like barbarism, and took refuge in the woods and savannahs of the far West. On the banks of the mighty rivers, and in the shade of the primeval forests, where his fellow-countryman Chateaubriand had shortly before called into being a poetic world around the fair vision of "Atala," Talleyrand's practical mind pictured to itself the farming homesteads of the future, abundant harvests, fat cattle, flourishing settlements and emporia of trade. Instead of peopling the mighty country which lay before him with the creations of fancy or with the ideals of freedom which had excited the foolish optimism of his other countryman La Fayette, the great Opportunist studied the men who crossed his path, and, by way of noting characteristic traits, put on paper one of his few sketches which has a literary ring about it:—"Le bûcheron américain ne s'intéresse à rien; toute idée sensible est loin de lui: ces branches si élégamment jetées par la nature, un beau feuillage, une couleur vive qui anime une partie de bois, un vert plus fort qui en assombrit un autre, tout cela n'est rien; il n'a de souvenir à placer nulle part: c'est la quantité de coups de hache qu'il faut qu'il donne pour abattre un arbre, qui est son unique idée. Il n'a point planté; il n'en sait point les plaisirs. L'arbre qu'il planterait n'est bon à rien pour lui, car jamais il ne le verra assez fort pour qu'il puisse l'abattre: c'est détruire qui le fait vivre; on détruit partout; aussi

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tout lieu lui est bon ; il ne tient pas au champ où il a placé son travail, parce que son travail n'est que de la fatigue, et qu'aucune idée douce n'y est jointe. Ce qui sort de ses mains ne passe point par toutes les croissances si attachantes pour le cultivateur ; il ne suit pas la destinée de ses productions ; il ne connaît pas le plaisir des nouveaux essais ; et si en s'en allant il n'oublie pas sa hache, il ne laisse pas de regrets là où il a vécu des années."

Talleyrand relates how oddly it sounded, when he called his servant in the middle of a nocturnal ride on the prairie, to be answered with, "Yes, Monseigneur," which seemed like an echo of the distant Autun. We know from his letters to Madame de Staël that he endeavoured to improve his position by speculations, and also that his schemes failed for want of the large capital required for buying land or making a profit on European goods. He spent the money he had saved from France in equipping an Indian merchant-man, and was on the point of embarking in her with Beaumetz when he received, in November 1795, the news that the Convention had revoked its decree against him.

It is said that the ship, in which Beaumetz now embarked alone, never reached its destination. Talleyrand merely states that his friend died in India, and that he was quite unprepared for the decree, which was the cause of his speedy return home.

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Both these last assertions are untrue. He returned to Europe, but not to France, and he had previously set everything in motion to procure the reversal of his sentence of banishment, firstly, after Robespierre's death, through his former vicar-general Desrenaudes, and still more through Madame de Staël's good offices with M. J. Chénier and Daunou. "Si je reste encore un an ici, j'y meurs," he had said in a letter to her, and that was enough to change her sympathy into assistance of the most active kind. She obtained the support of the Jacobin Legendre, and then that of Boissy d'Anglas; she aroused the pity of M. J. Chénier's friend, Madame de la Bouchardie, whose stanzas entitled the "Romance d'un Proscrit" reminded her fellow-countrymen of the exile beyond the seas. On the 16th of June, 1795, Talleyrand presented his petition, which Chénier supported before the Convention on the 4th of September, saying that he held in his hands a memorandum dated the 25th of November, 1792, a copy of which was among Danton's papers, proving that Talleyrand was labouring in the service of the Republic when he was proscribed by her. Persecuted by Marat and Robespierre, driven from England by Pitt, he had waited in the country of Franklin for the day when there would be judges instead of executioners in France. The Republic should recall him for the sake of his services to the cause of liberty, and as a token of her hatred of the *émigrés*, whose

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victim he would be "if cowards could ever triumph." Michaud takes care to point out how unfortunate this expression was six weeks after Quiberon and during the executions *en masse* of the last defenders of La Vendée. Chénier carried his point; and the decree which recalled Talleyrand referred to him as one "whose noble conduct as priest and man had powerfully promoted the Revolution."

Before embarking he had written from New York to Madame de Staël: "Voilà donc, grâce à vous, chère amie, une affaire terminée . . . M. de Staël me donnera-t-il une petite chambre? c'est chez vous que je voudrais descendre en arrivant . . . je vous aime de toute mon âme." But when the Danish ship in which he had sailed arrived at Hamburg in January 1796, events had taken place which caused him to change his mind. Madame de Staël had left Paris, and did not return there till the summer of 1797, and more than a year elapsed before Talleyrand again set foot on French soil.

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CHAPTER IX.

TALLEYRAND MINISTER OF THE DIRECTORY.

1798—1799.

THE reasons which prevented Talleyrand from entering France were of a political nature. According to the apt expression of De Maistre, the 9th of Thermidor had been far more of "a family quarrel," a change of persons, than a change of systems, Robespierre owing his fall to Dantonists who had resolved on getting rid of him in order to save their own lives. The committee of public safety of the year III. consisted, with but few exceptions, of regicides, who could only keep themselves in power by means of war abroad and force at home. On three separate occasions in the space of six months the Convention was obliged to maintain its position by the sword; on the 1st of April, 1795, by Pichegru's victory over the Paris sections; on the 20th of May by the defeat inflicted on the Parisian mob by the troops of the line; and on the 5th of October by Bonaparte's triumph over the moderate Republicans and the Royalists—Germinal, Prairial, and Vendémiaire, 1795. After the introduction of the

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constitution of the year III., which was its last act, there was a change of names, but not of principles, and the committee of public safety reappeared in the government of the Directory.

Talleyrand had written from America in May 1794 that peace would be followed by civil war in France. But there was no question of peace, for the Republic was still committed to the policy of conquest involved in the acquisition of natural frontiers, and only the scene of the campaigns changed. Of the ten states with whom England had concluded alliances or to whom she had promised subsidies between the 25th of March, 1793, and the 19th of April, 1794, half had either left or been forced out of the coalition in the course of 1795, and since the conclusion of the Peace of Bâle. Austria and Russia, joined by Sardinia, Portugal, and Naples, made the new treaty of alliance and guarantee of the 20th of May, 1795, with Pitt against France; but the two great Powers were intent on a policy of annexations and compensations which had little or nothing in common with the interests on behalf of which England had been putting continental armies into the field since 1793. It was the division of the Polish booty which absorbed the attention of Russia, and weakened Austria's power of action against France. Belgium and the left bank of the Rhine had been conquered by the republican troops at the expense of Poland. The secret treaty, signed by Russia and Austria at

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St. Petersburg on the 3rd of January, 1795, besides giving the latter her share of Poland and holding out hopes of the annexation of Bavaria and other German territory, invited her to take possession of Venice as a compensation for the loss of the Netherlands. On the other hand, the treaty of peace between France and Spain, the 22nd of July, 1795, was made with the object of excluding England from the Mediterranean, of transporting the scene of war to Italy, and of forcing Austria to recognise the conquest of the left bank of the Rhine, and the cession of the Netherlands by victories in the plain of Lombardy. After the mass of proposals and programmes, of intrigues and wild schemes, which were mooted in the brief interval between Danton's diplomatic essays in 1793 and Sieyès' re-entry into diplomacy in 1795, there was little left for Napoleonic policy to invent up to 1815. Danton insisted on the conquest of Holland in order to retain Belgium. Dumouriez, Kersaint, and the cosmopolitan German George Forster were for destroying England's Indian empire. A daring negotiator, Mackau, proposed the partition of the States of the Church to Acton, the Minister at Naples, as early as 1793. Dubois-Crancé and Sieyès were the precursors in 1795 of the policy of 1805, 1806, and 1807, and offered Hanover to Prussia, Lombardy to Piedmont, and Portugal to Spain. Sieyès devised the confederation of the Rhine, the camp at Boulogne, and the secularisations, and

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disposed of the peoples of Europe with a cynicism hardly exceeded by Napoleon. This revolutionary diplomacy was only perfectly consistent on one point. In Holland and on the Rhine, in Italy and the Pyrenees, England was the object of attack, and a common hatred united Girondists and Thermidorians, Moderates and Jacobins, Brissot and Barère, Rewbell and Bonapartein their crusade against the modern Carthage.

It was this undying hatred which confirmed Pitt in the conviction that the only means of attaining a lasting peace was for France, which wished for peace, to abandon the policy of conquest of the Revolution and revert to monarchy with the frontiers of 1792, and for the monarchy to break once and for all with the *ancien régime*. The policy of the revolutionary government in Paris was an outline of that of Tilsit and Bayonne; the Ministry in London was absorbed in the ideas which triumphed in 1815 under Wellington. Both were a generation ahead of history, and the plans of both were frustrated by the vicissitudes of war and the infatuation of parties.

Pitt was the first to experience a great disappointment. When the Crown emigrated after the death of the unfortunate child in the Temple, the new king, Louis XVIII., issued the manifesto of Verona in August, 1795. In it he condemned the Revolution, set up absolute monarchy and the *status quo* before 1789 in opposition to it, and made all the long

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and laborious negotiations between English diplomacy and the Royalist parties collapse like a house of cards. After Thermidor monarchical sympathies were strong enough in France, exhausted and impoverished as she then was, to make Tallien, Fréron, and Barras approach the monarchist-constitutionalists, whose representatives were to be found even in the constitution committee of the Convention. Madame de Staël, who was by no means a Royalist, could then interpret the sentiments of the moderate groups by referring even to peace with England as a possibility, which deserved to be taken into account by both Constitutionalists and moderate Republicans in the interests of a prudent policy.

All combinations of this kind became hopeless when it was proved that the old monarchy refused to come to terms with the nation, and that the Directory was merely a continuation of the Convention under another name. The decrees of Fructidor assured its members a majority in both the new assemblies. The appointment of the five Directors was subject to the proviso that each of them must have voted for the execution of the King. Liberty of worship, which had only just been guaranteed, was again abolished, and religious persecution and penal legislation against the emigrants were once more the order of the day. The men of the Terror began to creep out of their hiding-places. It was characteristic of the situation that one of them.

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the butcher Legendre, demanded the expulsion of Madame de Staël because she had entertained relations with the opposition, and had exerted her influence to obtain the pardon of emigrants like Montesquiou, Jaucourt, Narbonne, and Talleyrand. It is true that Boissy d'Anglas protected her against violence, but Sieyès could not forgive the doubts of the genuineness of his republican sentiments which had been openly expressed in her set, and she found herself obliged to absent herself from Paris for more than a year.

As for Talleyrand, he decided to wait at Hamburg till the storm had blown over. Chauvelin's secretary of embassy, Reinhard, had been residing there as French *chargé d'affaires* since the 24th of June, and was well qualified to enlighten him on the situation; for besides his official duties he was entrusted with the far more important secret mission of assuring the neutrality of the northern states of Germany and bringing them into the French alliance, a task which he performed with skill and good fortune up to the time when his marriage with the daughter of Reimarus in October 1796 led to his being transferred to Florence. It was during this time that a devoted friendship grew up between Reinhard and Talleyrand, who was destined to find him one of the most efficient supporters of his official career. There were also living in Hamburg Dumouriez, Countess Flahaut, who was thinking of marrying again, the new Duke of Orléans,

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as whose agent Talleyrand was again designated, and the Duke's "gouverneur," Madame de Genlis, whom he found quite unchanged : "La fixité dans les natures composées tient à leur souplesse."

Talleyrand moreover did not return alone, but accompanied by a lady whose acquaintance he had made in New York, a blonde beauty who had completely disarmed the calculating coolness and prudence for which he was generally remarkable. The daughter of a French officer, born in the East Indies and married to a Swiss merchant of the name of Grand, she had been separated from her husband in 1778 at the age of sixteen, owing to an episode of which Sir Philip Francis, the supposed author of the "Letters of Junius," was the hero. Although she succeeded in attracting two of the cleverest men of her time, she herself had so little pretensions to cleverness that people laughed at her, and asked her where she came from in order to receive the answer: "Je suis dinde (d'Inde)." Madame de Rémusat, who has recorded the charm of her dazzling beauty, also refers to her unpleasing voice, her ill-natured disposition, and positively inexhaustible stupidity, which made Talleyrand say: "Une femme d'esprit compromet souvent son mari ; une femme stupide ne compromet qu'elle-même." The silken thread with which he then bound himself was not destined to be a light one. He had fifty thousand francs left for himself and the beautiful

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Creole. His remark to Madame de Genlis, "that nothing on earth would induce him to take office again," was not seriously meant. The difficulty was rather to find the way back to it.

News was arriving from the seat of war which completely changed the political as well as the military situation. The Directory had found its master and victory its favourite. The armies which Carnot despatched to the Rhine in September were defeated; the young general who had been entrusted by him with the supreme command in Italy, had taken the offensive, had vanquished the veteran commanders of Austria, whose power in the peninsula was broken by the capture of Mantua on the 3rd of February, 1797, and had concluded treaties with three Italian states, which secured plenty to the French troops and closed the harbours of Italy against the English. A despatch from Bonaparte to the Directory contained the famous passage: "I have received your treaty of peace with Sardinia; the army has approved it." While the future dictator was learning to despise the advocates who governed France in the classic home of European culture and civilisation, poverty and a rise in prices had goaded the Paris proletariate under the leadership of Babeuf into a campaign against social order. Warned in good time, the Jacobins in power were able to suppress the rising of the Jacobins of the streets before its outbreak, and so protect society from the Utopian devotees of

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revolutionary logic, for whom the idea of equality was resolving itself into a denial of the rights of property in a communistic state. But in the face of the general distress public opinion evinced no gratitude to the Directory for successes of this kind, and in May the first retiring third of the Convention was replaced by moderate deputies. The executive remained revolutionary, while the popular representation ceased to be so, and the figure of the long expected Cæsar, who alone could bring the Revolution to a close, began to assume a distinct outline. From henceforth it was safe for a man of Talleyrand's antecedents to return to Paris.

Since the summer he had left Hamburg. He spent a fortnight in Amsterdam and then made a stay of some duration in Brussels. Masson and Lord Dalling speak of a three months' secret mission in Berlin, of which no traces are discoverable. In September 1796 he re-entered Paris after an absence of four years, accompanied by Madame Grand, who a few days afterwards was put down as an emissary of the emigration. "C'est une Indienne bien belle, bien paresseuse, la plus désoccupée de toutes les femmes," wrote Talleyrand to the Director Barras, then a stranger to him: "je l'aime et je vous atteste, d'homme à homme, que de sa vie elle ne s'est mêlée et n'est en état de se mêler d'aucune affaire." He had taken up his abode in a modest lodging, and hardly knew himself again in

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Paris. Churches were being used as warehouses, palaces as barracks or taverns, and monasteries as dancing-saloons for the people. In the once aristocratic Faubourg grass was growing on the deserted streets. New rulers and parvenu speculators rubbed shoulders in the *salons* of Madame Tallien and Madame Hamelin, "habillées . . . comme on ne se déshabille pas"; the pre-revolutionary society, as he had known it, had disappeared; he himself seemed to be forgotten by the political world. The Institute, which had been re-established, alone remembered his measures for the reform of public instruction and the scientific institutions of the country, and his legislative labours, and made him, with Dupont de Nemours, Lacuée, and Roederer, a member of the section for national economy, to which he submitted his two papers composed in America, and for which he wrote the report for 1797 as secretary of the classes: "C'est un de nos bons constituants," Roederer heard one of the audience say as they were applauding him on this occasion. In political circles he was counted one of the *constitutionnels directoriaux*, for whom Benjamin Constant, then a rising young publicist, published two pamphlets advocating the defence of republican institutions against the threatening attacks of the reaction. The indefatigable reporter of the Court of Vienna, Mallet du Pan, did not fail to note that Monsieur d'Autun, "le moins scrupuleux et le plus immoral des hommes,"

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had declared in favour of keeping Belgium, Liége, and the Dutch fortresses, and of the independence of Holland, in the *Cercle constitutionnel*, the rendez-vous of the moderate party. This pronouncement was made in November, just when Lord Malmesbury had arrived in Paris with instructions to make future negotiations for peace conditional on the evacuation of Holland.

The winter of 1797 passed away without any notice being taken of Talleyrand's overtures. Ill fortune, while it did not ennoble his character, never ruffled his temper. His remarks only betray the humiliation inflicted by the pecuniary straits in which he was placed. As long ago as 1792 he had made the characteristic observations to his friend Biron: "Où en êtes-vous de vos affaires? les suivez-vous? c'est là qu'il faut chercher le bonheur. Dans deux ans, il sera là tout entier pour nous qui ne sommes plus jeunes." From America he wrote to Madame de Genlis: "La situation de mon esprit est à peu près la même que vous l'avez vue, ni plus haineux, ni plus violent que de coutume. Je ne songe guère à mes ennemis; je m'occupe de refaire de la fortune, et j'y porte l'activité que peut inspirer l'emploi que j'espère en faire; et là mon imagination trouve des espérances et des émotions douces. Entre les sentiments dont on a besoin pour être content de soi, il faut compter celui de l'indépendance: c'est ma tâche actuelle.

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Si je parviens à la remplir, je dois regarder ces années-ci comme les plus utiles de ma vie, et me croire dans le petit nombre de ceux qui ont été bien partagés." "Voyez-vous, il ne faut jamais être pauvre diable," he said afterwards to Vitrolles. His attempts to make a fortune in America had not succeeded, and in Paris he said to Madame de Staël: "Ma chère enfant; je n'ai plus que 25 louis, il n'y a pas de quoi aller un mois; vous savez que je ne marche pas et qu'il me faut une voiture. Si vous ne me trouvez pas un moyen de me créer une position convenable, je me brûlerai la cervelle. Arrangez-vous là-dessus. Si vous m'aimez, voyez ce que vous avez à faire."

She complied with his request, gave him twenty-four thousand francs to go on with, and hastened to Barras, who consented to meet him, and with this view invited him to dine at his country-house at Suresnes. It was in May, and, as chance would have it, shortly after Talleyrand's arrival the Director's adjutant, whom he had brought up and to whom he was tenderly attached, was drowned while bathing in the Seine. Barras was deeply affected; Talleyrand returned to Paris with him and showed such sympathy in consoling him that from that day he became Talleyrand's friend. "Il aurait donné un parfum au fumier," was the expression which Barras employed to describe what he felt in Talleyrand's society.

On the 18th of July he carried Talleyrand's appoint-

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ment as Minister of Foreign Affairs with the support of his colleagues Rewbell and Reveillère-Lepaux. The two other Directors, Barthélemy, the negotiator of the peace of Bâle, and Carnot opposed it vehemently, and advocated the appointment of Colchen, a nonentity; they said openly that the renegade priest, who had been a traitor to his order, his king, and his God, would be ready to betray the whole Directory, that he changed his principles as he did his linen. But Carnot, who used this language, had to countersign his own discomfiture in his letter announcing the appointment to Talleyrand, to which the latter replied that the new Minister would prove his devotion to the Republic by deeds. He had succeeded as a candidate of the extremists, and was, nevertheless, mistrusted by them as an aristocrat and adherent of the Orléans faction, while the Constitutionalists, such as Mathieu Dumas and Dupont de Nemours, recommended him to the Councils as a man of firm character and great ability. The Prussian ambassador reported to his government to the same effect. "A few days ago," wrote Sandoz-Rollin, "he said to me in the course of a confidential conversation: 'I shall stand as a conciliating link between the Directory and the two Councils; my object is peace, and I detest all revolutionary schemes and intrigues." This coincides with what we find in his Memoirs: "Peace abroad could alone lead to order at home, and from thenceforth all

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my thoughts and actions were bent on peace." But to attain this end he would have required a measure of authority such as he never possessed at any stage of his career as Minister under the Directory. Not only was he kept in ignorance of all domestic affairs, but the Directors conducted even the business of his own department in direct contradiction to his own views and advice.

Madame de Stäel was absent from Paris when the appointment, which was owing to her initiative, was made. On the following day he wrote to her: "Me voilà donc encore Ministre. J'ai des raisons de position pour en être bien aise, des raisons de caractère pour en être fâché; c'est fort loin d'être un plaisir complet." A few days before he had said to her: "Je fais des vœux pour les succès de la République, je déteste plus que jamais l'aristocratie; je fais des vœux pour votre retour; j'ai un besoin extrême de vous revoir; je vous aime de toute mon âme." He used to relate afterwards that in the Hotel Galiffet, which was assigned to him as an official residence, he was surrounded by external splendour and by a crowd of servants whose wages he was unable to pay, and who used costly Sèvres dishes, because there was no money to buy earthenware.

His predecessor in office, Delacroix, left him a staff of capable officials, who soon experienced the consideration which characterised all his dealings with his

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subordinates. One of his first appointments was that of Hauterive, whom he had first met under the roof of the Duke de Choiseul, and afterwards in America, where he was working as a gardener, and who from this time proved an ornament to the French Foreign Office. When Talleyrand took over his office, the salaries were in arrear, and even the bill for his own state-coach could not be paid. "Vous êtes bien curieux," was his reply to the coach-builder who enquired when the account would be settled. The method and order which he introduced into the administration of his department gained for him the commendation of the budget commissions of 1798 and 1799. It was more difficult for him to get on with his colleagues. At the first meeting which he attended as Minister the following scene took place: Barras accused Carnot of suppressing an official document; both Directors stood up as they spoke. "I swear that it is untrue," cried Carnot, raising his right hand. "Do not swear," rejoined Barras, "for drops of blood would fall from your hand."

At the same time that Talleyrand was appointed, François de Neufchâteau was made Minister of the Interior, Hoche Minister of War, for a short time only, and Pléville-Peley Minister of Marine. The latter was succeeded in 1798 by Admiral Bruix, whom Talleyrand mentions as the only one of his colleagues with whom he could get on, and whose portfolio he took over when

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the admiral was placed in command of the fleet which took Bonaparte and his army to Egypt.

The new Ministry came to the helm at an eventful period. Bonaparte had commenced negotiations for peace with Austria by the preliminaries of Leoben, and the Directory, confronted with the question "to be or not to be," devised the *coup d'état* of Fructidor, which succeeded because Bonaparte, without seriously believing in the danger of Royalist conspiracies, nevertheless thought it good policy to play off the Jacobin triumvirate of Barras, Rewbell, and Reveillère against the two moderate Directors, Carnot and Barthélemy, and the two legislative assemblies. The constitutional authorities were bound to be a danger to him as soon as they gathered strength; and he was already on bad terms with them owing to his arbitrary treatment of the Venetian Republic. As for the Jacobins, they represented a system which he could overthrow whenever he pleased. But he did not consider it necessary to go himself into the streets, as on the 13th of Vendémiaire. He sent Barras three millions, which were gratefully accepted. Then he despatched the turbulent Augereau to Paris, who infringed the constitution by collecting troops in close proximity to the capital, and thus provoked the *coup d'état* which was carried out on the 4th of September and placed Paris under the iron heel of a military despotism, without a single hand being lifted among the people to defend its legitimate

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representatives. Then began an era of proscriptions and deportations, to the cold-blooded cruelty of which all the opponents of the victorious party, without distinction of political sentiments, fell victims, the deadly malaria of Guiana taking the place of the guillotine.

According to contemporary statements, Talleyrand passed the evening before the *coup d'état* in Barras' house with Benjamin Constant and Madame de Staël. It was he who, according to Miot de Melito, vehemently insisted on action, fearing that the Bourbons might be recalled. He is also said to have answered a question as to Madame de Staël's share in these events, to the effect "that she was concerned in the 18th but not the 19th of Fructidor"; in other words, that she was for the overthrow of the Royalists but not for the return of the Terror. Talleyrand accepted both. We know what he has to answer for from the historians who have investigated the second Terror, "la guillotine sèche," as it was called, and still more from the accounts of the victims of this narrow and fanatical persecution. The chief culprits were Merlin and Reveillère, who shared the task of punishing Royalist intrigues and persecuting recalcitrant priests by means of the decrees of 1790—1795 which had been revived against them. As the elastic offence of disturbing public order was sufficient to warrant deportation, no less than nine thousand nine hundred and fifty-two

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ecclesiastics were found guilty, although only one thousand three hundred and ninety-nine of them actually suffered the penalty. Talleyrand was asked to submit official reports concerning the participation of emigrant priests in Royalist conspiracies, pretended as well as real; he urged extenuating circumstances, and in January 1799 interceded for Count Coligny, without, however, being able to dispose his colleagues to clemency either in the one case or the other. On the other hand, he managed to get Roederer's name struck off the list and a journalist deported in his place, the Minister of Police, Sotin, insisting on his full number. He saved another *constitutionnel*, Mathieu Dumas, by giving him a forged passport.

The question now was to justify the 18th of Fructidor, as had been done with the 10th of August, not only in the eyes of foreign countries, but, strange to say, of Bonaparte himself, who had not given his consent to the violent measures which Talleyrand now styled legal and commended as a specimen of finished state-craft. The apology must have been no easy one, for his own hopes of peace had vanished. In August he had said to Sandoz-Rollin that Pitt wished for peace, that an understanding with him must bring about one in Vienna, and that he (Talleyrand) had rendered this possible. This policy had every prospect of success, if the rulers in Paris would only consent to it. War loans and subsidies were weighing heavily on

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Pitt's budget. The coalition, which he had formed with so much labour, had ceased to exist, Portugal was the only country on the Continent which still held to the English alliance, when at the end of August the news fell like a thunderbolt that the Court of Lisbon had also joined the deserters, while the English fleet was in open mutiny, and Ireland was on the brink of a terrible insurrection. The nerve of resistance, public opinion in England, was in favour of peace. "We have not what is of all means the most essential, the mind," wrote Canning, who had almost lost heart, to Pitt, who now directed all the energy which had inspired his resistance to obtaining peace. Lord Malmesbury was sent to France once more, this time to Lille, with full power to leave Belgium and Holland to their fate, to recognise French acquisitions of territory in Germany and Italy, and to stipulate for the retention by England of only the Cape, Trinidad, Ceylon, and the town and port of Cochin among all the French colonies which she had conquered. Of the three French plenipotentiaries at Lille one, Maret, was sincerely in favour of peace. Two of the Directors were on his side; Carnot declared afterwards that if his advice had been followed, peace would have been then concluded on most favourable terms. On the 10th of June, 1797, Barthélemy stated to Sandoz-Rollin that it would be "une absurdité politique intolérable" to aggrandise the Republic on the Rhine as a counter-

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poise to the power of Russia. But when Talleyrand took up the negotiations the influence of the brutal and violent Rewbell had already prevailed over counsels of moderation, and Lord Malmesbury was expected to agree to England's surrender of all her conquests, those made at the expense of Holland and Spain as well as those from France, and was informed that this was a *sine qua non* for the continuance of negotiations. After Fructidor the remodelled Directory went even further, and made such exorbitant claims that the negotiations were broken off, and Lord Malmesbury received his passports for the second time in the space of a year. Talleyrand's attempts to moderate these absurd demands were overruled by Rewbell as "frivolous;" he used the epithet "ignorantissime" when the Minister endeavoured to continue the negotiations for peace with Austria on the basis of the preliminaries of Leoben, instead of driving her from the Rhine at all hazards, while Talleyrand received despatches from Bonaparte dated from Montebello complaining that he was as bad a judge of the situation in Italy as the Directors themselves. The cause of the reprimand was that Talleyrand had, shortly before Fructidor, sent instructions to Bonaparte warning him that the establishment of isolated republics in Italy might pave the way for a united Italian Republic, which might in the future be persuaded to turn against France.

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Even at this early stage Sandoz-Rollin pointed out that everything conspired to thwart Talleyrand, and that his continuance in office for any length of time was impossible. But this opinion did not take into account the supple nature of the man. He accepted with outward calm the diplomatic discomfiture in which the failure of the Lille negotiations had involved his own policy. In the year 1797 he entered at Hoche's request into communication with Irish emissaries; a year afterwards he complied with an order of Merlin and issued unlimited powers for negotiations with Tippoo Sahib and other Indian princes, whose names were not even known in France. But all this time he was coolly watching which way the balance of power was inclining, and he soon came to the conclusion that its centre of gravity had shifted.

Directly after his nomination he had reported his appointment to Bonaparte. In his Memoirs he refers to a letter of congratulation from the latter as the cause of this communication. But this is a slip of the memory, and it was he who began the correspondence. "J'ai l'honneur de vous annoncer, général, que le Directoire exécutif m'a nommé ministre des relations extérieures. Justement effrayé des fonctions dont je sens la périlleuse importance, j'ai besoin de me rassurer par le sentiment de ce que votre gloire doit apporter de moyens et de facilités dans les négociations. Le nom seul de Bonaparte est un auxiliaire qui doit tout

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aplanir. Je m'empresserai de vous faire parvenir toutes les vues que le Directoire me chargera de vous transmettre, et la Renommée, qui est votre organe ordinaire, me donnera souvent le bonheur de lui apprendre la manière dont vous les aurez remplies."

Bonaparte's first letter to Talleyrand requests him to accelerate the negotiations for peace. By way of reply the Minister had to confine himself to transmitting the instructions of the Directory, which, a prey to inward dissensions, first of all threw difficulties in the way of the negotiations, and then, after the *coup d'état*, dictated to him the following aggressive passage: "We did not go to Italy to bargain away the rights of peoples: Venice must be given to understand that its liberation from the Austrian yoke is the object of the war." In September 1797 he also sent word to Miot de Melito, the ambassador in Turin, that the idea of an alliance between the French Republic and Piedmont must, under existing circumstances, be abandoned. When the exact contrary took place, the Directory consenting, under pressure from Bonaparte, to the alliance, by which he in vain attempted to save the little kingdom, and Bonaparte himself concluding peace between France and Austria on the 17th of October, on condition of the cession of Venice to the latter, then the Directors only ventured on the submissive language of assent and approval. But Talleyrand wrote: "Voilà donc la paix faite, et une paix à la

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Bonaparte. Recevez mon compliment de cœur, mon général; les expressions manquent pour vous dire tout ce qu'on voudrait en ce moment. Le Directoire est content, le public enchanté. Tout est au mieux. On aura peut-être quelques criailleries d'Italiens; mais c'est égal. Adieu, général pacificateur! Adieu! amitié, admiration, respect, reconaissance; on ne sait où s'arrêter dans cette énumération."

Bonaparte repaid Talleyrand's admiring confidence by addressing to him the letter of September 19th, in which he states his views on the sovereignty of the people and the delegation of its powers *à propos* of the draft of the constitution for the new Cisalpine Republic, which was formed out of the three papal legations. "The organisation of the French people," he wrote, "exists at present only in outline. The good opinion we have of ourselves, the thousand-and-one pamphlets and the inexhaustible speeches which flow from our deputies, do not prevent us from being very ignorant in political matters. We have not yet succeeded in clearly distinguishing between executive, legislative, and judicial authority. Montesquieu himself has not given a correct definition of them. No doubt this great man was fully equal to the task, but he himself admits that his work was more an analysis of the present and the past; a collection of observations and notes. His definitions of legislative, executive, and judicial power are taken from England. The right

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of declaring war, of concluding peace, and of levying taxes is not necessarily an attribute of *legislative* authority, although the English constitution for motives of prudence confers one of these rights on the House of Commons. This constitution, which is composed of privileges,—a dark ceiling edged with gold—rests on the assumption that the House of Commons represents the nation and consequently possesses the right to tax it, and so to protect it against despotism and abuse of power, and even against the insolence of courtiers. But in the case of a State, in which all power rests in the people and the people is the sovereign, there is no reason for investing the legislature with powers which are really foreign to its nature. In a case of this kind the government itself must be considered the representative of the nation, to the full extent of the powers which are conferred on it by the text of the constitution and the organic laws. The governmental authority must be divided into two distinct organs, of which one should not be able to take the initiative by action, but should only supervise and give legal approval to the measures of the others, the so-called executive. The executive should only be filled by men who have already held office and gained experience, whereas the legislative authority has to enact or amend organic laws, not, as now takes place, in the space of a few days, but after mature deliberation, lasting, if necessary, for months. A legislative assembly thus con-

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stituted, without rank in the Republic, devoid of party feeling and indifferent to the clamour of the day, would not have the ambition or the inducement to burden us with a quantity of legislative enactments, which, inspired by chance, perish of their own absurdity, and condemn us to the fate of being a nation with three hundred codes and no laws." Sieyès, to whom the contents of this document were to have been communicated, threw cold water on the attempt to deprive him of the monopoly of planning constitutions. Talleyrand took the matter more seriously, to all appearances at least, and mentioned Benjamin Constant as a republican of liberal views who was able and ready to put Bonaparte's political ideas into constitutional shape. His advice was not followed then, but afterwards, in 1815, and in the *Cent Jours*.

When the general arrived in Paris from Rastatt in December, Talleyrand saw him for the first time on the following morning, and fell under the spell of his personal charm: "Vingt batailles gagnées vont si bien à la jeunesse, à un beau regard, à de la pâleur, à une sorte d'épuisement!" He introduced him in solemn audience at the Luxemburg on the 10th of December, the odes of Chénier and Lebrun and an orchestra of one thousand nine hundred musicians forming an accompaniment, surrounded by brilliant toilettes and uniforms, amid the applause of the public, who hissed the humpbacked Reveillère and his colleagues and gave an

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ovation to the conqueror, who was obliged to submit to the embraces of the five Directors. By way of compensation Talleyrand gave a *fête* in honour of Joséphine, which was remarkable for tasteful arrangements, great luxury, and complete absence of ladies of good social position. It was recollected afterwards that Talleyrand's address contained the remark that without the Revolution "le génie du vainqueur d'Italie eût langui dans de vulgaires honneurs." He compared him to his favourite Ossian, referred to his unworldliness and inaccessibility to ambition, and said that, far from dreading his ambition, a time perhaps would come when its aid might be invoked.

Talleyrand had considerable difficulty in inducing Bonaparte to attend the anniversary of the King's execution with his Jacobin following, but they both found each other of one mind as to future policy. The Directory declaimed against "the insolence of England," and, a few weeks after the destruction of the Dutch fleet by Duncan's victory off Camperdown, strongly urged that a landing should be effected on the British coast. Bonaparte, who was placed in command of the army intended for England, knew the real value of these wild schemes. For a moment Talleyrand could indulge in the hope that he had converted him to his own views, for on the 28th of February, 1798, Sandoz-Rollin wrote to Berlin: "Le ministre m'assura que le général Bonaparte considérait cette entreprise (contre

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l'Angleterre) comme très hazardée, et préférerait de négocier la paix avec l'Angleterre." But Bonaparte had already other plans in view. For a whole year he had had his eye on the East, hoping to strike a blow in that quarter at the enemy whom he could not reach on the Thames. His confidant with regard to the Egyptian expedition was Talleyrand, who recognised his own ideas in the scheme for making the Mediterranean, from Malta to the Nile, a French lake. He was to follow the General and then proceed as French ambassador to Constantinople in order to reconcile the Porte to the campaign which was to overthrow the power of the Mamelukes. There would be time enough to choose between an alliance with Turkey, in return for the restoration of her suzerainty on the Nile, or a partition of the Turkish provinces with the Imperial Courts, which Talleyrand mooted in Vienna by means of Bernadotte. The frigate *La Badine*, which was to take Talleyrand to Egypt, had been ready in Toulon since the 3rd of June; after the taking of Malta Bonaparte became more urgent and sent another vessel to fetch Talleyrand, but in spite of this his mission to the East was not undertaken. It would have removed him too far from the centre of action, and would hardly have prevented the Porte from joining the second coalition after the Battle of the Nile.

Talleyrand's views with regard to the Egyptian

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expedition changed with the course of events. In September 1797 he commended Bonaparte's grand idea; in February 1798 he told the Prussian ambassador that he had originated it himself; two years afterwards he saddled the French consul in Cairo, Magallon, with the responsibility for it; but before Bonaparte embarked from Toulon in May, Talleyrand, who was confined to his bed with a serious illness, gave him one hundred thousand francs, which were repaid under the Consulate. "What induced you to lend me the money then?" asked Napoleon subsequently. "I had no particular motive," replied Talleyrand; "I might not have seen you again; you were young, and I felt an irresistible impulse to render you the service." "Vous faisiez un métier de dupe," was the only reply which Napoleon vouchsafed to him.

Talleyrand did not take any personal initiative in the events which in the winter of 1798 led to the establishment of the Roman Republic, the captivity of Pius VI. and his removal to Valence, the revolutionising of Switzerland and its transformation into the Helvetian Republic. In his memorandum of June 27th, 1799, he states that he strongly disapproved of the policy of the Directory in the first two cases, and as regards Switzerland, his despatches to the French *chargé d'affaires* Bacher in Bâle, prove that as early as the close of 1797 he tried in vain to prevent Bonaparte's violent measures against the Valtellina

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and the cantons of Tessin and Vaud. Subsequently, he only succeeded in considerably reducing the amount of the war contribution demanded from Berne, which he did all the more readily because the brutal Rapinat, a brother-in-law of Rewbell and French commissary in Switzerland, had never reported to the Foreign Office. But with regard to the temporal power of the Pope and the clergy generally the position was very different, and in the matter of the secularisations the policy of the Directory met with his entire sympathy, both in Germany and in Italy.

The Duke of Longueville, an ambassador of Louis XIV. and Mazarin, was the first to make use of the word on the 8th of April, 1648, during the negotiations for the peace of Westphalia, and in defence of a policy which aimed at treating the German ecclesiastical states as objects of compensation, or converting them into domains for the noble and princely families of Germany. A policy of this kind commended itself at once to the Convention. A diplomatist of that time, Desportes, who was envoy in Zweibrücken, prepared a complete scheme of secularisation as early as 1793. Three years afterwards Carnot proposed to deprive the Pope of his temporal possessions and bestow them on Spain, the object being to establish a counterpoise to the power of Austria in the Peninsula. In 1795 Sieyès advocated the suppression of all ecclesiastical states without exception, and the committee of public

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safety suggested, through Barthélemy, its ambassador in Bâle, that the ecclesiastical territory on the right bank of the Rhine would form a suitable indemnity to the temporal princes on its left bank, and also to Prussia, which was to be won over to the side of France by this means and by the prospect of a new confederation of princes, and which signified its consent to the cession of the left bank of the Rhine and its unconditional acceptance of the principle of secularisation in the treaty of August 5th, 1796.

It was not so easy to reconcile Austria to these ideas. The ecclesiastical princes of the Empire were her natural allies, and the Emperor himself an ecclesiastic, having received the minor orders. When the secret agreement of 1796 between France and Prussia became known to the diplomatic world, Francis II. informed the ecclesiastical states of the Empire, at Regensburg on the 6th of February, 1797, of the plans which the Protestant states had formed against them. A few months afterwards, at Campio Formio, Bonaparte succeeded in overcoming the resistance of the Court of Vienna by the offer of the bishoprics of Salzburg and Passau, and by promising that Prussia should retain its territory on the left bank of the Rhine, but be excluded from all share in the ecclesiastical booty, although the latter had openly accepted the principle of compensation for herself for the House of Orange and for Hesse-Cassel on the 3rd and 20th of July. Austria only

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asked for the maintenance of the three ecclesiastical Electorates and the recognition of her right to compensation; but at the same time Cobenzl exerted all his powers of persuasion at Rastatt to satisfy Thugut's demands, and to obtain the three Papal legations as an indemnity for Austria, whose designs on Italian territory Carnot had already endeavoured to thwart by his proposal to hand over the whole of the states of the Church to Spain, as an ally of the Republic, and so balance Austria's power in the Italian peninsula.

Talleyrand's policy was therefore not much more revolutionary than that of the chiefs of the Vienna cabinet when he sent the following significant instructions to the French ambassador in Rome: "Vous aiderez, bien loin de restreindre, les bonnes dispositions de ceux qui penseraient qu'il est temps que le règne du Pape finisse; en un mot, vous encouragerez l'élan que le peuple de Rome parait prendre vers la liberté." Three months afterwards he drew up a memorandum for Bernadotte, who was going as ambassador to Vienna, in which he stated quite frankly that the best means of limiting Austria's influence was to give as wide an extension as possible to the principle of secularisation. He quieted Abel, the representative of Wurtemberg in Paris, about the proceedings at Rastatt by pointing out that the acceptance of this principle was the best guarantee for the reorganisation of the Empire and the interests of its various sover-

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eigns. To Berlin, where, since the death of Frederick William III. a coolness in the relations with the French Republic was becoming more and more perceptible, he sent despatches and advice which continually laid stress on the advantage of shifting the power of Prussia from the Rhine to the north and east, and so perhaps restoring an autonomous kingdom of Poland under the Prussian sceptre. Madame de Rémusat confirms this by her remark that she often heard him say that "the peace of Europe was to be found in Poland."

Since May 1798, Sieyès had succeeded Caillard in Berlin, who had been a great favourite there. Talleyrand told Sandoz-Rollin that he hoped Sieyès would have a good reception, that he was disappointed with republicans and still more with republics, and was glad to leave a country which had ceased to have any attractions for him. Instead of taking this line Sieyès posed as the champion of representative Government on a republican basis, declared that "fear was the only principle of action for governments," wanted to surrender Bavaria to Austria and drive the latter out of Venice and the Tyrol, which were to be converted into republics. Austria, he said, once involved in a war with Prussia and Russia, would in all probability be forced to part with Bavaria. Prussia and Austria would be best kept in check by fomenting the rivalry between them, and then France, supported by the

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small German states, would be in a position to close the continental ports, "from Gibraltar to Holstein and even up to the North Cape," to English commerce. For similar reasons he had urged the seizure of Flushing in 1795, and informed the astonished Dutchmen that "principles were all very well for schools, states were governed by their own interests." As advocate of the confederation of the Rhine and the continental blockade Sieyès was a forerunner of the Imperial policy of conquest in its crudest form. No wonder that doctrines of this kind frightened and sobered people in Berlin, and defeated the plans for an alliance which were the object of his mission. In vain Talleyrand raised a warning voice. He too was in favour of a threefold division of Germany, and of shifting Austria's and Prussia's spheres of interest farther east. But he recognised what was possible, and, when Sieyès proposed the formation of an Italian republic, replied: "Permettez que je soutienne mon opinion contre la vôtre. Ce que vous appelez la force des choses, cette tendance vers le régime républicain que vous supposez que nous combattons dans cette contrée, y existe-t-elle en effet? Nous avons de toutes parts les preuves du contraire." The cause of liberty, he wrote on another occasion, required to be let alone to gain adherents. In March 1798 he remarked to Sandoz-Rollin that while the Directory was preaching war with England he was hoping for peace: "You are the only person capable of uttering

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such nonsense," interrupted Rewbell. Another time he silenced him with the following: "To the point, to the point! you always lose sight of that." Gradually things came to such a pass that all or nearly all that the Directory required of its Minister was his signature.

But a very different opinion of him prevailed abroad. In March 1798 the Prussian ambassador referred to the possibility of his entry into the Directory as a guarantee for peace, and reported to Berlin that both Spain and Portugal had promised him a million and a half in case of his appointment. As for Talleyrand, he made no secret of the contempt with which his Government inspired him. "Vous chercherez en vain un gouvernement plus absurde que le nôtre sur la face de la terre," he said to the Prussian ambassador in August 1798; "à Turin, Ginguené fait des scènes ridicules; à Naples, Garat débite un discours de maître d'école, qui aura fait rire d'étonnement toute l'Europe. À Gênes, Sotin voulait soulever la république ligurienne contre la Sardaigne; à la Haye, le sieur Delacroix bâtissait des systèmes contre l'Angleterre, tandis que le gouvernement hollandais croulait à ses pieds. . . ." When Ginguené, with utter want of taste, made his wife appear at the Queen's reception in Turin in the prohibited costume of the Directory instead of the proper court-dress, Talleyrand added an ironical marginal note to the paragraph on the subject in the *Moniteur*, to the effect that no one could fail to

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appreciate the significance of the victory won by the great nation. But even more ridiculous in his eyes than the Jacobins, who preached to princes and ministers, were the rulers at home, who in their white satin dress, with sky-blue rosettes on their shoes, scarlet mantles thrown over their shoulders, mock swords at their sides, and waving plumes in their hats, gave the reception-rooms of the Directory the appearance of a resort of strolling players. Madame de Staël gave open expression to Talleyrand's thoughts when she had the courage to write frankly in 1798: "This revolution may in the long run contribute to the spread of greater enlightenment among a considerable number of people, but the vulgarity of expression, of manners, and of views must be fatal to good sense and higher culture for years to come." The great craze of the day, the sect of the theophilanthropists, the *filoux en troupe*, as Talleyrand used to call them, excited his bitterest ridicule. The founder of it was Haüy, a brother of the well-known physicist; but its most zealous apostle was the Director Reveillère. The latter submitted to the Institute a memorandum in favour of a confession of faith drawn up by him which enjoined the commemoration of the three great acts of life—birth, marriage, and death. Talleyrand listened to it attentively, and then said drily that he had only one remark to make: to found his religion Jesus Christ had been crucified and had risen from the dead, and he advised the

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would-be founder of this new religion to do the same.

The days of such a régime were numbered, and Talleyrand gave his friends clearly to understand that he intended to secure himself against all eventualities, the most serious of which, poverty and want of independence, he had already experienced. He used to say that he had never met any one who was able to live on his income. He had hardly been a few weeks in office when the treaty with Portugal gave him an opportunity of enriching himself. Out of an indemnity of eight millions, which was paid in return for certain concessions, he is said to have divided one amongst the five Directors, and kept three for himself. Michaud's assertion that he concealed for two years from the allied government in Madrid the one-fifth reduction allowed by the Directory in the war-contribution payable since the treaty of San Ildefonso, and put the money, which amounted to twelve millions, in his pocket, cannot be verified from Spanish sources. But its probability is invalidated by the fact that Godoy's wretched administration was attacked and then overthrown in the course of these very two years, and that a thoroughly honest man, Don Francisco Saavedra, took charge of the finances and afterwards of foreign affairs. The embezzlement of such an enormous sum could hardly have escaped his notice, nor would he have had any motive to submit to it in

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silence. Talleyrand, however, never made a secret of his intention to make money out of his official position, and he told the Prussian ambassador plainly, among others, that he had not accepted the post in order to leave it as a poor devil and accept a pittance from the Republic. It was this conversation which made Sandoz-Rollin write to his government that he could not offer citizen Talleyrand less than three hundred thousand francs for his services. But he added: "Je l'ai dit: la soif de l'argent l'aura entraîné dans une multitude de souillures. . . . Je le crois perdu pour le ministère." A year afterwards, in June 1799, the Prussian councillor of legation, Roux, expressed himself still more strongly on this point. "Ce prêtre adroit," he wrote to Berlin, "n'a pas acquis un pouce de terre, mais il est possesseur d'un riche portefeuille, et il a déposé près de trois millions, soit à Hamburg, soit à Londres. Le seul traité d'alliance avec la Suisse lui a valu cinq cent mille francs." . . . "Orgueilleux comme un paon et vénal comme un laquais. . . . il ne dit jamais ce qu'il fait et ne fait jamais ce qu'il dit." In all these transactions Talleyrand pursued a definite system, treating the money as a payment due to him for services rendered. Thus Saxony and Wurtemberg afterwards each paid a million, at the time of the mediatisations, and Madame Grand made herself useful here, by telling the envoys of the handsome presents given by the great Powers, and so accelerating their

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payments. Napoleon attributed the treaty of Pressburg to bribery, and in 1807, at the instigation of Berthier, made his Minister return a present of one hundred thousand florins received from Bavaria, which, however, was afterwards paid to him again. On other occasions the Emperor shut his eyes, and Talleyrand himself, as in Poland in 1806, used to return the present if the service was not rendered. Of course things did not always go quite so smoothly, and there were moments in Talleyrand's career under the Directory when the laboriously constructed edifice, which was intended to serve as a refuge for the future, showed serious signs of collapsing.

In the year 1796, shortly before Washington's retirement from the Presidency, a conflict broke out between the Directory and the United States which threatened to terminate in war. The origin of it dated back to the year 1794. On the 19th of November in that year a treaty with the United States was signed in London, which substituted a benevolent neutrality for the previous hostile attitude of the two countries, settled their commercial relations for the next twelve years, and recognised the English principle that the neutral flag should not cover enemy's merchandise. The federalists, led by Washington and Hamilton, who wished to keep on good terms with all the Powers, concluded the treaty through Jay. The democrats, especially Jefferson and Monroe, showed a strong

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leaning towards France. In 1794 Monroe had gone to Paris as Minister of the United States, and he arrived there in July, a few days after the fall of Robespierre. His instructions were to demand an indemnity for the damage done to American citizens in the war between France and England, on the basis of existing treaties. Instead of following them, he joined in the intrigues of the Jacobins, with the object of forcing America out of her neutral position into open hostilities against England. Monroe went so far as to propose the levy of a special tax, to serve as a loan to the sister republic, which was in want of money. In the meanwhile the news of the treaty concluded between England and the United States in London got abroad, and Monroe, who was in concert with the diplomatic committee of the Convention, demanded that its text should be published in Paris. His government replied to this request, which interfered with their freedom of action, by recalling him, whereupon the Directory, which had now come into power, assumed an aggressive attitude towards the United States. A decree of July 2nd, 1796, which was at first kept secret, enacted that the flag of allied and neutral states should receive the same treatment from France as these states received from England. The consequence of this was the confiscation of all English goods found in American bottoms. The attempt to get up an insurrection in Canada in favour of France, by which the French

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hoped to compromise the government in Washington, failed in the same year, as did the agitation of the Directory's diplomacy and of the so-called "French party" for Jefferson's succession to the Presidency. But an American vessel was captured by the French a few miles from port, the French envoy adopted a very offensive tone, and the Paris government took up the position that the treaty between England and America was an infringement of that concluded between the latter and France in 1778.

In the summer of 1797 the moderate party in the Council of the Five Hundred strongly opposed these tactics, and the appointment of Talleyrand, Alexander Hamilton's friend and admirer, to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs seemed to promise a change for the better as regards the American dispute also. In July he notified to the French consul in Philadelphia the despatch of French commissaries to settle the existing differences, whereupon the new President, Adams, sent Generals Pinckney and Marshall and the lawyer Elbridge Gerry as envoys extraordinary to Paris. When they arrived there on the 4th of October, they found the Directory confirmed in its insulting aggressive policy by the victory of Fructidor, and they were informed that they would not be received until America had complied with the demands of France, and withdrawn its offensive complaints against the Directory. Subsequently, on the 8th of January, 1798, a new decree

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was issued which declared all vessels with English goods on board to be prize of war, and prohibited all ships which had touched at an English port in the course of their voyage from entering a French port. By these measures, and with the assistance of their new satellites, Holland, Spain, and Denmark, they hoped to isolate England and force America into hostilities with her. Even at this stage prudent politicians on the other side of the Atlantic, like Alexander Hamilton, deprecated hasty action, but at the same time in his capacity of War Minister he made preparations by land and sea, in order to be ready for any eventuality.

In the meanwhile, Talleyrand's agents, Hottinguer, Bellamy, and Hauteval, called on the American plenipotentiaries, and hinted that an offer of £50.000 to the Directors would appease their resentment and materially facilitate the course of the negotiations. They then reverted to Monroe's ill-advised proposal, and asked for a loan from the American government to the French Republic, which was to be made in the following manner: a claim of France on Holland dating from the year 1795, to the amount of thirty-two millions, the market value of which was fifty per cent. discount, was to be taken over from the Directory at its full nominal value; at the end of the war the Dutch Republic would be obliged to meet its obligations, and America therefore would run no risk in doing France this friendly service. France, they said,

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required a large sum of money for the invasion of England, the success of which the Americans had at heart, and if it was not forthcoming, the negotiations would not advance a step for the next six months, and the United States would be threatened with the fate of Venice. The Directory, they added, had relations with the French party in the country. After this Talleyrand had several interviews with the plenipotentiaries in Bellamy's presence, which were confined to details respecting the loan. A letter of Talleyrand's to Hamilton, written shortly after his return to Europe, had referred to "la conduite audacieuse et folle des agents de la France, qui s'étaient toujours montrés les ennemis de votre gouvernement." What must Hamilton, who had advised the despatch of the mission in the interests of peace, have thought of Talleyrand's attitude, when Pinckney and Marshall reported the threats and attempts at corruption, which they met with a categorical refusal, and after weeks of futile discussion finally answered by leaving France. Gerry alone remained behind, and was inveigled into further negotiation with Talleyrand, whereupon President Adams recalled him with a severe reprimand, and published the envoys' reports.

While Alexander Hamilton appealed to the national honour for resistance, and Washington, leaving his retirement, consented to take command of the forces in case of war, the news of these disgraceful pro-

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ceedings reached Europe through the Press. The Directory, brought to its senses by the energetic attitude of the Washington government, now disclaimed all intention of violating existing treaties, set the American sailors at liberty, and prohibited the seizure of American vessels in the future. Talleyrand adopted a conciliatory demeanour, and promised that the next envoy of the United States to France should be received with all due honours. It was in the year 1799. The quarrel so wantonly provoked by France was not settled until a year later, after Brumaire and by Bonaparte, who commissioned Talleyrand to draw up a new convention regulating the relations of the two countries.

Talleyrand now had to make his peace with the public. Madame de Staël, as soon as she heard through the Press of his alleged attempt at bribery, hastened to the Ministry, and in a state of great excitement urged him to vindicate his reputation. He listened to her quietly, left her with a smile, saying that he would soon be back, but did not re-appear, and afterwards described in the best of humours the scene which she had inflicted on him. The remark, "Madame de Staël n'a qu'un défaut; elle est insupportable," was probably made about this time. He did not treat public opinion so lightly. He admitted the negotiations for the loan, but as regards the £50,000 stated that the American plenipotentiaries

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had been imposed upon by some impudent rogues, and demanded that the names should be published in full, the initial letters only being given in the published despatches. This mode of defence deceived nobody, least of all those who, like Sieyès, had always had a liking for him. "You have followed the bad example of those who traffic in their honour, man's most precious possession," he wrote to his chief from Berlin. "I have repudiated the charge, but you must clear yourself or cease to be my friend." Talleyrand, however, had very good reason not to be much alarmed at this remonstrance. Even in the days of the provincial assemblies Sieyès was said to have been dissuaded from his opposition by the present of a rich benefice, and Roger Ducos, to whom Sieyès owed his appointment as Director, admitted after Brumaire to his colleague Gohier that he had received a hundred thousand francs, but Sieyès four hundred thousand, and that the First Consul had said: "Il faut gorger ce prêtre de biens pour en avoir raison." In his Memoirs Talleyrand has repaid Sieyès for his Berlin letter with the following passage: "He is not high-souled enough to dispense with riches; even his pride has not sufficed to protect his reputation in this respect."

Barras, who took whatever he could get, and Rewbell were still more deeply compromised. Talleyrand had hardly been appointed Minister when Barras prevailed on him to send an agent to Pitt on their behalf to

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bring about an understanding, although the negotiations had just been broken off. In spite of all official protests to the contrary, the cession of Ceylon and the Cape was offered if Pitt would consent to make the chiefs of the French government a secret payment of two million sterling in return for it. The sum far exceeded the amount of secret service money at the disposal of the English Minister; but his desire for peace was so strong that he could not bring himself to meet the offer with a flat refusal, but responded with a counter-proposal for a payment of ten and a half million francs. Barras and Rewbell probably did not think it advisable to accept a fifth of what they had asked, and so the matter dropped.

Under these circumstances, at all events, there was no reason why the members of the Paris government should not continue to act together, and so for the present Talleyrand was not disturbed in his office.

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CHAPTER X.

THE SECOND COALITION AND THE COUP D'ÉTAT OF BRUMAIRE.

1799.

IN March 1799 the war between France and the second coalition broke out in Europe. The immediate cause of hostilities was the advance of Russian troops into Austrian territory. But the whole moral responsibility for the renewal of the horrors of war lay at the door of the men who had inherited the policy of 1792, the champions of the revolutionary propaganda taken over from the Gironde and the Convention, which left its opponents no alternative between resistance and annihilation. It was they who at Lille forced England to continue the struggle which, beginning with Aboukir Bay and ending with Trafalgar, was destined to place the naval power of France at her mercy. It was the instinct of self-preservation which, after the battle of Aboukir, drove the Sultan Selim, whose empire was threatened with partition, into an alliance with the Tsar. The Emperor Paul's resistance to the French Jacobins, so

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loudly attributed to principle, was really the outcome of the rage excited by the French and Polish intrigues for the liberation of Poland, which found their way to him through Berlin as well as Vienna. The negotiations at Rastatt had broken down on the point in which failure had been anticipated. Austria's policy consisted of acquisition of territory in Italy and restriction of secularisation in Germany. France was bent on general secularisation, her object being to weaken Austria's influence in the Empire and so prevent any increase of her power in Italy. Thugut's efforts to bring about an understanding owed their failure to the dualistic position of the Austrian sovereign, who in his capacity of German Emperor had to defend interests which were at direct variance with the policy of Vienna statesmen. If Thugut could have brought himself to overcome the traditional distrust of Prussia, and if the latter could have been induced to abandon her fatal neutrality, then, with the strong opposition which French policy had aroused in Italy and Switzerland, the final result could hardly have been doubtful. Revolutionary conquest had lost its attractiveness and its prestige in the country of its birth. Detested by the oppressed nationalities as much as by the French themselves, it had, moreover, become an object of contempt to both. When the envoys of the Directory were cut down by the Hungarian hussars on leaving the Congress of Rastatt,

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people learned what the rulers of France were thought capable of by their fellow-citizens. Talleyrand in a conversation with Gagern designated the Austrian envoy, Count Lehrbach, as the culprit. But among his countrymen there were not a few who, instead of calling for vengeance, accused their own government of having instigated the murder of the three men.

This state of public feeling, which at home oscillated between conspiracy and apathy, and could no longer be blinded by ephemeral military successes gained against small helpless states, relaxed the bonds of discipline in the army as soon as defeats became the order of the day. Scherer, who had been beaten in Italy, was followed by the imprecations of his troops when he laid down his command. Jourdan and Bernadotte, when defeated by the Arch-duke Charles, hurried to Paris on their own initiative, in order to call the Directory to account for their inadequate forces, their empty war-chests, and the demoralisation of their troops. Deprived of their posts for a short time, and then re-appointed, the one to the command of the army, and the other to the Ministry of War, they lent a ready ear to schemes for ridding the country of the misrule of incapable despots. At last the day of reckoning seemed to have arrived. In the spring a Russo-Turkish fleet seized the Ionian Islands, which had belonged to France since the treaty of Campo Formio, and by the convention of March 21st,

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1800, they were constituted a republic under the protectorate of the two Powers. The Arch-duke Charles defeated Masséna at Zurich. Thugut's and Cobenzl's great move, the appointment of Suvoroff to the supreme command of the Austrian and Russian forces, led to the victories over Moreau and Macdonald in June, and so to the recovery of Italy. The most ill-fated creation of the Directory's policy in 1798, the Parthenopean Republic, collapsed after a duration of ten weeks, and Naples plunged into a bloody carnival of revenge. Carnot's and Rewbell's pet child, the Roman republic, which had existed since February 1798, was dissolved. Milan and Turin opened their gates to the allies; Joubert, despatched to Italy to change the fortune of war, met with a premature death at Novi. England did not confine herself to subsidising the allies, but an English force, supported by Russian auxiliaries, reappeared on the Continent after an interval of many years, and landed in North Holland, again under the command of the Duke of York, on the 27th of August. It obtained a preliminary success under Abercromby, whereupon Pitt's previsions were fulfilled, and the Dutch sailors brought what was left of the Dutch fleet over to the English. Another insurrection was threatening in Brittany and La Vendée, and France was on the point of being invaded, when disunion in the camp of the Allied Powers, the sole but the best ally of the revolutionary government in Paris,

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came once more to her assistance. It was with feelings of rising indignation that old Suvoroff had received orders dictated by "the clerks in the Vienna *chancellerie*," and had subordinated his own and the Tsar's views to Austrian interests. With the fixed determination of tearing up the detested Austrian alliance he marched over the Gothard, too late to prevent Korssakoff's defeat and Masséna's victory at Zurich, and devoted his energies to the brilliant retreat, which restored the Tsar his army and broke up the second coalition. While these events were succeeding each other in Switzerland, the allied forces of the Russians and English sustained a defeat at Bergen on the 19th of September, which the Duke of York attributed to the refusal of the Russians to obey his commands, and which enabled his antagonist Brune to save Belgium and Holland for the Republic. In the meanwhile, however, in France itself things had taken a turn which external successes were powerless to prevent.

In May, while the news of French disasters in Italy and on the Rhine were spreading panic and consternation, the government had once more to face the re-election of a third of the legislative assembly and a compact opposition. Eight months after the *coup d'état* of Fructidor, on the 22nd of Floreal (May), 1798, the Directory had been powerful enough to exclude the recalcitrant Jacobins as it had done with the Constitutionalists a year previously. But on this occasion

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there was no chance of a successful *coup d'état* on the part of the ruling Terrorists against the defeated fraction in their own camp. While the other parties held aloof, the Jacobins of the opposition were victorious in the elections, and chance sealed the defeat of their Directorial opponents still more completely. At the election for the renewal of the executive on the 11th of May, the most energetic of the Directors, Rewbell, drew the retiring lot, and the Council of the Ancients appointed Sieyès, who was ambassador at Berlin, in his place. With utter ignorance of the real state of affairs he was ascribed the merit of having detached Prussia from the coalition. Their information as to his home policy was more accurate; it was known that he had a very poor opinion of his colleagues, and that he was forming plans for a reform of the constitution, which would not be confined to a change of persons. He had hardly entered on his office when the Councils, making use of their recovered freedom of action, on the 18th of June (the 30th of Prairial) replaced the Directors Treilhard, Merlin, and Reveillère by Gohier, Moulins, and Roger-Ducos, three mediocrities, who discussed the paragraphs of the constitution of the year III. while the constitution itself was crumbling into ruins.

Sieyès, the new President of the Directory, had also by no means lost faith in the saving virtue of logical combinations for restraining unbridled passions. But he kept the text of the new constitution, that of the

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year VIII., in his pocket for the present, and looked about him for a soldier possessed of sufficient strength to save France by means of a *coup d'état.* He first thought of Joubert; then, after the latter's death, Talleyrand suggested the Duke of Brunswick, whose name recalled the combinations of 1792 referred to above. Sieyès' friends went still farther. In order to get rid of Louis XVIII. they hit upon the idea of marrying his niece, Madame Royale, afterwards Duchess of Angoulême, to the Arch-duke Charles, and offering him the French throne. The Princess was then in Vienna, and wild as the scheme was, it created some uneasiness in Mittau, among the members of the exiled royal family. It came to nothing, as Thugut demanded Alsace and Lorraine as the Arch-duke's dowry, and the Director now turned his thoughts to Berlin. A friend of Talleyrand's, Sainte-Foy, who had taken part in the negotiations between Mirabeau and the Court in 1791, called on Sandoz-Rollin in August, and in the course of a long conversation pointed out that peace could only be restored by means of a hereditary constitutional monarchy, but that the nation would never consent to place a Bourbon on the throne. A German Protestant prince would have a better chance, and Prince Louis Ferdinand, nephew of the King of Prussia, had been thought of. The ambassador reported the conversation to Berlin with the remark that he thought he detected in it the secret object

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of sowing discord and distrust between Prussia and the other Powers. He calls Sainte-Foy a confidant of Talleyrand's, but the latter had ceased to be Minister since the 14th of July. On the 6th of July he stated that he would resign, and on the 13th he sent in his resignation, but remained in charge of the business of the office until his old pupil and present successor Reinhard arrived in Paris from Switzerland on the 6th of September.

The Directory accepted Talleyrand's resignation with flattering expressions of gratitude. He did not leave office of his own accord, and Sieyès in particular did what he could to prevent him. The act was forced upon him by the so-called pure Republicans of the Société du Manège, the Jacobins headed by Delacroix, who accused Talleyrand, "*l'émigré*," as they called him, in the *Journal des Hommes Libres*, of having kept up relations with Louis XVIII. by means of his uncle, the cardinal-archbishop, and of simulating republican sentiments in order to undermine the Republic, like his successor Reinhard. It was not difficult for him to clear himself of such vague charges as these. He published the pamphlet entitled "Éclaircissements donnés par le Citoyen Talleyrand à ses Concitoyens." In this document the Constitutionalist of 1789 lays claim to the title of fellow-worker in the cause of liberty, appeals to the London mission entrusted to him by the provisional executive in September 1792,

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and then, passing to the administration of his office, states that an honourable peace had been the aim of all his hopes and endeavours.

At this point the tone changes, and the accused becomes an accuser, who has settled his account with the present, and now addresses every one of his words to a future audience, which may shortly be in a position either to place him on his trial or give him their confidence.

"N'est-il pas évident que ce n'est pas moi qui ai cherché à accroître le nombre de nos ennemis, à exaspérer nos amis, à hâter la rupture des traités, à indisposer les neutres, à menacer enfin toutes les puissances de l'irruption de nos principes? Et lorsqu'on pense que ceux qui osent me faire cet inconcevable reproche, sont ceux-là même qui sans cesse attisaient le feu de la discorde, qui appelaient à grands cris toutes les fureurs de la guerre, qui étaient impatients de mouvements révolutionnaires dans toutes les parties du monde, qui adressaient inconsidérément à toutes les puissances les injures les plus absurdes et les plus impolitiques, qui ne semblaient s'occuper qu'à entraver toute négociation, qui se plaisaient à répandre sans cesse dans les feuilles publiques cette assertion si funeste au repos de l'Europe, que les républiques et les rois sont essentiellement en guerre. Lorsqu'on songe que moi, j'étais constamment occupé à réparer tant de disconvenances, tant de folies; à calmer les envoyés des puissances neutres et amies, toujours prêts à en tirer des motifs d'alarmes; quand on s'arrête un instant à ces réflexions, on est frappé d'étonnement de voir que ces hommes veulent m'accuser, moi, d'avoir coopéré à l'exist-

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ence de la coalition, et qu'ils paraissent ignorer, eux, à combien de titres cette imputation pourrait leur être faite. . . . Paraîtra-t-il étonnant que ces mêmes hommes m'imputent, à moi, toutes les opérations du gouvernement, celles du ministre de la guerre, celles du ministre des finances, celles du ministre de la police, la destitution des généraux, la nomination des commissaires, la nomination des fournisseurs, etc., en un mot, tout ce qui a été fait ou n'a point été fait dans la république et hors de la république, depuis que je suis ministre ; qu'ils me demandent, à moi, pourquoi le grand-duc de Toscane n'a pas été gardé en otage, comme si, moi, je donnais des instructions aux généraux ; qu'aguerris contre la crainte de tout reproche, par la multitude même de leurs mensonges et de leurs contradictions, lorsqu'ils m'accusent, et si injustement, du refroidissement d'une puissance neutre, ils fassent, eux, d'incroyables efforts pour nous brouiller avec l'Espagne et la Prusse ; que, fermant les yeux à toute évidence, ils osent affirmer que c'est moi qui ai aliéné de nous les États-Unis, lorsqu'ils savent si bien qu'au moment précis où ils impriment cet étrange reproche, des négociateurs américains arrivent en France, et qu'ils ne peuvent ignorer la part qu'il m'est permis de prendre dans cet évènement, à raison du langage plein de déférence, de modération et de dignité, que je leur ai adressé au nom du gouvernement français, tandis que ceux qui m'attaquent aujourd'hui ne voulaient alors leur faire parvenir que des paroles dures et irritantes ? Est-il étonnant qu'ils veuillent me faire rendre compte de la cession du duché de Bénévent au roi de Naples, lorsque le duché de Bénévent n'a jamais été cédé au roi de Naples ? qu'ils confondent tout, qu'ils altèrent tout, qu'ils ignorent tout ; qu'ils placent les ports du Portugal dans la Méditerranée ; qu'ils prennent le

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citoyen Eymar, ex-ambassadeur dans le Piémont, pour un abbé Daymar, du côté droit de l'Assemblée constituante; qu'ils me supposent des relations intimes avec tel homme qu'ils nomment, et avec qui je n'ai même jamais eu une communication depuis que je suis ministre: qu'ils prétendent que c'est moi qui ai provoqué contre le citoyen Truguet un genre de rigueur qui m'a constamment paru sans excuse, tandis que mille voix s'élèveraient au besoin, même la sienne, pour repousser de moi une aussi absurde calomnie."

"Et qu'ai-je donc fait pour qu'un tel soupçon ait pu s'adresser à moi? Ma vie toute entière permet-elle de me supposer une action de ce genre? Ai-je jamais été vindicatif, persécuteur? Dans tout le cours de mon ministère, peut-on me reprocher même un acte sévère? Ai-je blessé quelqu'un, même par un propos? Les citoyens associés à mes travaux ont-ils jamais reçu de moi autre chose que des témoignages de confiance et d'amitié? Ont-ils redouté un caprice de ma part? Ont-ils été inquiets un seul instant sur leur sort?—On a, l'année dernière, couvert les murs d'injures contre moi, dictées par la fureur: avais-je fait précédemment ai-je fait depuis le moindre mal au jeune homme égaré qui me les adressait? Enfin, ai-je dénoncé? ai-je fait destituer? ai-je fait supprimer? Non, certainement; non; et je suis loin sans doute de m'en faire un mérite. Quiconque me connaît, sait très-bien qu'il n'était pas plus dans mes principes que dans mon caractère d'agir autrement. J'ai fini: je suis certain d'avoir répondu victorieusement à tous les reproches; je laisse les injures. Je les méprisais dès le commencement de la révolution: je ne changerai point."

This remarkable document is the only instance, in

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a public life extending over fifty years, of a departure from Talleyrand's invariable practice of never taking notice of personal attacks. The quietly dignified question, "Ai-je blessé quelqu'un, même par un propos ?" could hardly have been uttered by any other of the politicians who took part in the Revolution. The obvious retort, why did he identify himself with a policy, which he knew to be so pernicious, and countersign its decrees, he meets with the rejoinder: "Je l'avouerai, j'étais retenu par ce désir, par cette espérance infatigable de la paix, don't rien ne pouvait me détacher." The whole of his apology, and still more his attack, takes but little account of the existing order of things. Everything, up to the chance reference to the Papal fief of Beneventum, which was destined to be his after the lapse of a few years, announces the impending crisis, the inevitable collapse of the old régime, and the approach of the new.

The last document which bears Talleyrand's signature as Minister is dated the 3rd of September, two days before he made over charge of his office to Reinhard. It is addressed to the Directory, and confirms the failure of the "great and sublime project" of the Egyptian expedition, and the danger which threatened Bonaparte, and emphasises the necessity of bringing him and the army back, even at the cost of the loss of Egypt, and of concluding a convention with this view in Constantinople, provided that England gives

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her consent thereto. The negotiations, he adds, should be conducted by a Spaniard, as there was no chance of getting a Frenchman unharmed to the Bosphorus either by land or sea, the last French envoy, Bouligny, having been under arrest since the outbreak of hostilities. It was nothing more or less than a capitulation, a word which Talleyrand did not hesitate to use, only Bonaparte was to have the power of accepting or rejecting its terms.

But what was known about Bonaparte? A letter of his, written on the 10th of February, 1799, under the impression that war had not broken out, reported to the Directory his impending departure for Syria, and his intention to return home as soon as the object of the expedition was attained and "France had taken arms against the Kings of Europe." This had already taken place when the small French army left for Syria. It was lying before St. Jean d'Acre when Barras, on the 14th of April, moved by the bad news from Italy and the Rhine, started the idea of recalling Bonaparte. His proposal met with vehement resistance from his colleagues; there were already plenty of generals, they replied, who were only too ready to seize on supreme power; Bonaparte had better be left where he was. Four weeks afterwards they changed their mind. The Spanish fleet, which had been shut up within its ports for two years by the English blockade, could now move more freely. Talleyrand, who was then in

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temporary charge of the Ministry of Marine, urged the Spanish cabinet to put its naval forces at the disposal of France, in order to support Admiral Bruix's expedition, which was to relieve Malta and fetch Bonaparte and his army from Egypt. Bruix was the bearer of a despatch from the Directory dated the 26th of May, which left Bonaparte a free hand as regards his arrangements in Egypt, but at the same time offered him the command of the republican forces. "Ramenez-le," wrote Talleyrand laconically to his friend the admiral.

But the latter underwent an experience similar to that which Thugut had had with Suvoroff. The Russians had crossed the Alps, to fight not for Austria but against France; in the same way people in Madrid were willing to join the French against the English, but not to sacrifice themselves for French interests in the Levant. Instead of meeting in the Mediterranean, the allied fleets appeared off Brest on the 8th of August, where the utter want of munitions of war and stores would have alone sufficed to detain Admiral Bruix, who had no funds at his command, while in Paris, which was now without tidings of Bonaparte, newspapers brought the intelligence on the 28th of July, of the raising of the siege of St. Jean d'Acre and the return of the French troops to Egypt. After this everything became so uncertain that Talleyrand, and subsequently Reinhard, were ordered to enter into the negotiations referred to above, which were based on the assumption

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that the problem was to bring the remnant of a defeated army back to France. Jung adduces some facts which prove that Joseph, Lucien, and Talleyrand heard from and communicated with Egypt through the French consulates in Genoa, Ancona, Cadiz, Algiers, Tunis, and Tripoli; but even this slender thread was broken, when all of a sudden, on the evening of October 4th, Bonaparte's despatch, giving a glowing description of the victory at Aboukir, arrived in Paris. The Directory had hardly had time to make the arrangements necessitated by the change of situation, when the telegraph announced Bonaparte's arrival in France. He had given Nelson the slip, had landed at Fréjus after a voyage of forty-seven days, and was now on his way to the capital, hailed by the people as a deliverer.

When Talleyrand's friend, Hans von Gagern, asked him afterwards who had recalled Bonaparte from Egypt, the reply was that it was Bonaparte's sole doing. But to the further question, who had planned the 18th of Brumaire, the answer was that this was everybody's doing. In cases of this kind it was Talleyrand's wont to anticipate "everybody," and Roederer says he was one of the first to penetrate the seclusion which the man on whom all eyes were now fixed deliberately sought in his small apartment in the Rue Chantereine, now Rue de la Victoire. The breach of faith as regards the mission to the East had been forgiven. No one

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was better qualified than the ex-Minister to supply information respecting the men who were to be made use of or removed from the scene. In the latter category was Barras, who, as Lucien said, had found his Capua in the Luxemburg, and whose only object was to provide for his own future. The charge frequently made against him, that he had been in communication with the Bourbons since May 1797, and had pledged himself to schemes for restoring the Monarchy in return for an unconditional amnesty for the past and an enormous sum of money, is refuted by Ernest Daudet in his history of the emigration. He quotes Barras' manuscript memoirs and Russian documents to prove that the Court at Mittau had been taken in by its own agents Fauche-Borel and David Monnier when it issued letters patent and written promises for the Director. Barras himself, he states, did not discover these intrigues until September 1799, and immediately informed Talleyrand, and afterwards his colleagues, of them. Two of the latter, Moulin and Gohier, when sounded as to the possibility of Bonaparte's election in place of Sieyès, declared with short-sighted formalism that it was out of the question, because he had not attained the required age of forty. The Director Roger-Ducos was a tool of Sieyès, and the latter played every card in his hand before consenting to the Bonaparte solution. It is true that after Zurich he had requested his brother to summon

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him back from Egypt; but when Moreau arrived in Paris from Italy almost simultaneously with Bonaparte, Sieyès made him proposals which, if they had been accepted by the General, would have placed the fate of France in his hands. Since the year 1797, when the Abbé had rejected overtures from Bonaparte, which were made through Talleyrand, the two men had cherished an ill-concealed antipathy for each other. It was much remarked that at a dinner shortly after his return, the General had taken no notice of the Director, although at that time he was holding out hopes to and dangling schemes before the various republican parties, which kept them on the move without binding him to anything. But the *coup d'état*, which all were expecting, could not take place until Sieyès and Bonaparte came to terms; and Talleyrand now undertook to bring about this necessary understanding.

In spite of many reasons for dissatisfaction Sieyès retained a feeling of regard for him, which was not returned. It was known that he had voted for Talleyrand's entry into the Directory on the 30th of Prairial. When the Jacobins frustrated the election, Talleyrand remarked to the Prussian ambassador that it was doubtful whether recent events would not turn as much to the disadvantage of Sieyès as to that of those whom he had turned out. "C'est un esprit profond," said some one of the Director in his presence: "Dites

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creux," rejoined Talleyrand. But both Bonaparte and he had been convinced for years past that Sieyès, when confronted with the alternative of a revival of the Terror or an arbitrary *coup d'état*, would prefer the latter. This surmise was confirmed when Bernadotte, whose sympathies were on the side of the Jacobins, was suddenly dismissed on the 14th of September, in spite of his brilliant success as War Minister, and Fouché was appointed Minister of Police for opposite reasons on the 20th of July. Lucien Bonaparte had been President of the Five Hundred since the 22nd of October; Cambacérès, Roederer, Bruix, and Regnault de Saint-Jean were with Talleyrand in Bonaparte's confidence. He could count upon Berthier, Marmont, and Lannes, who had returned from Egypt with him. There exists a complete list of the generals and officers who had been won over by them, or who had placed themselves spontaneously at their disposal. Moreau was one of them. Jourdan, Augereau, and even the Jacobin Bernadotte remained passive. In the case of the latter, this was due to the influence of his brother-in-law Joseph. Sieyès now received an oral promise from Bonaparte to support his new constitution, which replaced the five Directors by three Consuls appointed for ten years, a Senate nominated for life, and an Elective Chamber of Deputies, but on condition that the draft of the constitution should be referred to a special commission, and that, in the meanwhile, a provisional government should be formed,

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consisting of Bonaparte, Sieyès, and Roger-Ducos. Sieyès had been looking out for a soldier, and now, since the 1st of November, the day on which this interview took place, he had found one. And he never for a moment doubted that the new saviour of society would make short work of him as well as of everybody else; but it was too late for him to go back. He drew up the three decrees, of which the first, issued by the Council of the Ancients, constitutionally empowered for that purpose, transferred the popular assembly from the capital to St. Cloud; the two others invested Bonaparte with the supreme command of all the forces, and directed the election of three new Consuls.

The drama which, in the form of the *coup d'état* of the 18th Brumaire, or November 9th, 1799, heralded the introduction of Napoleon's rule at the close of the century, was enacted in two days, and under such varying circumstances, that the second day threatened, for the space of a few hours, to upset what had been achieved on the first. On the 18th, while the Council of the Ancients was summoning the legislative assembly to meet at St. Cloud on the following morning, and placing Bonaparte at the head of the army, Talleyrand undertook to make Barras resign. On the 20th of October, Barras had dined with Bonaparte, and had told the latter that the Republic was near its end, that great changes were necessary, that Hédouville should be made President, and Bonaparte return to the army, in

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accordance with his own wishes; as for himself, he was in bad health, unpopular, and used up, and only fitted for the sphere of private life. Hédouville, a republican general, employed by Hoche during the first pacification of La Vendée, was now in command of the army of the west, and had behaved in a prudent and conciliatory manner. During the last few weeks of the government of the Directory, confidence as to the future had been so shaken, that republican officers joined the Royalist standard, and Barras, in spite of all the denials produced in his memoirs, may very well have indulged in the hope that he would be able to win over Hédouville to the monarchical cause. To the above remarks, which were dropped in a casual way, Bonaparte returned no answer, but Talleyrand now reverted to them and made use of them for his own immediate object. While he himself awaited the development of events in the hotel of the administration of the Department of the Seine, on the Place Vendôme, he sent his confidant Bruix to the unsuspecting Barras, with an application for resignation drafted by Roederer. According to Michaud, Barras confided his schemes for the restoration of the monarchy to Talleyrand, and the latter compassed his fall by betraying the secret to Bonaparte. But Barras was compromised without any such complicity in Royalist conspiracies, and quite ready to depart when he was requested to do so. He only asked for a safe conduct to Grosbois, his country-house near Paris. About

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noon, his secretary Bottot appeared with the required resignation, which put the two opposition Directors in a minority. Bonaparte's reply: "Qu'avez-vous fait de la France?" was addressed to the Directory only as a matter of form, and really intended for public opinion in Europe. Gohier, who up to the eleventh hour refused to believe in a *coup d'état*, because Madame Bonaparte had invited him to breakfast that morning, and Moulin, who like him clung to the old constitution, were soon relieved of further responsibility, the one by a hasty flight, and the other as a prisoner of Moreau. That very evening Sieyès advised the arrest of forty Deputies, whose opposition was apprehended on the following day. But Bonaparte had scruples about this on account of the oath which he had taken that morning in the Council of the Ancients to defend the representatives of the nation.

On the 19th of Brumaire the actors in the drama met again at St. Cloud. A house had been taken there for a year for the civilians implicated in the conspiracy, which, however, was only required for four-and-twenty hours. Talleyrand says that he went there as "an amateur." He does not do himself justice, for he was in the very heart of the conspiracy. He was accompanied by Montrond, a witty Epicurean and political *frondeur*, who from this time belonged to the circle of his intimate friends, by Duquesnoy the economist, Arnault the writer, Desrenaudes, Callot, an army con-

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tractor, and Roederer, who made a point of attending every political funeral. In the morning Fouché had conferred with the zealous Bonapartist Arnault and had told him that he would answer for Paris; it was for the General to do the like for St. Cloud.

Talleyrand now sent Arnault with a message to Bonaparte that Fouché and he thought the time had come to accelerate matters. "No time has been lost," answered Bonaparte with a smile; "a little patience and everything will be arranged." He and Sieyès waited alone in one of the rooms of the *château*, while the Five Hundred were holding a stormy sitting in the Orangerie. When his adjutant Lavalette informed him that the oath was being taken to the existing constitution, amid shouts of "À bas les dictateurs!" and each deputy answering to his name, and Sieyès hereupon remarked, "La constitution entière, c'est beaucoup," then he prepared to act. He entered the Council of the Ancients, and apostrophised the assembly in the incoherent speech, which Bourrienne interrupted with the whispered remark that he did not know what he was saying. His appearance among the Five Hundred, with four grenadiers behind him, threatened at one time, as is well known, to have a more disastrous termination. Of his address to the Deputies, delivered amid constant interruptions, in a passionate strain and with gathering irritation, and alternating between a tone of menace and apology, the famous allocution,

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"Suivez-moi, je suis le Dieu du jour," are the only words which have lived in the memory of posterity. Desrenaudes was not the only person who lost his presence of mind when Duquesnoy, who had been sent to find out what was going on, returned with the news that Bonaparte had been declared "hors la loi." Roederer states that Talleyrand then despatched Duquesnoy and Montrond hurriedly to Bonaparte. But Sieyès had already addressed to him the historic words: "Puisqu'ils vous mettent hors la loi, mettez-les hors la salle"; and all that Montrond had to say afterwards was that he had seen Bonaparte change colour. While Lucien was conducted by his brother's soldiers out of the assembly of the Five Hundred, where things had passed beyond his control, and was aiding him with his theatrical southern rhetoric to stir up the soldiers against the recalcitrant deputies, Lavalette observed Talleyrand and Arnault awaiting the result in the court-yard in a state of great excitement. A travelling carriage was standing at the gate, ready for any emergency. At this point Murat's grenadiers crossed the parliamentary threshold, and dispersed the Five Hundred with drums beating. Their red cloaks and caps were left on the empty benches, and that same evening Lucien collected a sufficient number of them to form a commission, which declared the violation of the constitution to have been unavoidable, and offered the thanks of the country to Bonaparte, by whom it was effected.

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Talleyrand did not wait for this last act. "We must go to dinner," he said to Roederer. Madame Simons, a pretty and amiable woman, had prepared dinner for them, as well as for Arnault, Montrond, and Sainte-Foy, in her country-house near St. Cloud. The company was in the best of spirits; Montrond alone seemed to be troubled with unpleasant recollections, and occasionally muttered to himself, "That was not correct, General Bonaparte," referring, not to the *coup d'état*, but to his change of colour.

A few days afterwards the First Consul publicly thanked the citizens Talleyrand, Volney, and Roederer for their co-operation in the *coup d'état*. With the exception of the discomfited Jacobins there was not a soul in France who did not hail the victory of arbitrary over constitutional power. It put an end to civil war and anarchy at home, and held out hopes of peace abroad. "Le 18 Brumaire a sauvé la France," wrote La Fayette to Bonaparte in 1802. In his preface to "Le Génie du Christianisme," Chateaubriand compared the conqueror of Brumaire to Cyrus. Toulongeon, a Constitutionalist of 1789, concluded his history of the Revolution with the words, "Bonaparte was not the first, but the only man." Chénier congratulated the Council of the Ancients, and still more himself, that from henceforth the guarantees for liberty were inscribed, not in a constitutional document, but in the heart of Bonaparte. Sieyès admitted to Talleyrand

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that he had found his master: "qui sait tout, veut tout, et peut tout." Independent observers like Chateaubriand's friend Joubert said: "Il n'est point parvenu, il est arrivé." Niebuhr called the 18th of Brumaire "the only one of all the French revolutions that was necessary and beneficial." Napoleon's accuser, Lanfrey, says it was an improvement "that despotism was no longer shielded by anonymity." The French bourgeoisie breathed again, and the French noblesse soon deserved Bonaparte's commendation, that "it alone knew how to serve." Of the three hundred and sixty-one members of the Convention who had voted for the death of Louis XVI., one hundred and twenty-one out of about three hundred survivors took service under the Empire. A future Minister of the Monarchy of July, the Duke de Broglie, describes his sensations and experiences when France heard the news, and Barante, a thoroughly moderate man, testifies that the state of public feeling was one of satisfaction and re-awakened hope. One of the best proofs of this was that Gaudin, afterwards Duke de Gaëta, who had declined the offer of the Ministry of Finance made him under the preceding governments, now accepted it and brought order out of chaos. He remained in office for fourteen years. The 5 per cent. rente went up from 7 to 12 after Brumaire, and a fortnight later, after the abolition of the compulsory tax, to 17. In the year 1803, during the visit to Brussels, Madame

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de Rémusat one evening heard the First Consul ask Talleyrand how he had managed to grow rich so quickly, and if it was true, as was stated, that he gambled on the Bourse. "I did so once," was the reply: "I bought rentes on the 18th of Brumaire and sold them on the 19th."

In his Memoirs Talleyrand speaks of monarchy having succeeded "polygarchy" on that date, but takes care to point out that this elective sovereignty had nothing in common with the restoration of the legitimate monarchy, and that the latter was out of the question in 1799. For the problem was, not to find the best ruler, but to find one possessed of the qualities required for lifting the country out of the groove of revolution, and accustoming it to the idea of a monarchical government. No one was so well fitted for this as Napoleon. The Zurich statesman Hans von Reinhard mentions a remark made by Talleyrand in the summer of 1798, which proves that he did not adopt this view in later years to justify his own political attitude, but that it was really his opinion at the time. It was on the occasion of a republican fête, presumably that of July 14th, that he said to Reinhard himself: "Eh bien, aujourd'hui ceci, demain les Bourbons; mais il faut que d'abord quelqu'un retourne la pyramide." When, shortly after the *coup d'état*, General Lamarque turned tc Talleyrand and observed that everything had improved in France

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since a step had been taken in the direction of the monarchical principle, the latter rejoined: "C'est clair, vous aviez mis la pyramide sur la pointe, nous l'avons replacée sur la base; le nom en haut n'y fait rien; il s'agissait d'abord de la tourner."

At Mittau there was very little taste for such ingenious distinctions as this. There the view prevailed that the name at the apex of the pyramid was everything, and that, even after Brumaire, it ought only to have been that of the lawful monarch. At present the courtiers of the exiled king knew nothing of the armistice in La Vendée and the rebellious provinces of the west, which Hédouville had concluded in December on behalf of the provisional Consuls; they only knew that England was firmly resolved to make no treaty with the revolutionary government, and they believed that the whole policy of the Emperor of Russia was bound up with a scheme for a general restoration. The Voltairian Louis XVIII. wrote in a sentimental strain to Cardinal Maury, who was not much more seriously inclined than himself, that Providence had chosen the noble figure of the Tsar for this task, and the legitimate king took Paul for a Cyrus, as he afterwards took Bonaparte for a Monk. The Royalist party had three generals, Pichegru, Willot, and Dumouriez, devoted to their policy; they were endeavouring to gain the support of the exiled La Fayette and Carnot, and they indulged in the hope

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that they would be able to rally Masséna, Moreau, Moncey, and Joubert to their cause.

Talleyrand's was the only name never connected with these hopes. A Royalist agent, who refers to him in 1798, adds that he listened to what was said to him, but that his course of action would evidently be regulated by events alone. Monseigneur d'Autun, the accomplice in the schism, the emissary of Danton, the conspirator of Fructidor, was also held responsible for offences of which he was never guilty, and credited with absurdities which no one condemned more severely than himself. Inferior conspirators declared that it was not necessary to secure him, because he had no influence or voice in the matter. Baron Hyde de Neuville, one of the men who professed themselves ready to get rid of Bonaparte by force, was better informed. He states that Talleyrand, in order to dispose the Royalists favourably towards the projected pacification of the west, held out hopes to him after Brumaire of reconciling the First Consul to the idea of a restoration, in case a peaceful solution with England and Russia should turn out to be impracticable. He then took Hyde and the Royalist general d'Andigné to the Luxemburg to see Bonaparte, who discussed the terms of pacification, but repudiated all idea of an arrangement with the Bourbons: "Join me," he said to the agent of the Chouans, "my government will be a government of youth and

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intelligence." He referred contemptuously to the Comte d'Artois, saying that he had not been seen on the field of battle. Talleyrand, on the other hand, affirmed his liking for him, said that he could not render the prince any services, but that the man was lovable, and that he felt attached to him. Hyde says that Talleyrand was perfectly straightforward, and that he had no complaint whatever to make of him; he also mentions a remark Talleyrand made about Bonaparte, that "if he remained in power for a year, the world would see great things." The conference led to no result, but in a letter, sent through Josephine, Louis XVIII. once more asked the First Consul to draw his sword on behalf of a restoration. The answer was given after the battle of Marengo, and destroyed for ever the illusions of the exiled Court.

Talleyrand's re-appointment to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs took place as early as the 21st of November. The Swedish *chargé d'affaires*, Brinkmann, refers to the First Consul's openly expressed hesitation on making it; Roederer records his remark that corruption had always prevailed in France, that every one who had been Minister had built country-houses. He might have also referred to Thugut, among others, who had drawn an allowance from the King of France from the year 1768, when he went to Constantinople as Austrian ambassador, up to the outbreak of the Revolution. Similar experiences awaited him in his

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own family; "Murat is returning with his pockets full, Leclerc is making his pile, we are all rich," said Joseph in 1802. Lucien as ambassador in Madrid was paid for the treaty of Badajoz in little bags full of diamonds. The Bonapartes were not indispensable, but Talleyrand was. All public offices, remarks Napoleon in the St. Helena memorial, were so organised that their administration only required an average amount of intelligence, coupled with zeal and devotion to the service of the State; but the Ministry for Foreign Affairs forms an exception, as it demands initiative and the power of persuasion. But who, said Bonaparte to Mollien, who was not best pleased with the observation, can compare with Talleyrand in knowledge of the time, of the world, of cabinets and of peoples? His appointment was not seriously objected to even by his Jacobin opponents, while Fouché's continuance at the head of the police had to be maintained in the teeth of Sieyès, who now advocated arbitrary measures which the tamed hero of the Terror was not inclined to sanction. The tendency was now in a contrary direction. The detested decree of the preceding Messidor, the *loi des otages*, which was directed against La Vendée, and placed liberty and property at the mercy of party hatred, was abolished. Even as regards the Jacobins, measures were confined to banishment or imprisonment of those who were most compromised, Talleyrand taking the opportunity of striking his personal assailant

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Jorry off the list. He also succeeded in keeping Bonaparte and Sieyès, never cordially disposed to one another, on decent terms. The idea was to leave Sieyès alone for the present. He was allowed to expound the new constitution to the two commissions. It regulated the elective rights of the sovereign people by a beautifully contrived machinery, and controlled one function of the State by another, with the result that authority was resolved into fragments and government disappeared in a cloud of metaphysics. "Que voulez-vous?" said Bonaparte to La Fayette, "Sieyês has created mere phantoms, phantoms of judicial and phantoms of executive power. Flesh and blood had to be put in the constitution somewhere, and so I have put them in the executive. The Grand-elector of the Constitution of the year VIII., "le porc à l'engrais," as Bonaparte called him mockingly, was replaced by a First Consul appointed for ten years, whose real omnipotence was hardly veiled by the presence of two colleagues with a consultative vote. A subservient Senate composed of notables took the place of Sieyès' constitutional jury, and nominated the members of the legislative body and the Tribunate, the former of which voted the measures of the Government without debating them, while the latter debated them without ever proceeding to a vote. Talleyrand might have recalled the plan which General Bonaparte sent him in September 1797, when the

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draft of the Italian constitution was under discussion. Its main outlines clearly reappeared in the new organisation of the Napoleonic state, only that instead of Cisalpina it was France who was the subject of the experiment.

The change of system necessitated a complete change of persons. Sieyès and Ducos declined to be consular colleagues of Bonaparte. The former was made President of the Senate, with a handsome allowance, survived the Revolution of 1830, and never thought it worth while to remind the public of his existence. Ducos was made a Senator. He was succeeded, on Roederer's recommendation, by Lebrun, who had been trained under the Monarchy and then elected a member of the Constituent Assembly, was a Royalist by conviction and an excellent financier. Cambacérès was appointed Minister of Justice. He was of good family and gentlemanly manners, and combined avarice with an unblemished character, and it was said of him that he knew how to be mean with dignity. He was loaded with honours, and ended as one of the great official personages of the Empire. The men with a talent for administration, such as Chaptal, Fourcroy, Crétet, and Portalis (banished at Fructidor), were transferred to the Council of State, together with Roederer, who had expected a portfolio and saw first of all Laplace and then Lucien Bonaparte preferred to himself for the Ministry of the Interior.

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Bonaparte made use of Roederer, but did not like him, and said one day to Miot that he could never have any confidence in the man who had been guilty of the treachery of August 10th. Maret, the negotiator of London and Lille, was made secretary to the Consuls. The *personnel* of the Empire began to learn their parts. The first discordant note came from the Tribunate; Benjamin Constant had taken his election seriously, and had prepared an opposition speech, which, however, only attacked the bill regulating the procedure of the three assemblies. Roederer, who was apprised of his intention, endeavoured in vain to dissuade him from it, and published an article in the *Journal de Paris* that morning, stigmatising all deliberate opposition as contemptible. Madame de Staël, warned by her friend Constant of the possible consequences of his proceedings for himself and for her, replied that he ought to obey his convictions. The speech was delivered, and in the evening Madame de Staël found herself deserted by her usual circle of friends. Excuses followed, among them one from Talleyrand; a conventional refusal of an invitation to dinner was his parting word to the woman to whom he owed his return to France and the change in his fortunes. Madame de Staël has immortalised this meanness in the portrait of herself, "Delphine," in which Talleyrand is evidently the original of the sketch of Madame de Vernon, who sacrifices Delphine's

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happiness to the prejudices of society. "I am told that the authoress and I are both disguised as women in the book," he replied, when some one called his attention to the satire, which, after all, was of a mild description. We are not told whether he looked into "Delphine" and found the following passage, which is also addressed to him: "Midway in your life you met the young woman who gave you her first friendship, a sentiment well-nigh as deep and fervent as a first love. Attracted by the charm of your intellect and your manners, she never doubted the nobility of your character, and defended you against all the attacks of the world. You have inflicted a mortal wound on the heart which was yours, although this cruelty could not have promoted any of your interests, for truth would have served your purpose better than falsehood. I hope from the bottom of my heart that you will be happy, but I venture to predict that you will find no one to love you as I have done. An intimacy of this kind comes but once in a lifetime. However fascinating you may be, you will never again meet with the friendship, the devotion, and the illusions of Delphine."

The question now was whether his official career had any compensations to offer him, whether the Minister of the Consulate was likely to succeed in the policy of peace which the blindness of the Directory had doomed to such ignominious failure.

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CHAPTER XI.

TALLEYRAND MINISTER OF THE CONSULATE.

1799—1801.

THE brilliant period inaugurated by the Consulate justified the most sanguine expectations formed of it, for it fulfilled its promise and completed the reconstruction of France. The leading characteristic of Bonaparte's achievement was that he refused to be bound by the narrow rules of doctrinaire fanaticism, and reverted to the elementary and indispensable foundations of social order, which had disappeared in France. He avoided the danger of reaction by taking care not to disturb such institutions of the Revolution as showed signs of vitality, and declined to run the risk of fresh upheavals and injustice involved in the restoration of what had been radically destroyed. The new system steered between these extremes and took its stand on the principle of possession, which was the source also of his own power. The purchasers of the *biens nationaux* were left in quiet enjoyment, and as most of them belonged to the peasantry, the latter were attached to the new régime by the strongest of all ties, that of property. People could now obtain a

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decision from the courts uninfluenced by the suitors' political views or antecedents, which had been impossible since the enactment of the Jacobin decrees of proscription. At the commencement of the Consulate the list of *émigrés* amounted to one hundred and forty-six thousand persons, mostly officers, politicians, nobles, and priests, who risked their lives if they crossed the frontier; while, besides them, there were two or three hundred thousand of their dependents, who, deprived of political rights and robbed of their property, existed on sufferance as the pariahs of society. Napoleon did not repeal the decrees relating to exile, but a series of senatus-consulta and remissions resulted in the exemption of so many classes of persons from their operation, that after the Peace of Amiens the doors of the fatherland were opened to all but the actual leaders of armed resistance. The man who had consented to the *coup d'état* of Fructidor hastened, as soon as he was in power, to repair the injustice done by it. Barthélemy, Carnot, Barbé-Marbois, Mathieu Dumas, Siméon, Portalis, and Fontanes, were recalled from exile, and gradually appointed to the highest offices. The work of reconciliation extended farther into the past, and embraced the Thermidorians, the Terrorists, and the few survivors of the Gironde. All the members of the Constituent Assembly were struck off the list of *émigrés*, and all persons under suspicion were given

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a chance of clearing themselves. The only thing that was impossible was to distribute the money voted as compensation for those who had lost their property with even an approach to justice. It is true that the restitution of the property not sold by the State provided a certain indemnity, but of a total value of at least two milliards of francs, only about one hundred million was restored, mostly to small people, and even for them the senatus-consultum of the year X. meant little more than the permission "to die of starvation in France." Napoleon was perfectly well aware of the glaring injustice of this; but, on the one hand, the state of the finances precluded more being done, and, on the other, it was no part of his policy to place large sums of money at the disposal of the Royalists. For he thus obtained the benefit of their services, and saw the first names of the Monarchy take their place in the Imperial Almanac. The First Consul found himself at the head of a society without privileges. They had ceased to exist in the *égalitaire* democracy, which strewed his path with the doctrines of the "Contrat Social." But the future Emperor avoided the mistake of thinking that because institutions had changed men had changed with them. He put the right construction on the conception of equality by interpreting it as an aversion on the part of the modern Frenchman to all distinctions from which he himself is excluded by reason of chance, position, or

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birth, and held out to him every prospect of advancement to which his personal ability entitled him. The First Consul could thus devote himself to the career of ambition, in which his claim to the throne met with no opposition. No one, he said to Roederer, had any interest in the fall of a government which rewarded all merit according to its deserts. But, he added, he alone of all his surroundings knew what a government should be.

Talleyrand yielded to the spell like the rest. In the despatches of De Lessart, Dumouriez, and Danton, and still more in those of Rewbell and Barras, he had missed "le langage noble." Now at last the ruler had made his appearance who could countersign the Minister's notes with the sword of the conqueror. Talleyrand's admiration was sincere, and expressed itself in warm terms, often of affectionate flattery: "The feeling which unites me to you," he wrote in June 1800 to the First Consul, "and the confidence that the sacrifice of my whole life to your fortunes and to your aims may be of service to the latter, make me take care of my health." Four weeks afterwards he added: "I am not myself when separated from you." In 1804 he made the following confession to "the restorer of the honour of France," as he called him: "Heartily weary of all the political changes which for the space of ten years have agitated France and made her so unhappy, I feel that the person of the Emperor

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is the only thing which binds me to the institutions which he has founded." The latter returned his affection, and on one occasion, when taking leave of him at Mayence in 1806, broke into sobs as he embraced him and his wife. The self-control of the man of the world and statesman impressed his more brutal genius; when he returned from Egypt he possessed knowledge of mankind, but not of individual Frenchmen, whom he had had no opportunity of observing, and Talleyrand's knowledge of persons supplied the deficiency. But the latter made only a very limited use of his influence in this respect. Thus Dupont de Nemours, who might have rendered great service in finance, remained forgotten in America, where he had been dragging out a miserable existence since Fructidor. Narbonne had been living in Paris since 1801, in straitened circumstances, and Talleyrand saw him continually at the house of the Countess Laval, with whom he lived. But it was not owing to his intervention that the Emperor, who afterwards showed such a marked preference for Narbonne, took him into his service in 1809. This apathy, which Talleyrand's friends experienced to their disadvantage, was a boon to his opponents. When Lucien left the Ministry of the Interior a year after Brumaire, he accused Talleyrand of perfidy because he had advised him to exchange his portfolio for an embassy. But the advice was the best that could have been given

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him, for the want of integrity of Lucien's administration and the indiscretions of his pen had made him impossible, and it was Fouché, not Talleyrand, who insisted on his retirement, although the latter knew exactly what sort of man he was, and had called him "un grand estafier." But there is nothing to show that, when his influence was at its height, he abused it for the purpose of injuring those whom he disliked, such as Maret and Sémonville, or those who, like Mollien, belonged to his opponents. Macdonald complained that by sending him to Copenhagen he had interrupted his career for eight years; and that he was on bad terms with Chaptal, the Minister of the Interior, is shown by the quotation in the Memoirs of Napoleon's verdict on Chaptal, that he was heavy, vain, and dull, and that he had only kept him in office to please Cambacérès,—which, by the way, was very unjust. Talleyrand knew that he was surrounded by opponents, if not by enemies, and insisted, in order to maintain his influence, on direct intercourse with the First Consul in every matter connected with his department. The latter's idea of a government was one in which all the threads were gathered into his hands; he treated even Ministers as executive officers. In later times Talleyrand's cause of complaint was that he was obliged, in order not to interrupt this personal intercourse, to follow the Emperor about everywhere under the most trying circumstances, and submit to

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all the fatigues and hardships of camp life and winter campaigns.

After assuming office his first task was the re-organisation of the staff. He obtained the grant of pensions for the old deserving *employés*, who had been in want since 1789, thus re-establishing the connection between the past and the present. Two excellent officials, d'Hauterive and Miot de Melito, were appointed to represent the interests of the Foreign Office in the section of the Council of State for the home service, and the staff of the office was henceforth in part recruited from among the auditors, who were trained in every branch of administration in close proximity to, and, so to speak, under the eye of, the chief of the state. Up to 1805, when their relations underwent a change, d'Hauterive was the Minister's right-hand man; he rose high in the favour of the First Consul and Emperor, and was strong enough, when necessary, to hold his own against both. His idea of departmental discipline was so strict, that he considered even the frequenting of cafés and restaurants as an offence against the dignity due to the office, and expected his subordinates to confine themselves to the family circle, and to be ready to place every moment of their time at the disposal of the government even out of office hours. This was the tradition of the office, and this was the idea of official duty in the days of Torcy and Vergennes. Henceforth a yearly account of the

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objects and results of the administration was to be rendered to the country: "Vous ne cacherez ni les fautes, ni les erreurs," wrote Bonaparte to Talleyrand. But this grand order was given in the year of the victory of Marengo; it ceased to be observed in more difficult times, and when one complication after another had generated a policy which was not calculated to bear the open light of day.

The first document in which the new head of the Foreign Office appealed to public opinion in Europe was the memorandum on the European situation at the close of the century addressed to the Consuls. It advocated peace and a system of alliances, strong enough to restore the balance of power in Europe, which eight years of ruin and revolution had destroyed. France was saddled with the responsibility for this state of things, whereas prudence enjoined that she of all others should leave no stone unturned to secure peace. A durable peace could only be obtained by carefully conducted negotiations.

All diplomatic intercourse with the British Cabinet had ceased since the meeting at Lille. France was still at war with Russia. Thugut proved more amenable, and consented to discuss matters with the antagonist whose armies were facing the Austrian troops and ready to renew the struggle in Italy and on the Rhine. But in spite of this Talleyrand addressed himself to Prussia in the first instance. Although

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the aggressive policy of the Directory had impaired the good relations between Paris and Berlin, the Prussian capital was still the central point from which French diplomacy could take stock of the situation and pick up threads which had been dropped, even if both governments had every reason to approach each other with reserve.

During the last few years Prussia had been alternately cajoled and played off against Austrian influence in the Empire, then allured by hopes of the leadership in North Germany and of acquisition of territory, and lastly duped, as at Rastatt, where no attention was paid to her demands. Even the great achievement of Hardenberg's diplomacy, the neutrality of North Germany, secured by the treaty of July 16th, 1796, was more than once in danger; as, for instance, in 1797, when the French government discussed the advisability of arbitrary measures against the Hanse towns, the idea being to force them to exclude the English flag, and, if they refused, to ruin their trade, in order to strike another blow at England. After Campo Formio the Directory had taken into consideration an invasion of Hanover, and Bonaparte himself, in a memorandum addressed to the Directory on the 23rd of February, 1798, had referred to the seizure of Hanover and Hamburg as desirable moves in the struggle against England. In April of the same year a report of Talleyrand's foreshadowed measures for closing the

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Elbe. Then the Egyptian expedition and the events of 1799 drove these schemes into the background. The victories won by the coalition made even the Berlin government pluck up courage to demand the cession of Prussian territory on the left bank of the Rhine and the independence of Holland from the French government. But before this request had been even considered, the French armies were victorious in Switzerland and in the Netherlands, and the only result of Prussia's representations was to confirm the conviction in Paris that "nothing would really rouse the Prussian Cabinet out of the apathy which had constituted the whole stock-in-trade of its policy for the last four years." "There is always the same inertia, the same reluctance to enter into any engagement which might by any possibility, at any period, however remote, lead to a conflict." The above remarks are quoted from Talleyrand's reports. Directly after his appointment, on the 28th of November, 1799, he reverted to his favourite scheme, which was often thwarted but never abandoned, and advocated the conclusion of separate treaties with the South German kingdoms as a counterpoise to Austrian influence. At the same time he expressed the hope that it might be feasible to form a confederation of the North German states with the same object against Prussia, and so hold in check both these ambitious Powers, whose quarrels were always at the expense of their weaker

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neighbours, and who would never make peace except on condition of their annihilation.

This determination, to confine Prussia's power in Germany within the narrowest possible limits, was quite compatible with his intention to avail himself of her intervention in the impending negotiations with the European powers. Just at that moment it had risen in value. An incident took place in Ancona, the Russian colours being removed from the ramparts by a subordinate Austrian officer, which made the Emperor Paul more embittered than ever against Austria, and induced him to take the initiative in approaching Prussia. Herr von Krüdener, a diplomatist who was in his confidence, was sent, at first on a secret mission, to the Court of Berlin; and he was followed shortly afterwards by Duroc, who was despatched by the First Consul, to announce, in accordance with etiquette, the news of a change of government in France to the King of Prussia. With the same object of making polite advances the *chargé d'affaires*, Otto, who had succeeded Sieyès, received another appointment, and General Beurnonville, who was considered an open enemy of Austria, was nominated ambassador in Berlin. The relations with Prussia having thus been replaced on a good footing, the First Consul addressed a communication to the King of England and another to the German Emperor, on the 26th of December, 1799, in which he called upon the two sovereigns, the

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first in solemn tones, as the head of a free people, and the second in warmer language, to join, before resuming a sanguinary struggle, in a loyal endeavour to bring about a durable and general peace.

In taking this step the First Consul invited the verdict of the two Cabinets on the *coup d'état* of Brumaire and on his own right to address them in the name of France. The response was not long in coming; they declined to recognise him, not even vouchsafing a direct answer to his letter, and identified him with the Revolution. Lord Grenville sketched the history of the war of conquest waged by the Jacobin propaganda, dwelling on the exactions, the injustice, and the ruin which had marked its path, and declared that England could not discern any change of principle in the altered language of the new chief of the state, and that the restoration of the Bourbons could alone guarantee this. England, he said, had no wish to dictate any particular form of government to the French, but she would continue the struggle until adequate security was given for the safety of herself and her allies, and for the preservation of social order in Europe. Thugut enquired in a milder tone what guarantees were forthcoming for the future observance by France of the principles of international law.

England's decision has been severely censured even by Englishmen both at the time and in our own day. Fox argued ironically that according to Grenville's

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ideas the new régime would have to be opposed until it received an accession of strength. The English Cabinet, which consisted of twelve members, was split into four parties, and it was Windham who was the mouthpiece of Burke's irreconcilable policy, not Pitt, who, then as ever, was in favour of peace. Even now Lord Rosebery, Pitt's latest biographer, calls Lord Grenville's note "a supercilious and arrogant lecture," and an interference with the right of the French to control their own destiny. Napoleon himself, however, has undertaken the justification of the verdict of his opponents. Every reason which made him indispensable to France, he, the great heir of the Revolution, alone possessing the power to curb it, and bring order out of chaos, and every consideration which marked him out as the only man who could terminate the revolutionary movement at home, combined to force him to extend it abroad, and so accomplish the task, the aim and end of which was the Empire of the West and the supremacy of the Latin race. It is true that neither Danton, nor Merlin, nor Dubois-Crancé had invented it; they only continued in their own way the tradition of the Monarchy, the policy of Richelieu and of Louis XIV., but with this all-important distinction, that the Monarchy could give up foreign conquest and yet remain what it had been before. The precursors of Bonaparte and Bonaparte himself had no such alternative. His only title to rule was

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victory. At the moment when he made overtures of peace to London and Vienna this title was invalidated, Italy having been lost by the blunders of the Directory, and his own dubious successes having failed to secure Egypt. Besides this there was another and not less cogent reason. The French treasury was empty, and no administrative conjuring could alter the fact that, to use the emphatic words of the Finance Minister Gaudin, "finance had ceased to exist in France." When Bonaparte crossed the Alps for the first time, he applied to the Directory for 500,000 francs, and received 24,000 instead. In the course of his victorious campaign he not only fed and paid his army, but also remitted 60 millions, partly to Paris, and partly to the army of the Rhine. Gaudin had found 167,000 francs in the treasury, the remains of a sum of 300,000 francs borrowed the day before. The troops had not been paid, and official salaries were ten months in arrear. The requisitions for the army were covered by orders, not only on the taxes in arrears, but also on those about to fall due; moreover, these taxes were to a great extent already mortgaged to contractors. In addition to this, in the western Departments, all taxation was swallowed up by the civil war, and in 1799 the direct receipts in the whole country showed a falling off of 409 millions, while the budgets exhibited an enormous deficit every year. This desperate situation had brought the Directory down to framing its budgets

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for a period of ten days, and Gaudin thought himself lucky when he managed to prolong it to four weeks in the first year of his administration. This incredible state of things, which he compares to sitting on a volcano, would of itself have sufficed to bring about a warlike solution. At all events, neither the First Consul nor his Minister for Foreign Affairs was disappointed by England's rejection of their proposals. Even Talleyrand openly stated that things had taken a happy turn on this occasion. "C'est maintenant aux succès de la guerre à ranimer le département de la paix," he wrote to Bonaparte. Lord Grenville's note was answered with the question, what would England say to a proposal to undo the Revolution of 1688 and restore the Stuarts? Thugut was requested to negotiate on the basis of Campo Formio, which, after the Austrian successes, was equivalent to a declaration of war.

In the meanwhile the government had to live. Talleyrand received notes and instructions nearly every day, with the object of relieving the financial distress. Now it was Flushing which was to be ceded to the Dutch Republic for ten to fifteen millions, at another time Hamburg which, by the mediation of the same Republic, was to be guaranteed by France against Prussian designs of annexation, if its Senate would agree to pay ten or, at all events, not less than six millions. The First Consul considered these negotia-

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tions of more importance than those with London and Vienna, for the issue of the next campaign depended on them. He was not less eager in urging the resumption of negotiations with Portugal. If she could be induced to pay eight to nine millions, that would in all probability ensure the re-conquest of Italy, which depended chiefly on providing teams for the artillery, for which ten thousand horses were required. Money meant above all things battalions and batteries; as usual, French diplomacy was to lay the Continent under contribution, but at the same time occupy the various cabinets with proposals and negotiations, which led to nothing but helped to gain time. Talleyrand's exchange of notes with Thugut, which lasted for five months, had no other object. In May, when the French armies were marching, the one on Bavaria and the other over the Alps, and Bonaparte had left Paris to take the command in Italy, he wrote to his Minister from Lausanne, directing him not to break off negotiations with Thugut, but to continue them by means of Lavalette, the French *chargé d'affaires* in Dresden. "His principal task," wrote the First Consul, "must be to express a desire for peace, to listen to all that is said to him, to hint that we shall have no difficulty in coming to an understanding with Rome, Sardinia, and Switzerland, to say that the treaty of Campo Formio must be carried out, but that modifications of it are admissible. Citizen Lavalette must

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put nothing down in writing, bind himself to nothing, adopt a thoroughly conciliatory attitude, and reply to all proposals made on behalf of Austria that he will lose no time in submitting them to his government. All this will help to settle the preliminaries." One of the last communications which Talleyrand received from Bonaparte before Marengo, dated from Novara on the 1st of June, betrays his annoyance with Prussia. Beurnonville rightly asserted that she would never be of any use to France, and pointed out that the impending collapse of the Turkish Empire was producing an identity of interests between France and Russia.

A similar train of thought runs through the fifty-two notes and bulletins by means of which Talleyrand kept the First Consul informed of the diplomatic situation during the latter's absence in Italy, which lasted barely two months, from the 6th of May to the 3rd of July. Chance and haste have prevented these documents from disappearing and probably being destroyed, with all the letters addressed to Napoleon in the imperial archives, by Talleyrand's order in April 1814. He was to have accompanied the First Consul, but a serious illness detained him in Paris, and his intention to follow him later on was not carried out. But he sent him reports every other day, the principal interest of which is that they prove how completely paralysed the diplomatic action of France would have been without the prestige of the victories on the

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Danube and on the Po. Sémonville wrote from Holland that the first news of a defeat would be the signal for revolt in every part of the country and for mutiny of the troops, that all parties were on bad terms with France, and that a change of *personnel* would probably involve complete disorganisation, as there were no partisans of the French alliance in Holland. It was not till after Marengo that they condescended to furnish the seven thousand men demanded by Bonaparte. Spain, whose fleet had been blockaded off Brest since August 1799, betrayed an inclination to abandon her submissive attitude, and lend an ear to English overtures. The French government was obliged to take advantage of the circumstance that letters were opened in the Spanish post-office, to address flattering remarks to the Queen in the despatches to the ambassador, Alquier, and followed up the impression so produced by presents of French millinery. A letter is extant signed by Talleyrand and addressed to the "Citoyenne Minette," who took boxes packed with dresses to Madrid, dealing with her and her mission in a thoroughly serious spirit. In a report on the general European situation, dated the 21st of June, the Minister expresses the opinion that Spain needed peace more than all the other Powers, because none was affected by such a disproportion between engagements and the ability to carry them out, as existed in her case. As regards Prussia,

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Bonaparte and Talleyrand warned each other of the danger of listening to the vague assurances of Haugwitz or of placing any reliance on his "stérile fécondité." Talleyrand even proposed to dispense with the dilatory untrustworthy offices of Prussia, and to enter into direct relations with Russia, as it would be easier to influence the Court of Berlin through the Tsar than the latter through Berlin.

The difficulty was to find a go-between who would be *persona grata* to the Tsar. Talleyrand thought of his old friend Choiseul-Gouffier, who had resided in St. Petersburg for a long time, and then of another *émigré*, Caraman. But Choiseul was not in favour with Paul, and Caraman was devoted to the interests of Louis XVIII., although Talleyrand was not aware of it. Some other expedient had to be found. Bourgoing, the French agent in Hamburg, endeavoured, by means of his Russian colleague Muravieff, to get a letter from Talleyrand into the hands of Panin, the Emperor's favourite, conveying the intention of the First Consul to send six thousand Russian prisoners back to their own country with all military honours. But Muravieff was frightened by the order of the Tsar prohibiting all intercourse with the official diplomatists of France on pain of instant dismissal, and Talleyrand's letter finally reached its destination by means of subordinate agents. At the same time a Russian prisoner-of-war, the officer Sergejeff, was de-

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spatched to St. Petersburg with a duplicate of it to which was added a postscript of far greater importance than the letter itself. Malta, which was blockaded by the English and defended by a weak French garrison, was on the point of surrendering. In 1798 Paul had procured his own nomination as Grand Master of the Order of St. John, which was quite dependent on him for support, and in process of dissolution. The Maltese were his favourite plaything, the chivalrous element in his crusade against the Revolution, and the possession of the island "sa folie," as Haugwitz says, for which he would have given the half of his empire. The First Consul now offered him the island, thereby gaining the advantage of either depriving the English of it or embroiling them with their northern ally.

Whether the move would succeed seemed at first doubtful. The Tsar made no reply to the communications of the French government, or to the semi-official flatteries of the French Press, which thanked him among other things for having "thwarted the mad schemes of the Directory." Talleyrand was obliged as before to have recourse to Berlin for information about Russia. England is hardly mentioned in his reports at this time. They refer to the intrigues of English agents in Switzerland, in Italy, and at the South German courts, and to the plan for provoking an insurrection in Provence; he also points out on one

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occasion that no concessions could be expected from England, but does not expatiate further on the situation, which for the time seemed to be beyond the range of diplomatic influence. At this point the news of Marengo arrived and made him exclaim: "Quel début et quel dénouement! La postérité pourra-t-elle croire aux prodiges de cette campagne? Sous quels auspices votre retour nous est promis! Il n'y a point eu d'empire qui ne fut fondé sur le merveilleux, et ici le merveilleux est la vérité."

Talleyrand was among those who, like Fouché, Roederer, and many others, viewed the First Consul's decision to take the command in Italy with anxiety. The question, What was to become of France if he did not come back? was discussed quite openly, and by Bonaparte as much as by any one else. To Roederer, who even at this early stage dwelt on the necessity of having a direct heir, he said that the succession of one of his brothers was the worst thing that could happen, that Moreau had no friends, and that Carnot was probably best fitted to be chief of the state. When the same question was discussed in Talleyrand's presence by Sieyès, Fouché, Carnot, and La Fayette, the choice lay between the two last-named. A report was circulated in Paris that in crossing the St. Bernard the First Consul had been in danger of being cut down by an Austrian detachment, whereupon Talleyrand begged him to take care of himself, adding that for a

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long time to come his name was the only guarantee for the safety of the state. Lucien's Memoirs are altogether wrong in speaking of "a conspiracy of Auteuil," where Talleyrand then lived, at this juncture. If it was not in his character to leave anything to chance, it was just as little his interest to replace Bonaparte by La Fayette.

In the night of July 2nd-3rd the First Consul returned to Paris, surrounded by a halo of prestige from the battlefield of Marengo, the lustre of which was undimmed by the successes of Moreau in South Germany and the claim of Kellermann and the dead Desaix to the victory of June 14th. The object of the campaign had been attained. Millions poured into the treasury from Germany and Italy. Beyond the Alps Austria was deprived of the result of her successes in 1799, and forced to sign the convention of June 15th, which fixed the Mincio as her preliminary frontier. Negotiations for peace could now be resumed, and immediately after the victory the First Consul, in a long letter to the Emperor Francis, written "from the battlefield," which was directed much more against English than Austrian policy, reverted to peace on the basis of Campo Formio, with a better right than he had done six months previously. The bearer of the letter was General Count Joseph St. Julien, who arrived in Paris with the reply of his Sovereign a few weeks later, on the

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21st of July, having been too late to catch the First Consul in Lombardy. The Emperor announced his readiness to accept a general truce, but once more declined to be party to a treaty the stipulations of which would plunge Europe into fresh agitation. He added that he was prepared to conclude a durable peace on a different basis, and endeavour to bring it into harmony with the engagements which he had been obliged to enter into since the resumption of hostilities. This last significant passage referred to an agreement with England, which had been signed in Vienna by Thugut and Lord Minto on the 20th of June, after a long delay and in ignorance of the result of the battle of Marengo. Austria was to receive a subsidy of two-and-a-half millions sterling, and in return promised not to conclude a separate treaty of peace with France before the end of February.

Nothing could have come more amiss to the First Consul. His object was, and could not help being, to obtain peace at once, as his own individual achievement and as the result of the battle of Marengo. It was with this end in view that he had written the, as he himself said, "somewhat original" letter to the Emperor Francis. He now made Talleyrand take part in a very unworthy piece of intrigue. St. Julien was not a diplomatist by profession. His instructions were to propose a serviceable basis for the future public

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negotiations, and so prevent public expectation from being once more disappointed by a premature and useless commencement of them. This was the extent of his powers. In spite of this, a week after his arrival in Paris, he had signed preliminaries binding the Emperor to close the ports of his empire against his English allies, and so contradicting the contents of his own letter, Campo Formio being again taken as the basis of the understanding and the frontier of the Rhine being abandoned.

St. Julien had certainly entertained doubts as to whether he was justified in taking a step of this importance. But Talleyrand allayed them by assuring him that, in his place, and as the confidant of his sovereign, he would act in precisely the same manner; fresh scruples on the part of the General were met by the threat that, if he refused to sign, hostilities would be resumed forthwith; whereupon St. Julien hesitated no longer, but left for Vienna with the treaty in his pocket and accompanied by Duroc. The First Consul's adjutant was ordered amongst other things to insist on a speedy conclusion of the definite treaty. But he did not get beyond the Austrian outposts, where passports for the onward journey to Vienna were refused him. In the meanwhile these proceedings were to be kept a profound secret in Paris. But St. Julien had let the cat out of the bag; while Talleyrand denied that any agreement had been signed, Sainte-Foy and

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Madame Grand admitted to the Prussian ambassador: "Il ne saurait convenir de rien avec vous. Le premier Consul, qui a tout fait et tout rédigé, lui a prescrit le secret, mais il n'en est pas moins vrai que lui et St. Julien ont signé les préliminaires à La Malmaison le 30, à une heure du matin." It has been urged in explanation of St. Julien's conduct, which threw Thugut's whole policy to the winds, and which the latter stigmatised in his first panic as "a mad step, unprecedented in the history of the world," that the Emperor Francis was more eager for the speedy conclusion of peace than his Minister, and that St. Julien knew this. Thugut's letters certainly show that he awaited the Emperor's decision with great anxiety. But it was given in accordance with his own views. St. Julien was disavowed and sent to a fortress, the separate treaty was rejected and a congress proposed in its stead, and the English ambassador in Vienna was at once informed of what had taken place, so as at all events to frustrate the intention of the French to represent the event as a breach of faith with England. The document conveying the decision, which was dated the 11th of August and addressed to Talleyrand, reached Duroc in good time, who thus returned with a complete diplomatic defeat instead of the hoped-for success. "J'ai bien su," remarked the First Consul to Roederer a few weeks afterwards, "que les pouvoirs de M. de St. Julien n'étaient point en règle, quand j'ai ratifié

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les préliminaires de paix signés par lui. Mais j'étais bien aise de mettre l'Empereur dans le tort aux yeux de l' Europe, et cela m'a réussi."

Talleyrand probably did not take such an optimist view. In his answer to Thugut he had to maintain the fiction that St. Julien had abused his confidence; but he admitted to the Council of State that the Austrian envoy's powers were insufficient, and that therefore there was no ground for making the matter the subject of a public complaint or the point of departure for a fresh rupture. It would be better, he added, to agree to Austria's proposals, and, without discontinuing hostilities, consider what should be the new basis of peace. The Emperor Francis had proposed Lunéville as the place of meeting for the new congress; Count Cobenzl, the negotiator of Campo Formio, arrived there on the 24th of October, and then accepted an invitation of the First Consul to spend a few days in Paris. He was the guest of Talleyrand, who had not seen him since they met at Strasburg, and who relates in his Memoirs how Bonaparte, who in 1797 had treated with Cobenzl on the footing of complete equality, now so contrived matters that at the first audience, which was given late in the evening, there was no chair forthcoming for the Imperial ambassador to take a seat beside him. In their exchange of views also such marked differences manifested themselves that Cobenzl's speedy return to Lunéville seemed desirable from every

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point of view. Joseph Bonaparte was to conduct the negotiations there. A few weeks before, on the 3rd of October, he had signed the first peace of the Consulate, the treaty with the United States, as after the events of 1798 it seemed unadvisable to conclude it through Talleyrand. It was not without some opposition on the part of the Minister that Joseph managed to get this treaty named after the place where it was signed, his country-seat Morfontaine. A more difficult task awaited him at Lunéville, where Cobenzl made demands out of all keeping with the military situation, which had changed at all points to the disadvantage of Austria, the great bone of contention now being that France insisted on a separate peace with Austria, and the latter refused to act independently of England. At the end of November the First Consul met Cobenzl's obstinate diplomatic resistance with the resumption of hostilities. Moreau's victory at Hohenlinden achieved what Marengo had failed to accomplish, and Austria agreed to cede Italian territory which Brune's advance to the Adige had already placed in her opponent's hands.

In the meanwhile Talleyrand's despatches to Joseph in Lunéville betrayed a bitterness which was generally foreign to him. The episode with St. Julien had left its sting. Cobenzl felt the effect of it in the manner in which the conqueror's terms were dictated to him after the successes of the two campaigns.

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Talleyrand carried out the First Consul's orders by declaring that all further discussion was inadmissible. The conditions of Campo Formio were revived; the Adige became Austria's boundary in Italy, and the valley of the Rhine France's German frontier. On the 9th of January Talleyrand wrote to Joseph that Piedmont should be restored to the King of Sardinia, to preserve the balance of power in Europe, and that there was no objection to the re-instatement of the Grand Duke of Tuscany. On the 20th of January he had to countermand his instructions on the last point, for Bonaparte, in order to gain over the Queen of Spain, had made the preliminary secret treaty of San Ildefonso on the 1st of October, which promised her nephew and son-in-law at Parma the title of king, and a larger territory in the shape of Tuscany or the Legations, in return for which Spain restored Louisiana to France and left her Parma and Elba. Since Marengo Godoy had again become Minister, and Tuscany was now finally fixed on at Lunéville as an indemnity for the Duke of Parma, Modena, and afterwards the Legations, being added to Cisalpina. Talleyrand reiterated the views which he had expressed in 1798 by pointing out that the necessity for finding compensation for Modena and Tuscany in Germany would be the most effectual way of making Austria recognise the principle of the secularisations. The ecclesiastical states, he remarked, should share in the

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losses sustained by the Empire, and only the hereditary princes should obtain an indemnity.

On the 9th of February the peace was signed which destroyed Thugut's policy and closed his official career. On the 7th of March it was ratified by the Empire. After a contest lasting for nearly ten years Austria was isolated, driven out of Lombardy, and deprived of her position in Italy and of all hopes of aggrandisement in South Germany. She had obtained Venice, given up the Rhine frontier, and lost the Netherlands: in the traditional struggle for supremacy in central Europe she had succumbed to her French adversary. The result, great as it was, did not absorb the activity of French diplomacy. While negotiations were proceeding with Austria, their effect was watched in Berlin and St. Petersburg. As regards the Tsar, the problem was complicated by the eccentricity of his character. At this moment he was just as angry with England as with Austria, for England called on him to continue the war, but took no steps to obtain the exchange of the Russians, who were taken prisoners at Zurich, and neglected his troops, which, after the defeat in Holland, were quartered in Jersey and Guernsey, and suffered great privations there during the winter. The rupture became complete when Malta fell into the hands of the English on the 5th of September, and the latter refused to comply with the Tsar's demand to surrender the island, which was so important both from a

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strategical and commercial point of view. His mind moved by leaps and bounds, and all calmer feelings were merged in a resolve to revenge himself on his faithless allies. The treaty of alliance between Prussia and Russia of 1792 had been renewed with certain modifications on the 28th of July, shortly after Marengo. The original plan of a confederation of the northern Powers, England included, against France, was now transformed into a league of armed neutrality between Russia, Prussia, Sweden, and afterwards Denmark, with the object of protecting the neutral flags against England's tyrannical interpretation of maritime law; the British ambassador was requested to leave St. Petersburg, English vessels in Russian ports were seized, and at the end of the year Russia, Sweden, and Denmark signed a convention binding themselves to take the offensive against England in the following spring. The deeper his hatred of England, the more intense was his sudden admiration for the conqueror of Brumaire. The change which had long been quietly preparing found its first open expression in the mission of General Sprengtporten to Paris, to take charge of the six thousand Russian prisoners. Fourteen days later, on the 30th of December, a friendly letter of Paul's announced the despatch of a Russian plenipotentiary as desired by the First Consul, and at the same time the Tsar intimated to the government in Berlin, which was inclined to raise difficulties, that he

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agreed to the cession of the left bank of the Rhine and to indemnifying the temporal states of the Empire by secularisations. Since the 3rd of October there had existed an understanding between Beurnonville and Krüdener, which became more and more unaffected by Prussian influence. The new ambassador, the Marquis Luchesini, who had replaced Sandoz-Rollin, now used-up, in Paris since the end of October, was negotiating with Talleyrand as to Prussia's mediation between Russia and France when the situation had already undergone a complete change. After the battle of Hohenlinden and Paul's overtures to the First Consul the French Minister changed his tone, and declared that the impending peace with the Tsar would determine the attitude of France towards Prussia.

These negotiations were in active progress when the First Consul escaped by a mere chance from the infernal machine on the evening of December 24th. Fouché, now admirably served by Barère, who had turned police-spy, discovered that the real authors of the crime were the Royalists; but being attacked on all sides and pressed to take this course by the First Consul, he consented to the deportation of one hundred and thirty Terrorists. "Déporter des hommes à l'occasion d'un crime qui leur est étranger, me paraît le comble de l'iniquité," said Fouché's violent opponent Roederer to Réal, when the latter told him on the 30th of December that the Chouans were the real culprits.

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"Fouché fera toujours ses listes," was the reply, "parce que ce sont des hommes mauvais par eux-mêmes." Three days before this Talleyrand had been consulted by the First Consul in presence of the Council of State on the point whether the sentence should be carried out by means of a special law or by the direct action of the executive. Roederer states that Talleyrand answered as follows: "Je pense que votre pouvoir suffit pour agir et que vous devez en user. Je pense que le gouvernement doit montrer qu'il sait se défendre; cela est nécessaire au dedans et au dehors. Les négociations ont été interrompues vingt jours, à cause de l'affaire de Ceracchi." According to Miot de Mélito Talleyrand's reply was couched in more laconic style: "À quoi bon avoir un Sénat, si ce n'est pour s'en servir?" At all events, the point was decided in accordance with the second view, the legal dictatorship being conferred on the Senate, which for the first time ordered deportation by means of a senatus-consultum. The First Consul admitted openly that he struck at the Terrorists not because of the *attentat*, which they did not commit, but on account of the crimes of the Terror, the 2nd of September, the 31st of May, and the conspiracy of Babeuf. They met with no compassion and deserved none; but the reign of arbitrary power had commenced; the sentence was directed not against the crime, but against persons who were thought capable

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of committing it. On the 9th of January Ceracchi, Arena, Topino-Lebrun, and Domerville were executed for an alleged attempt on the life of the First Consul. Five other conspirators, whose guilt was not proved by more satisfactory evidence, met with a similar fate, whereupon two of the real authors of the crime of the 24th of December, the Royalists Carbon and Saint-Régent, were actually discovered.

Talleyrand was implicated in these arbitrary proceedings, which condemned innocent men to death, and justified his attitude by the necessity of maintaining the authority of the government in the face of foreign powers. This practical object was attained. The Tsar, who did not do things by halves, ordered Louis XVIII., who was living under his protection and at his expense at Mittau, to leave Russian territory. While the exile and his suite were wandering from place to place along the high roads amid the snows of winter, the Russian envoy Kalitscheff was received with royal honours in Paris at the end of February, and brought instructions to make the conclusion of peace conditional on the cession of Malta to the knights of the Order of St. John, and on the independence of Naples and Sardinia, Bavaria and Wurtemberg. The First Consul was ready to comply with these demands. Although the incorporation of Piedmont into France had already been decided on, he contented himself with claiming Savoy and

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consenting to the peace with Naples, which was signed on the 18th of March, on condition that the Neapolitan ports should be closed to the Dutch. France, Russia, and Prussia were to come to an understanding as to compensations in Germany. At the same time Prussia's troops closed the mouths of the Elbe and Weser. In addition to this, the Tsar indulged in the idea of advancing on India by way of Khiva and Herat, in order to punish the English in that part of the world for the breach of faith which had deprived him of Malta.

These combinations, which in many respects were a prelude to those at Tilsit, were destined to have an abrupt termination. Paul's last political act was the ultimatum to Prussia to occupy Hanover or be prepared for a Russian attack. It was this despatch which arrived in Berlin with Pahlen's postscript : "Sa Majesté est indisposée aujourd'hui. Cela pourrait avoir des suites." It was dated the 23rd of March, the day of his death, and led to the advance of Prussian troops into Hanover, to which the King, who had entirely different schemes in view, gave his consent with reluctance. The first pronouncement of the new Tsar Alexander was in favour of peace with France, but also of peace with England; and a few weeks later the coalition created out of such heterogeneous elements fell to pieces. The only tears which were shed for Catherine's ill-fated son are said to have come from

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Bonaparte, when he heard of the ghastly deed by which Russia once more tempered her despotism. Talleyrand took the matter more coolly, and received the official intimation, that Paul had died of apoplexy like his father, with the remark that it seemed advisable to invent a new disease in Russia.

END OF VOL. I.

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