

## CHAPTER VI.

The Austrian Chancellor of State, Prince Metternich.

NEVER has there been a man more detested and dreaded than Metternich. From the Baltic to the Pyrenees, from the boundaries of Turkey to the borders of Holland, there is but one voice heard respecting this Minister—that of execration. As he was the chief instrument in new modelling the present form of Europe, the author and the mainspring of the Holy Alliance, that embryo of great events, his character and policy deserve our impartial investigation. Metternich is descended from one of the ancient but impoverished German families, which gave to this country their spiritual princes. A subtle management of affairs at the Congress of Rastadt, where he repre-

sented the Counts of Westphalia, brought him under the notice of the Emperor of Austria; and he entered his service as Ambassador to the Court of Dresden. In the year 1806, he was appointed Ambassador to the French Court. Napoleon had just at this time relaxed from his rigour against the ancient French nobility, and they gathered round him in considerable numbers. With a free passport to the coteries of these families, from which, of course, all the illegitimate members of the new created nobility were excluded, Metternich glided with that insinuating suavity and graceful demeanour, for which he is so justly celebrated, not only into the secrets and the *chronique scandaleuse* of the French Court, but even into the favour of the leading characters, and of Napoleon himself. It was here he imbibed that deep knowledge of Napoleon's character, and penetrated those secrets which enabled him to perform, a few years afterwards, the political and diplomatical dramas at Dresden and Prague. In 1810, he was appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs, in the place of Count Sladion. How he succeeded to direct the attention of Napoleon to the Princess Maria Louisa; how Prince Schwartzenberg, his successor, managed this busi-

ness ; and how it finally ended ; the wise reader will have a key to, in what has been said. Metternich himself disposed the princess to accept of Napoleon's offer, and conducted her to Paris. Several hints respecting a reward for his services were not understood by Napoleon. We know Metternich's character, and how he made up for the disappointment at a subsequent more favourable opportunity.

This failure, however, contributed not a little to facilitate the insinuations of the Russian Autocrat, to whom he was attached since 1806, from a certain similarity of character, such as is consistent with an Autocrat and a courtier. The deep secrecy in which Metternich involved the plans of Austria, during the French campaign of Russia, and even during the Congress at Prague, is considered as the *chef-d'œuvre* of his diplomatic genius. Metternich knew the citizen-like notions of Napoleon respecting his matrimony with Maria Louisa, and it was not a great matter of difficulty to keep him, during the Congress at Dresden, the invasion, and the succeeding armistice, and the Congress at Prague, in suspense,—till the Austrian armies were in array, and the mask could safely be thrown off. Napo-

leon's pride and unbridled selfishness, which made it impossible for him to see with other eyes than his own, contributed more to his deception and subsequent ruin, than even Metternich himself. It was this offended pride which made him recall his ambassador, Count Narbonne, the only one who penetrated the designs of Metternich. The substitution was most unfortunate:—the proud, impetuous Caulincourt, a slave to his master, and blind to every thing which was going on in Prague, except horses. Fate retributed fully this deception. Metternich became the instrument of Alexander; and if he was not his dupe, he was something still worse. It was he, through whom the Russian Autocrat prevailed upon Schwartzemberg to risk the advance towards Paris, and thus to terminate the war with a single blow. Alexander managed the parties in Paris so well, that the news of the taking of this capital, and the dethronement of Napoleon, arrived at the same time at the head-quarters of the Austrian Empire.

When Metternich showed the plan of the Holy Alliance to P—— W——y, the latter replied, “*Mais, mon Prince, cela offensera.*” “*Des fantaisies !*” was the answer of Metternich.



In this point, however, Metternich is mistaken: he certainly knows sovereigns and courtiers better than any man living, but not the people; and in the same manner as Napoleon ruined himself from want of proper knowledge of the legitimate characters and their hangers-on, so the Holy Alliance and Metternich's consequent adherence to its principles, has done Austria more harm, than all the perfidy of this minister has done good.

Metternich's exterior is graceful, though not without a sort of effeminacy. A broad forehead, a fine nose, blue well-formed eyes, an agreeable mouth, which has always a smile at his command, with a well-shaped figure, are the outlines of the Austrian prime-minister. No man turns these gifts to better advantage. With a grace, a *sans gêne*, not in the least incumbered by any of those drawbacks, religion, morality, or principle,—he will entertain a circle of fifty and more persons in the most charming manner,—enter into<sup>d</sup> dissipation and the follies of his equals and superiors: but, at the same time, while administering to the pleasures and vices of others, will form his schemes on their frailties and hobby-horses. In the art of penetrating the weak sides of his superiors, and,

what is still more, of making himself necessary to their frailties, he is absolutely a master. It was in the midst of revelry, during the Congress at Vienna, that the R—n E——r grew tired of these fastidious bacchanalia. The Prime Minister was, as may be thought, embarrassed not a little. It might have deprived him of A——r's presence,—of all the fruits of his fine-spun combinations. Intimately acquainted with the amiable weak side of his new patron, he perceived that then a stimulating *divertisement* would do very well. The gorgeous tournaments, balls, and dinners, were all at once superseded by *petites soirées* given by Metternich, at which the beautiful P——p of S——g, a born P——ss de Cl——g, was the queen. The family of the princess, however, saw the affair in another light, and the contrivance failed of success. With the same ingenuity as she was drawn into these *petites familiarités*, she extricated herself, and withdrew from Vienna to F——g. A——r followed: and the fair fugitive was once more compelled to fly before the would-be conqueror. Metternich availed himself in the interim of the time and tide; and it was principally owing to the transcendent charms of this talisman, which drew A——r to

the subsequent tedious Congresses at Trappau and Laybach. 16

Austria is, no doubt, indebted to Metternich and his stratagems for its aggrandisement and its geographical *arrondissement*. Venice, Milan, and, above all, the Tyrol, Salzbourg, and the territory which he prevailed on Bavaria, in the most specious terms, to return, are important acquisitions. This empire constitutes now a compact body of kingdoms and provinces, with more than thirty millions of inhabitants, and a considerable sea-coast;—a monarchy which, if its interests were properly understood and managed, might prove a match against the most powerful on the Continent of Europe. Why the same minister has suffered, nay contributed, to lay Austria at the mercy of Russia, and put it in the power of the latter to bring her armies, after a successful battle, before the gates of Vienna, and to separate the empire into two parts, it would be difficult to explain unless we refer to note (12).

The position of this empire becomes, with respect to Russia, indeed, every day more and more critical. The latter government has, since the

times of Catherine I., availed itself of the religious ties which exist between the Russians and the Turkish provinces, Moldavia, Wallachia, Servia, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Croatia, and Dalmatia, to detach them gradually from the Ottoman Porte. They are now almost openly governed by Russian Consuls; the crescent is but a shadow there, and the natives are in fact more Russian than Turkish subjects. Sooner or later these provinces will be annexed to the Russian colossus, and form with Greece, the natural allies of Russia, a front which chains Austria, faces the whole of Europe, and commands the Mediterranean. There is no doubt as to what would then become of Hungary, (<sup>13</sup>) Transylvania, and the Austrian Croatia and Dalmatia.

The Hungarians themselves, or, as they are called, the Haggares, are the thirteenth tribe of the Finnish nation, twelve smaller tribes of which reside in Russia. More than four millions of Hungarians are of the Greek confession. Indifferent as they already are to the House of Austria, they would be, in a short time, drawn over to the Russian interest, and the fate of this kingdom, and of Austria itself, could be no longer doubtful: they would be joined to the Russian Empire. To



mend his policy, Metternich favours the Turks, and takes a lively interest in their present new modelling—during the lifetime of Alexander in a clandestine, and since his death, in an open way, by demonstrations and armies sent to Poland.

That the Austrian nations desire their constitutions as much as any other people, no person will dispute, from what we see going on in Hungary, Bohemia, Italy, and the Tyrol. But, besides that constitutions are an utter abhorrence to Metternich and his master, these people want their old constitutions. Bohemia wants that granted by Rudolph II.; Hungary would disdain to hear of any other constitution than its own; the Tyrol desires its monarchs to deliver to them their coronation oath, sitting on the Ducal Stone in a field near Innspruck, just as their counts did in the twelfth century; Venice sighs after its Doge; Milan after its Dukes. To satisfy and to manage, at the same time, so many different bodies and interests, would require more pliability than even Metternich is master of. The easiest and the shortest way seemed to him that of precluding infection, and, if possible, of destroying bad examples. The King of Naples accordingly is drawn from his ca-

pital, and Naples and Piedmont are overrun with Austrian soldiers, and the French sent to Spain. From the same reason, the constitutions of Germany are new modelled, so as to make them harmless playthings, and inoffensive to their neighbours, the Bohemians and Moravians.

The manner in which Metternich carries his measures into effect, is certainly unique. To a perfect knowledge of all the leading characters with whom he has to deal, he unites an acuteness in selecting his instruments, not less astonishing. He has indeed collected a living gallery of Metternichians. His ambassadors are a sufficient proof of this fact. Like an immense spider, he has woven his net over the whole of Europe; has his spies in every capital; is in Portugal with the Miguelites; in Spain, France, and Italy, with the aristocrats and priests; and in Constantinople with the Sultan, hand and glove: thus wielding or rather resisting the destinies of Europe more than any other person. As a diplomatist, and as a political intriguer, we may be allowed to say, he stands unrivalled: but there his power ends. Where something more than shifting and intriguing is necessary, his genius fails him. As a statesman,—if we call by this name a man who

consults the true interests of his prince and of his country, and acts on a great plan,—he is very indifferent.

We shall forbear long inquiry as to the best course to be pursued with respect to Austria, and willingly allow that this empire and its nations are not yet ripe for a constitution. A constitution, whether extorted by the force of arms from a weak prince, or whether the free gift of a sovereign, will sleep, and not be properly enjoyed by the nation until the materials for its proper use are ready prepared in it:—a proportionate division of property and intellectual light. England only made a constant use of its excellent charter, when the feudal power of its barons was broken, property more equally divided, and the nation enlightened. France follows in the same footsteps. Germany has light, but the steps which in Prussia have been taken during the administration of Baron Stein, are again in a retrograde movement. The rest of Germany consists of a collection of vast manors belonging to lords, who are called kings and princes; their subjects are little better than tenants. The Austrian empire presents but immense domains of the nobility, and small parcels of land of the peasan-

try. There is no connecting link between these two extremes of wealth and information, and of poverty and darkness, in a third middle state. A great statesman, such a one as Chatham, Pitt, Sully, Colberg, or Stein, would have sold the immense domains of the *crown, of the fund of public worship, of the studies, and of the different corporations* to the nation, and thus have created a third order, and the materials for a steady and moral futurity. They would have promoted, at the same time, rational information. The former ministers of France would certainly have pursued a third course, that of a paternal government, an economical retrenchment of the public expenses, re-establishment of order in the finances, strict justice towards the people, a religious adherence to promises and to public faith, and a successive and gradual improvement. They would have proceeded on the road which Francis pursued, and successfully pursued till 1811. This would, perhaps, have been the course most suitable to the present interest of this vast collection of provinces.

Metternich chooses according to his character, stemming the torrent by moral degradation. The consequences are, universal detestation of Aus-



tria among the nations of Europe, and a shyness and silent hostility, even on the part of other courts, to associate with a policy so absolutely devoid of honour and principle. Metternich now stands alone and deserted, with his policy supported only by his armies, and his spies, and his confederates.

Dazzling as Austria's power and policy may appear in foreign countries, an observing traveller, not entirely excluded from the higher circles, will soon find out that Austria is nearer a crisis than, perhaps, any other country. There will not be a simultaneous rise, or a preconcerted plan, to assert popular rights by force of arms; the provinces are too closely watched, and even too much opposed to each other. The Bohemians would not hesitate to march against the Hungarians, the Poles against the Italians, and the Austrians against all of them, even in the present time. But just such a minister, with his withering system, destroying faith, honour, and principle, squandering the treasures of the nation, and crippling the resources of the German hereditary dominions, was destined to pave the road to that very emancipation, which spreads more and

more throughout Europe:—at a time when the proud Hungarians begin to be tired of farther encroachments, and to be ashamed of a policy and of a government protected only from universal contempt by its power and its intrigues.

Metternich is certainly a man of high talents, his policy is dreadfully consistent, and never has there existed a more dangerous enemy to human freedom; but his knowledge is entirely superficial. He is a very indifferent lawyer, and an absolute idiot in financial matters. Indeed, the first step in Austria, its double paper currency, convinces one sufficiently that there is, certainly, not a worse financial management in any country. His acquirements are entirely those of a courtier, in the worst sense of the word. A self-possession, under the most trying and harassing circumstances; a sure and fine tact in judging characters; an ease in gliding into the secrets and the confidence of his superiors; and, above all, an inimitable grace of lying, as they say, with an assurance which it is not in the power of any human being to disconcert,—are his principal characteristics. During one of his coteries, or rather courts, which he holds as regularly as the Empe-

ror does his grand and *petit gala* days, he addressed himself to the Bavarian minister, in that *apropos* manner for which he is so well known: "Your King seems very fond of liberal ideas?" The ambassador was puzzled, but did not reply. "And of the Greeks too?" No answer. "A little more prudence would do no harm, or his Bavarian Majesty will force us to reprisals not likely to please him. You may inform your sovereign of this."

The new King of Bavaria had, just at this time, introduced several liberal regulations; which, with his open zeal in favour of the Greeks, displeased Metternich extremely. The ambassador thought it his full duty to report these insinuations to his sovereign. The incensed king sends orders to his ambassador to address to Metternich these words: "The King of Bavaria is, as sovereign, bound to no explanation except to God and his conscience, and wishes Prince Metternich to let him alone."

Metternich instantly despatched a courier to Munich, expressing the utmost concern and astonishment at receiving such a message, as he never

had, in any manner, expressed the least opinion respecting the measures of so wise a monarch ! At the same time he complained, in bitter terms, of the misrepresentations of the ambassador. This nobleman was, *of course*, wrong ; he was recalled, and another sent in his place. Where such a policy is uppermost, an open opposition would be folly. The nobility of the Austrian empire feel it, and they pay both him and his master in the same manner.