

SUPPLEMENTARY VOLUME

TO

POLITICAL PORTRAITS,

IN THIS

NEW ÆRA;

WITH

*EXPLANATORY NOTES—HISTORICAL AND
BIOGRAPHICAL.*

BY

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OF NATIONS, AND OTHER WORKS.



*Amicus Plato, Amicus Socrates,
Sed Magis Amica Veritas.*

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M. TALLEYRAND.

THE portrait of this statesman was given at considerable length, and what has since taken place has only confirmed what then was said. Without honour or fixed principles, he is able at intrigue and deception, and displays an uncommon talent for taking hold of circumstances, as they occur, for his own advantage.

When he found that Buonaparte, by his obstinacy, must fall, he was one of the first to betray and abandon him. He acted privately nearly the same part that his friend Fouche has acted since in a more public way.

Had Talleyrand not been at Vienna at the time of the escape of Buonaparte from the island of Elba, it is difficult to conjecture what he would have done. The probability is, that, knowing so well the resolution and means of the allies, he would have foreseen the failure of Buonaparte's plan, and therefore have followed the fate of Louis. Fouche and the others who embraced the cause of Buonaparte, though not without talents, were, like most French-

men, ignorant of the characters of the allied sovereigns, and of the people they govern.

Of all people, the French have the least knowledge of their strength and means, comparatively with those of other nations. The reason is, that they have so high an opinion of themselves, that they look on others with contempt, and even do not see facts in their true light.

Because the revolution broke out in so unexpected and terrible a manner, and with a prodigality of blood unexampled, and a contempt for every one of the rules that govern nations, they succeeded, (before Europe was aware of its danger), in subduing, singly, many nations*; they thought that it was owing to their own superior valour entirely, and that they were a nation calculated and intended to rule over all mankind. They consequently attributed their overthrow in 1814 to treason†, and to

* They seduced the ignorant and discontented by the false promises, and vain theories of liberty and equality—they bribed the interested by their active agents and emissaries—they neutralized the indolent—and then they overran the countries which betrayed their governments. But by fair fighting, in equal numbers, they never had any visible superiority.

† It was curious enough to hear how French vanity reconciled itself to this discomfiture, as appears by the subjoined anecdote—

being betrayed, and to any thing but their being fairly beaten to the gates of Paris.

The generosity of the allies they attributed to fear and respect; and thus, when they found that the

The following conversation, which actually took place here, in London, shews how the affair was taken by the Parisians, and, of course, by the rest of the French:

Englishman. Were you in Paris when the allies arrived?

Frenchman. Yes I was: but we were not conquered—we were sold and betrayed. The balls would not fit the cannons; and such was the rage and bravery of the defenders of Paris, that when they found they would not fit, in despair they threw them at the enemy, and killed numbers of them!!! Even the boys of the Polytechnic School shewed their courage and their rage.

Englishman. Well, but the allies behaved very well after they got possession.

Frenchman. No thanks for that—It was wisdom. Had they done otherwise, and the citizen (*les bourgeois*) got angry, not one of the allied armies would have escaped alive.

Such vanity and credulity are only equalled by the folly of believing that people of other nations could credit such absurdity: but the reality is, that the French people do not perceive the absurdity. Their vanity persuades them that what they say is true.

The second visit of the allies has, indeed, dissipated the illusion. There was no treason in getting the victory at Waterloo, and subsequently entering Paris; and the allies do not seem at all afraid either of the “*bourgeois*,” or of the boys of the Polytechnic school.

army was all joining Buonaparte, they anticipated a new career of conquest and victory; and they had no conception that the allies would seriously come against them, or, if they did, that they would succeed. Attributing their former failure to treason, they naturally enough had confidence in the fresh attempt; and, attributing the conduct of the allies to fear, they as naturally imagined that they would not *venture* a second time to invade France.

It is to be observed and remembered, that those who abandoned the king when Buonaparte approached Paris, and was well received where he passed, had sworn again and again to adhere to his Majesty, whilst Buonaparte was weak and at a distance. Their allegiance to one or the other depended altogether on their confidence in their success, or anticipation of misfortune: and nearly all those who conceived France to be a superior nation to any other, thought themselves certain of the success of Buonaparte.

Talleyrand, in respect to his knowledge of mankind, of other nations, and of the firmness of the allied sovereigns, stood very differently from Fonche, Carnot, and those men who had always been in France, and who never can get rid of the republican

ideas of 1793, and of that period when the pride of the French was at its height.

The allied sovereigns, it is said, have at last seen through the true character of Talleyrand, such as we gave it in his portrait, and he is dismissed from any office of political importance; but it was full time.

To his advice or influence may be attributed much of the mischief that has happened since Louis was restored. The refusal to abolish the slave-trade, on the false pretence that it would create displeasure in France—the favouring American privateers, to the prejudice of England—and preferring Spain in commerce, even to her own prejudice*.

A crooked-minded, wily politician, who is not guided by honour, even to those by whom he is employed, may on occasions be useful; but he is so dangerous an instrument, that it is better to dispense with his services, than to run the risk of being be-

* Talleyrand has a particular hatred to England, on account of his not being permitted to hatch treasonable plots here in 1793. While the French ambassador Chauvelin remained, and till the alien act was passed, the intriguing talents of Talleyrand had full scope; but Mr. Pitt got rid of him as soon as the alien bill was passed into a law.

trayed by him. There is no safety in employing such a man as a minister; and there are those who think that he has endeavoured to create a misunderstanding between this country and Russia, and that he contrived to make Buonaparte believe that he was to have been taken from the island of Elba, and sent into exile, by which means he made him more ready to take the step that has to him proved so fatal.

These are only matters of suspicion; but a man who has acted as Talleyrand has done throughout, must lay his account with being suspected, and has no right to complain*.

* The letter of Lord Castlereagh to Talleyrand, relative to the ambition of the Emperor of Russia was certainly not intended to be made public—It was confidential: yet it was printed, and circulated in the newspapers. Did not this look like management, and with a design to offend the emperor, who, with much good nature and good sense, is nevertheless very easily offended.

Reports also gained ground in December, that Talleyrand's couriers betrayed him, and took his letters to Elba, instead of Paris. As this was impossible to be done twice, query whether Talleyrand did not send false despatches, in order to dupe and frighten Buonaparte?

