

nately in the best and worst society in Paris. His sole object at that time was to convince the world that he was no true priest. His throat still hoarse from the masses he had been obliged to sing in the monastery, his rank still battling with the priestly robe which he trailed after his lame foot, a second Esau who had sold his birthright to his younger brothers for the lentil pottage of the episcopal messroom,—he assumed a character made up of ambition, Encyclopædian philosophy, and dissipation. He did not forget to present himself at Court, where he made a great show of virtue. The youthful Bishop already knew perfectly well how to put on the mask: he was polite, flowery, somewhat unctuous, and generally preferred remaining silent. This was at first called modesty, but Talleyrand soon hit upon that insinuating smile which never forsook him in after years during his embassy in London. From this moment he was considered a genius, his silence became an authority, and people wagered that if he would only open his mouth something superlatively wise would most infallibly be brought to light. Talleyrand enjoyed the triumph of silence, took his leave, and hastened to Mirabeau who had long been beckoning to him. They linked their arms together, criticised the great people, lounged about the Palais Royal, and spent the night at the gaming table, in the Rue Quincampoix. Talleyrand and Mirabeau were the best of friends, and the latter sometimes praised the former because he was a man who had some ideas. I have always been curious to know what Talleyrand called an idea in 1786.

What kind of philosophy was it for which Talleyrand and Mirabeau then declared themselves in the midst of roses and mercenary delights? All I know about it is that both of them were always in want of money; and Talleyrand's chief maxim was that his idea might be summed up in getting as much as possible out of it for himself. The States met: the Bishop of Autun had to represent his Chapter. It is well known what good service Talleyrand did at the union with the Tiers Etat, at the time of the abolition of privileges, and at the Champ de Mars, where he performed a mass commending the New Constitution of France to the protection of heaven. He did well to reform. The priest pursued him terribly, he hated his profession, and threw away one privilege of his rank after another. Through all his votes and amendments there glowed less of the enthusiasm of freedom than of hatred. No one could have made a better calculation. Whilst he revenged himself for the injustice of his parents, for the vigils at which he fell asleep as a chorister, for the fasts he had undergone, and for that mess of pottage, he contrived at the same time to win considerable popularity. He knew what monarch would sit on the throne of France: he gave up Marie Antoinette to her tears and