

play; did not go out of his way to seek them, and was contented if he merely attained his object, even though it were by questionable means. He did not shrink from Jesuitism either in morals or politics, but I repeat that he acted in this way on no settled principle, without system, and without any fixed rules. One rooted principle, however, he had, which has been already mentioned, that of making as much money as possible. Talleyrand's political career would have been different if he had not had the misfortune to start in debt. It was no doubt possible to win large sums at the commencement of the revolution, and the luck of the gaming table, which was Talleyrand's constant resort, is alluring. Nevertheless, his exile plunged him into great difficulties; he could not return to Paris but by the help of borrowed money, and there were times when he had not the wherewith to pay his hackney coach fare to the hotel of some member of the directory. But in the consulate, and during the empire, he amassed considerable wealth. Napoleon was very generous even when Talleyrand, the worst possible economist, suddenly came again to the end of an accumulated fortune. It was at the Bourse that the minister had the best luck. The money intrigues which he carried on with the poor harmless King of Spain have never been cleared up, but a very easy-going conscience seems to have lurked behind them. Talleyrand was always in the position of wanting still more than he had; he was not unfrequently obliged to sell his house, his moveables, or some country estate, and it was just in the nick of time that the Pope offered him several millions for his principality of Benevento. The Bourbons were less generous; they had only orders and feudal titles at their disposal. Talleyrand was forced to indemnify himself on the Bourse; up to the present time it is his right hand, the hand which pays. He turns politics to the best account, and plays at hazard with the world's destinies in order to keep up the day's quotations. Perhaps Talleyrand would not have shuffled with words and oaths so often if he had not been so often in want of money. When he said "unfortunately, a man must live," he meant "unfortunately, virtue is impossible." People are very apt to father upon Talleyrand an unalterable principle in French politics, which was, as it were, at the root of all his undertakings. I mean alliance with England. But this is not such an old hobby of his; he first took it up after the second restoration. As republican and imperial minister, he had not many inducements to try it. The hatred on the other side of the channel seemed unquenchable, and England did not hesitate to increase her debt for the sake of giving herself blindly up to it. Still it is true that Talleyrand early became acquainted with the secret springs which set British politics in motion :