

est and whose duty it was to have suppressed it, excited a fermentation among the people, that shook the very foundations of absolute monarchy, and, at length, deprived the kings and ministers of France of this odious engine of oppression!

M. de Mirabeau had now required considerable reputation as an author; and as he was utterly destitute of any certain revenue for supporting the dignity of his rank, or even procuring the necessaries of life, he had often recourse to the press; sometimes to administer to his pleasures, and sometimes to his wants. He bore up, however, against the misfortunes, with a manly dignity, and has often been heard to exclaim, with a gallantry and a frankness peculiar to himself, 'that he thought it more honest, and even more glorious, to be indebted for his support to his pen, than, like his ancestors, to procure it by means of his sword!'

The death of his father at length relieved him from his calamities; but, on this occasion, he did not acquire any property, but what he was strictly entitled to by law: for such was the rancour of the deceased count, that he was continually devising means, even on his death-bed, for disinheriting that son of his property, whom he had formerly deprived of his liberty, and against whom he had procured more than thirty *lettres-de-cacher*, in the course of his life! Immediately after this event, the young count de Mirabeau determined to travel; and he accordingly visited Germany, Switzerland, Flanders, and England. In this country, he studied the constitution and laws, with a keen and penetrating eye; and although he discovered the blemishes that, according to some, still disfigure and disgrace our government, he yet had the candour to acknowledge, 'that it was, at that time, better calculated than any other in Europe, for the happiness and prosperity of the people!'

The unruly passions of his youth, however, held out but a faint prospect of his future greatness; for the ardour of his temperament was such, that he indulged, both in France and foreign countries, in scenes of dissipation, that seemed to obliterate the native dignity of his mind, and efface the purity of his moral character. His attachment to the fair sex was unbounded; and he had often recourse to means for achieving the completion of his wishes, and gratifying the dissoluteness of his inclinations, which his judgment could not approve, and his heart, naturally susceptible of the most delicate impressions, could not but disclaim. The melancholy

end of madam Vernon, a young lady, whom he ravished from the eye of jealousy, and the arms of power; whom he adored in the delirium of enjoyment, and dismissed in the capriciousness of youthful folly; and who, disdainful to survive his affection, meditated and accomplished her own destruction; is an event which, while it gratified the malice of his enemies, made a lasting impression on his own mind, and occasioned for many years, the most bitter contrition and remorse!

But the period of reformation was not far distant: true genius is seldom incorrigible. M. de Mirabeau felt that he had but too long sacrificed to the passions; and something seemed to whisper to his mind that a nobler pursuit, and a more elevated destiny awaited him.

His first wish was to be employed in some honourable situation under government. He, accordingly solicited the ministry for an appointment; and M. de Calonne, who had raised himself from being the intendant of Metz to the post of comptroller general of the finances, perceived his abilities, and thought that they might be subservient to his own designs. Frederick the Great, laden alike with honours and with years, was, at that time, verging toward the grave; and it was the interest of France to be minutely acquainted with the progress of an incurable disorder, with which he was afflicted; to discover the genius, the capacity, and the inclinations of the prince royal, and the sentiments of those ministers and generals who surrounded him. Although an ambassador from Versailles resided at the court of Berlin, yet it was thought necessary to find some person of rank and abilities, who, without being invested with any public character, might visit the capital of Prussia, in a situation less liable to suspicion.

Mirabeau was solicited for this purpose; and, notwithstanding he did not receive his stipulated appointments with regularity, and that he was often left destitute of any resources but those suggested by his own abilities, yet he fulfilled the object of his mission with uncommon success, and disclosed the situation, the views, and the characters of the Court of Berlin, in a work, entitled 'The Secret History of the Court of Berlin,' that has attracted the notice of all Europe. His memorial to the prince of Prussia, on his succeeding to the throne, is also another production, no less celebrated for its masterly composition, than the noble principles it inculcates, and the salutary advice it instills into the heart of a young sovereign.

At this period of his life, his ambition aspired no higher than to fill some inferior diplomatic