

constancy such as, at the most, becomes only great states and little sovereigns. I have told you, dear nephew, politics and rascality are synonymous, and this is true; still, you will find in this respect, some people of good faith who have formed for themselves certain systems of probity. Thus, you may chance anything with your ambassadors. I have found some who have served me faithfully, and who, in order to uncover a mystery would have rifled the pockets of a king. Attach yourselves especially to those possessing the talent of expressing themselves in vague, ponderous, or ambiguous phrases. You will make no mistake in keeping some political locksmiths and doctors; they may be of great use to you. I know from experience all the advantages to be derived through them.¹

One of the first principles of politics is to endeavor to become an ally of that one of one's neighbors who may deal the most dangerous blows to one's state. It is for this reason that we have an alliance with Russia, because as long as the alliance lasts, Prussia's rear will have nothing to fear from Russia.²

It has been said, and the phrase has been thoughtlessly reexpressed that treaties are useless because all their stipulations are hardly ever fulfilled, and because men are no more scrupulous in our century than they have been in other centuries. I answer to those who think in this way that I have no doubt whatever that there have been, in ancient and even in very recent times, Princes who have not exactly fulfilled their engagements; but that it is always most advantageous to conclude treaties. For every ally one secures there will be in each case an enemy the less, and, if one's allies are of no assistance, still they always ought to observe an exact neutrality.³

Nothing was more contrary to the welfare of the Prussian state than to allow the formation of an alliance between Saxony and Russia, and nothing would have seemed more unnatural than to sacrifice a Princess of the royal blood in order to dislodge the Saxon Princes. Another expedient was resorted to. Of all the German Princesses of marriageable age none but the Princess of Zerbst was more suitable to Russia and more likely to serve the Prussian interests. . . .

When the Empress had made up her mind to choose the Princess of Zerbst for marriage with the Grand Duke, less difficulty was met

¹ *Les Matinées Royales*, pp. 32-33.

² *Exposé du gouvernement prussien—Œuvres philosophiques*, tome ii, p. 187; *Œuvres de Frédéric le Grand*, tome ix.

³ *L'Antimachiavel—Œuvres philosophiques*, tome i, p. 94; *Œuvres de Frédéric le Grand*, tome viii.