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THE SECRET HISTORY OF THE
COURT AND CABINET OF ST. CLOUD.
In a series of Letters from a resident in Paris to a Noble-
man in London, written during the months of
August, September and October, 1805.

LETTER XXXII.

Paris, August, 1805.

MY LORD,

NOT to give umbrage to the Cabinet of Berlin, Buonaparte communicated to it the necessity he was under of altering the form of government in Holland, and, if report be true, even condescended to ask advice concerning a chief magistrate for that country. The young prince of Orange, brother-in-law of his Prussian Majesty, naturally presented himself; but after some time, Talleyrand's agents discovered that great pecuniary sacrifices could not be expected from that quarter, and perhaps less submission to France experienced than from the former governors. An eye was then cast on the Elector of Bavaria, whose patriotism, as well as that of his ministers, were full guarantees of future obedience. Had he consented to such an arrangement, Austria might have aggrandised herself on the Inn; Prussia in Franconia, and France in Italy; and the present bone of contest been chiefly removed.

This intrigue, for it was nothing else, was carried on by the cabinet of St. Cloud, in March 1804, about the time that Germany was invaded, and the Duke of Enghein seized. This explains to you the reason why the Russian note delivered to the Diet of Ratisbon on the 8th of May following, was left without any support, except the ineffectual one from the King of Sweden. How any cabinet could be duped enough to think Buonaparte serious, or the Elector of Bavaria so weak as to enter into his schemes, is difficult to be conceived had not Europe witnessed still greater credulity on one side, and still greater effrontery on the other.

In the meantime Buonaparte grew every day more discontented with the Batavian Directory, and more irritated against the members who composed it. Against his regulations for excluding the commerce and productions of your country, they represented with spirit, instead of obeying without murmur, as was required. He is said to have discovered, after his own soldiers had forced the custom-house officers to obey his orders, that, while in their proclamations the directors publicly prohibited the introduction of British goods, some of them were secret infusers of this forbidden merchandise, introduced by fraud and by smuggling; and that while they officially wished for the success of the French arms and destruction of England, they withdrew by stealth what property they had in the French funds, to place it in the English. This refractory and, as Buonaparte called it, mercantile spirit, so enraged him, that he had already signed an order for arresting and transferring *en masse* his high allies, the Batavian directors, to his Temple, when the representations of Talleyrand moderated his fury, and caused the order to be recalled, which Fouché was ready to execute.

Had Jerome Buonaparte not offended his brother by his transatlantic marriage, he would long ago have been the Prince Stadtholder of Holland; but his disobedience was so far useful to the cabinet of St. Cloud, as it gave it an opportunity of intriguing with or deluding other cabinets, that might have any pretensions to interfere in the regulation of the Batavian government. By the choice finally made, you may judge how difficult it was to find a suitable subject to represent it, and that this representation is intended only to be temporary.

Schimmelpenninck, the present grand pensionary of the Batavian Republic, was destined by education for the bar, but by his natural parts, to await in quiet obscurity the end of a dull existence. With some property, little information, and a tolerably good share of common sense, he might have lived and died respected, and even regretted, without any pretensions, or perhaps even ambition to shine. The anti-orange faction to which his parents and family appertained, pushed him forward, and elected him, in 1795, a member of the first Batavian National Convention, where according to the spirit of the times, his speeches were rather those of a demagogue than those of a republican. Liberty, equality and fraternity were the constant themes, of his political declamations; infidelity his religious professions; and the examples of immorality his social lessons. So rapid and dangerous are the strides with which seduction frequently advances on weak minds.

In 1800, he was appointed an ambassador to Napoleon Buonaparte and Charles Maurice Talleyrand. The latter used him as a stock-broker, and the former for any thing he thought proper; and he was the humble and submissive valet of both. More ignorant than malicious, and a greater fool than rogue, he was more laughed at and despised than trusted or abused. His patience being equal to his phlegm, nothing either moved or confounded him; and he was, as Talleyrand remarked, "a model of an ambassador, according to which he and Buonaparte wished that all other independent princes and states would choose their representatives to the French government."

When our minister and his sovereign were discussing the difficulty of properly filling up the vacancy of the Dutch government, judged necessary by both, the former mentioned Schimmelpenninck with a smile, and, serious as Buonaparte commonly is, he could not help laughing. "I should

have been less astonished," said he, "had you proposed my Mameluke Roston." This rebuke did not deter Talleyrand (who had feigned his terms with Schimmelpenninck) from continuing to point out the advantage which France would derive from this nomination, "because no man could easier be directed when in office, and no man easier turned out of office when disagreeable and unnecessary. Both as Batavian Plenipotentiary at Amiens, and as Batavian ambassador in England, he had proved himself as obedient and submissive to France as when in the same capacity at Paris."

By returning often to the charge, with these and other remarks, Talleyrand at last accustomed Buonaparte to the idea, which had once appeared so humiliating, of writing to a man so much inferior in every thing, "*Great and Dear Friend!*" and therefore said to the minister, "Well! let us then make him a grand pensionary and a *locum tenens* for five years; or until Jerome, when he repents, returns to his duty, and is pardoned."—"Is he then not to be a grand pensionary for life?" asked Talleyrand; "whether for one month or for life, he would be equally obedient to resign when commanded; but the latter would be more popular in Holland, where they were tired of so many changes."—"Let them complain, if they dare," replied Buonaparte. Schimmelpenninck is their chief magistrate only for five years, if so long; but you may add that they may re-elect him."

It was not before Talleyrand had compared the pecuniary proposal, made to his agents, by foreign princes, with those of Schimmelpenninck to himself, that the latter obtained the preference. The exact amount of the purchase-money for the supreme magistracy in Holland is not well known to any but the contracting parties. Some pretended that the whole was paid down before-hand, being advanced by a society of merchants at Amsterdam, the friends or relatives of the grand pensionary; others, that it is to be paid by annual installments of two millions of livres (84,000*l.*) for a certain number of years. Certain it is, that this high office was sold and bought; and that had it been given for life, its value would have been proportionably enhanced; which was the reason that Talleyrand endeavoured to have it thus established.

Talleyrand well knew the precarious state of Schimmelpenninck's grandeur; that it not only depended upon the whim of Napoleon, but had long been intended as an hereditary sovereignty for Jerome. Another Dutchman asked him not to ruin his friend and his family, for what he was well aware could never be called a sinecure place, and was so precarious in its tenure. "Foolish vanity," answered the minister, "can never pay enough for the gratification of its desires. All the Schimmelpennincks in the world do not possess property enough to recompense me for the sovereign honours which I have procured for one of their name and family, were he even deposed within twenty-four hours. What treasures can indemnify me for connecting such a name and such a personage with the great name of the Emperor of the French?"

I have only twice in my life been in Schimmelpenninck's company, and I thought him both timid and reserved; but, from what little he said, I could not possibly judge of his character and capacity. His portrait and its accompaniments have been presented to me, such as delivered to you by one of his countrymen, a Mr. M—— (formerly an ambassador also), who was both his school-fellow and his class-mate at the university. I shall add the following traits in his own words as nearly as possible. "More vain than ambitious, Schimmelpenninck from his youth, and particularly from his entrance into public life, tried every means to make a noise, but found none to gain a reputation. He carelessly in succession all the systems of the French revolution, without adopting one for himself. All the kings of faction received in their turns his homage and his felicitations. It was impossible to mention to him a man of any notoriety, of whom he did not become immediately a partisan.—The virtues or the vices, the merit or defects, of the individual were of no consideration; according to his judgment it was sufficient to be famous. Yet with all the extravagances of a head filled with paradoxes, and of a heart spoiled by modern philosophy, added to a habit of licentiousness, he had no idea of becoming an instrument for the destruction of liberty in his own country, much less of becoming its tyrant, in submitting to be the slave of France. It was but lately that he took the fancy, after so long admiring all other great men of our age, to be at any rate one of their number, and of being admired as a great man in his turn. On this account many accuse him of hypocrisy, but no one deserves that appellation less; his vanity and exaltation never permitting him to dissimulate, and no presumption therefore was less disguised than his, to those who studied the man. Without acquired ability; without natural genius or political capacity; destitute of discretion and address; as confident, and obdurate as ignorant he is only elevated to fall, and to rise no more."

Madame Schimmelpenninck, I was informed, is as amiable and accomplished as her husband is awkward and deficient; though well acquainted with his infidelities and profligacy, she is too virtuous to listen to revenge, and too generous not to forgive. She has never been the worshipper of Buonaparte, nor the friend of Talleyrand; she loved her country, and detested its tyrants.—Had she been created a grand pensionary, she would certainly have swayed with

more glory than her husband; and been hailed by contemporaries, as well as posterity, if not a heroine, at least a patriot—a title which, in our times, though often prostituted, so few have any claim to, and therefore so much the more valuable.

When it was known at Paris that Schimmelpenninck had set out for his new sovereignty, no less than sixteen girls of the Palais Royal demanded passes for Holland. Being questioned by Fouché as to their business in that country, they answered, that they intended to visit their friend the grand pensionary, in his new dominions. Fouché communicated to Talleyrand both their demands and their business, and asked his advice. He replied, "send two, and those of whose vigilance and intelligence you are sure. Refuse, by all means, the other fourteen. Schimmelpenninck's time is precious; and were they at the Hague, he would neglect every thing for them. If they are fond of travelling, and are handsome and adroit, advise them to set out for London or St. Petersburg; and if they consent, order them to my office, and they shall be supplied, if approved of, both with instructions and with their travelling expenses."—Fouché answered his colleagues "that they were in every respect the very reverse of his description; that they seemed to have passed their lives in the lowest stage of infamy, and that they could neither read nor write." You have therefore no reason to fear that these belles will be sent to disseminate corruption in your happy Island.

LETTER XXXIII.

Paris, August, 1805.

MY LORD,

The Italian subjects of Napoleon the first were far from displaying the same zeal and the same gratitude for his paternal care and kindness, in taking upon himself the trouble of governing them, as we good Parisians have done. Notwithstanding that a brigade of our police-agents and spies, drilled for years to applaud and to excite enthusiasm, proceeded as his advanced guard to raise the public spirit, the reception at Milan was cold, and every thing else but cordial or pleasing. The absence of duty did not escape his observation and resentment. Convinced, in his own mind, of the great blessing, prosperity, and liberty his victories and sovereignty have conferred on the inhabitants of the other side of the Alps, he ascribed their present passive or mutinous behaviour to the effect of foreign emissaries, from courts envious of his glory, and jealous of his authority.

He suspected particularly England and Russia, of having selected this occasion of a solemnity that would complete his grandeur, to humble his just pride. He had also some idea within himself that even Austria might indirectly have dared to influence the sentiments and conduct of her *ci-devant* subjects of Lombardy; but his own high opinion of the awe which his very name inspired at Vienna, dispersed these thoughts, and his wrath fell entirely on the audacity of Pitt and Markoff. Strict orders were therefore issued to the prefects and commissaries of police to watch vigilantly all foreigners and strangers who might have arrived, or who should arrive, to witness the ceremony of the coronation, and to arrest instantly any one who should give the least reason to suppose that he was an enemy, instead of an admirer of his imperial and royal Majesty. He also commanded the prefects of his palace not to permit any persons to approach his sacred person, of whose morality and politics they had not previously obtained a good account.

These great measures of security were not entirely unnecessary. Individual vengeance, and individual patriotism, sharpened their daggers, and, to use senator Roderer's language, "were near transforming the most glorious day of rejoicing into a day of universal mourning."

All our writers on the revolution agree, that in France, within the first twelve years after we had reconquered our lost liberty, more conspiracies have been denounced, than during the six centuries of the most brilliant epoch of ancient and free Rome. These facts and avowals are speaking evidences of the internal tranquillity of our unfortunate country, of our affection to our rulers, and of the unanimity with which all the changes of government have been, notwithstanding our printed votes, received and approved.

The frequency of conspiracies not only shews the discontent of the governed, but the insecurity and infidelity of the governors. This truth has not escaped Napoleon, who has therefore ordered an expeditious and secret justice to dispatch instantly the conspirators, and to bury the conspiracy in oblivion, except when any *grand coup-d'état* is to be struck; or, to excite the passions of hatred, any proofs can be found, or must be fabricated, involving an inimical or rival foreign government in an odious plot. Since the farce which Méheé de la Touche exhibited, therefore, you have not read in the *Moniteur* either of the danger our Emperor has incurred several times since, from the machinations of implacable or fanatical foes, or of the alarm these have caused his partisans. They have, indeed, been hinted at in some speeches of our public functionaries, and in some paragraphs of our public prints; but their particulars will remain concealed from historians, unless some one of those, composing our court, our fashionable, or our political circles, have taken the trouble of noting them down; but even to those, they are but imperfectly or incorrectly known.

Could the veracity of a Fouché, a Real, a Talleyrand, or a Duroc (the only members of this new secret and insin-