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PRINCE METTERNICH.

STATESMEN SERIES.

LIFE OF
PRINCE METTERNICH

BY

COLONEL G. B. MALLESON, C.S.I.

SECOND EDITION, WITH PORTRAIT.

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PREFATORY NOTE.

IN writing this sketch of the statesman whose career occupies so great a space in the history of Europe for fifty years I have consulted, amongst others, the following works: (1) "The Autobiography of Prince Metternich"; (2) Binder's "Fürst Clement von Metternich und sein Zeitalter, 1836"; (3) "Neuer Plutarch," vol. v.; (4) Thiers' "Histoire du Consulat et de l'Empire"; (5) Capefigue's "Diplomates Contemporains"; (6) Gerwinus's "Geschichte des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts"; (7) Maurice's "Revolutions of 1848-49"; (8) Alderstein's "Chronologisches Tagebuch der Magyrischen Revolution"; (9) "Napoleon and his Detractors."

G. B. M.

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to concert measures with the allies against Napoleon. It was another and a very important mesh in his web. Yet his success was not quite so great as the reader might gather from the perusal of the commentary of M. Thiers. He mystified, but he did not take in M. de Narbonne. The French ambassador was too clear-headed a man to fail to be struck by the facility with which the Minister agreed to all his proposals. Not so readily, he thought to himself, would Austria, in the circumstances then existing, assent to a proposition which would place, according to his view of it, in the hands of Napoleon, the direction of the forces she had raised and armed with so much haste. For granting, as one could not fail to grant, that the allies would refuse the proposals of Napoleon, though presented by the hand of Austria, that was the logical alternative, the only alternative, of his proposals, as he intended them to be understood. If Metternich had understood him in a different sense, then there must be a further explanation. Yet he had seemed to understand him—and had not raised one objection. Puzzled, convinced that all was not right, Narbonne endeavoured, by further questioning, to get behind the real meaning of the Minister. To accomplish this, he asked him what would happen if France and Austria could not agree on the terms of peace to be offered to the allies. This was to beg the whole question. Metternich, recognising this on the instant, conscious that a direct answer would show the Frenchman that he was being played with, hastened to elude a reply by an adroit interruption. "The question of conditions does not disturb me," he hastened to interpose.

"Your master will be reasonable—it is impossible he should not be. What! he would not risk everything for that ridiculous chimera of the

he decided in favour of the plan which he had previously settled with Schwarzenberg, or that by the exercise of that tact which was one of his chiefest powers he obtained the adhesion of the Czar.

On the 20th December the Austrian army crossed the Rhine between Schaffhausen and Basel. Actual hostilities did not begin till towards the close of the following month. Before that period Metternich met at Basel one whose desire for the overthrow of Napoleon equalled his own—the English Minister, Lord Castlereagh.

“A few hours’ conversation,” he writes, “sufficed to lay the foundation of a good feeling between this upright and enlightened statesman and myself, which the following years cemented and enlarged.” Further: “I soon saw that his ideas about the reconstruction of France in a manner compatible with the general interests of Europe did not materially differ from mine.”

They both believed that by evicting Napoleon they would kill the Revolution. Napoleon was evicted—but the Revolution? The damming up of its waters produced the overthrow which in time was to sweep even the astute Metternich into obscurity.

From Basel Metternich proceeded with the sovereigns and the English minister to Langres, the 25th of January, there, he tells us, to be occupied with negotiations of the greatest importance, and which, he adds, would remain unknown if he had not recorded them. The nature of those negotiations may be summed up in a single phrase. They were to decide upon the most suitable successor to the doomed Napoleon. Alexander wanted to appeal to the French nation. This view Metternich combated with all his force. To him it meant the unchaining anew of the Revolution. He went so far with Alexander as to threaten that Austria would then and there withdraw her forces if the idea were persisted in.