

close to her, to convince her there was no cause for alarm.¹ The young duke was compelled to study so hard, that it was represented to the duchess-regent that his health was injured by such close application, and that his delicate constitution required more recreation and relaxation. Her reply was that of a Roman mother: "Better that I should have no son, than a son without wit and merit!"² One day, when Mary Beatrice was repeating her daily devotional exercise, she missed one of the verses in the *Benedicite*; and as she continued to do so every time she was made to repeat that psalm, the duchess gave her a box on the ears.³ Their uncle, prince Rinaldo d'Este, asked the two children whether they liked best to command or to obey? The young duke said, boldly, "he should like best to command;" the princess replied, meekly, "that she liked better to obey." Their uncle told them "it was well that each preferred doing that which was most suitable to their respective vocations," alluding to the duke's position as a reigning prince, and probably not anticipating for Mary Beatrice a loftier destiny than wedding one of the nobles of his court. Her own desire was to embrace a religious life. Her governess, to whom she was passionately attached, quitted her when she was only nine years old to enter a convent. Mary Beatrice bewailed her loss with bitter tears, till she was sent to the same convent to finish her education. She found herself much happier under the guidance of the Carmelite sisters than she had been in the ducal palace, where nothing less than absolute perfection was expected by her mother in every thing she said and did. There is, withal, in the heart of every young female of sensibility, a natural craving for that sympathy and affectionate intercourse which ought ever to subsist between a mother and her daughter. The duchess of Modena loved her children devotedly, but she never caressed them, or treated them with those endearments which tender parents delight to lavish on their offspring.⁴ Mary Beatrice often spoke, in after-years,

¹ MS. Memorials of the queen of James II. by a nun of Chaillot, in the Secret Archives of France.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.