

## ADMIRABLE RESOLUTION OF A FRENCH CURATE.

[From the Supplement to the *Memoirs of the Duke de St. Simon*; lately published.]

**T**HE Duchess of Berry was living in a mixture of the most haughty grandeur and the meanest and most abject slavery; between the most austere and frequent, though short retreats to the Carmelites,\* and the most profane amusements; between obscenity, blasphemy, riot, and the most ridiculous terrors of death and the devil, when she was taken ill at the Luxembourg.

She had become pregnant by Rions,† and was indignant that the world should talk of what she had desired to hide: her pregnancy was arrived at its crisis, and this, ill prepared by intemperance, soon became dangerous. She now shut herself up in a small range of apartments, with Rions, Madam de Mouchy, the real mistress of her paramour, and one or two women on whom she could depend. Neither her father,‡ nor the duchess of Orleans were admitted within the doors of the chamber, and the ladies of her household chose to absent themselves voluntarily from this mystery of profligacy; the physicians themselves were only admitted for moments.

Fits and danger increasing, Languet, the celebrated curate of St. Solpice, who had already made himself busy, talked to her father of administering the sacrament. The difficulty was how to get at his daughter to propose it; but he soon had to encounter one much greater. The curate, as a man of conscience, declared that he should not only refuse to administer whilst Rions and Mouchy were in the same apartments, but whilst they should continue in the palace. This declaration he made aloud, and in public, to the Duke, who was less shocked than embarrassed by it.

Having taken the curate aside, and pressed him to moderate his zeal, but finding him inflexible, he proposed at last to refer the whole to the cardinal Noailles. This the curate instantly accepted with the deference due to the cardinal as his bishop, and only reserved to himself the liberty of stating to him the reasons of his conduct.

The moment was pressing, and the duchess confessed herself, during the dispute, to a cordelier, her director. The duke of Orleans, who knew that there was

some difference of religious opinions between the cardinal and curate, hoped to find the former more flexible—he was mistaken; the cardinal arrived, the duke took them both aside, and the conversation lasted more than half an hour.

As the declaration of the curate had been public, the cardinal, who was archbishop of Paris, thought proper that his should be public too. All three approaching the company, the cardinal told the curate in a loud voice, that he had done his duty with dignity; that he had expected no less from his piety and experience; that he approved of the conditions he had made before he administered the sacrament; that he exhorted him not to shrink, nor to suffer himself to be imposed on in an affair of such importance; that if he wanted authority, he now by his own, as his superiour and bishop, enjoined him not to suffer the duchess to participate of spiritual comfort till M. de Rions and Mde. de Mouchy were dismissed from the place.

It is easy to judge of the effect this declaration made on the assembly present, of the father's embarrassment, and of the rumours that were instantly disseminated. The question was now between the regent, the cardinal, and the curate, which of them should carry this resolution to the duchess, who, after her confession, expected every moment to see the priest with the sacrament enter her apartments. After a short conversation, the duke at last presented himself at the half-opened door of his daughter, and called Mde. de Mouchy, to whom, she within, he without, he reported the resolution of the two ecclesiastics. Mouchy, equally astonished and enraged, began to assert her character in a high tone, and to descant on the affront offered by a couple of canting priests, to herself and her mistress, to whom the message, if delivered, would be instantaneous death. Finding, herself, however, obliged to convey it, in her own manner, she brought back a decisive refusal to the regent, still waiting at the door, who carried it to the cardinal and the curate.

The curate contented himself with shrugging up his shoulders; but the cardinal

\* A convent in the Fauxbourg St. Germain.

† A nephew of the duke of Lauzun.

‡ The Regent of France.