

Life as an Émigré. Part 2

Summary

The duchess gives a more positive report of life in Tournai than in her Letter of the previous month, comparing the fear she would have been enduring if she had remained in France with the respect she had just been shown at the court of Marie-Christine, archduchess of Teschen, who was co-governor of the Austrian Netherlands.

Date and place of writing

7 November 1791, Tournai

Themes

- The Duchess
- National Politics
- Nobility
- Religion

Letter

Tournai. 3 October 1791

No, Madame, I have not been struck down by dysentery or any of the other Tournai afflictions. I am as well as I was in Paris, or even in Moreuil, and only sometimes become worried about what we have all left behind in France that is precious to us. That is the nub of nearly every conversation we have here. Ah! How lucky we are to be in Tournai, without the fear of being torn to shreds, hanged, or at the very least under threat from some motion in the National Assembly. A few precious things are all that remain for us in France, and what will become of them?

Although I have sought solitude here, seeing little of society as a result, I had the pleasure of paying court to our princes who govern these provinces. I paid them very respectful homage, which I hope will gain me their protection if the Emperor were to tire of having so many French people on his territories.

The archduchess, Marie-Christine, who is the ruler here currently, received me with kindness having enjoyed meeting the late Monsieur the duke d'Elbeuf in Vienna, and as I had forewarned her of my present vulnerability she made sure to pay me every attention due to my name and rank.¹ The archduke Charles, who will succeed Her Royal Highness, was also present. He is a prince, 19 years of age, who appears

sensitive and is still studying law in accordance with the sensible German custom of keeping the sons of a ruler occupied during their youth. However, I only approve of this if he is taught to understand the beauty of the Catholic faith and how its practice can bring perfection to government.

Notes

1. This means the duchess had travelled from Tournai to Brussels, where the archduchess held court.

Source

Archives nationales de France, F7 4775/1 (notebook 3, pp. 68-69).

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