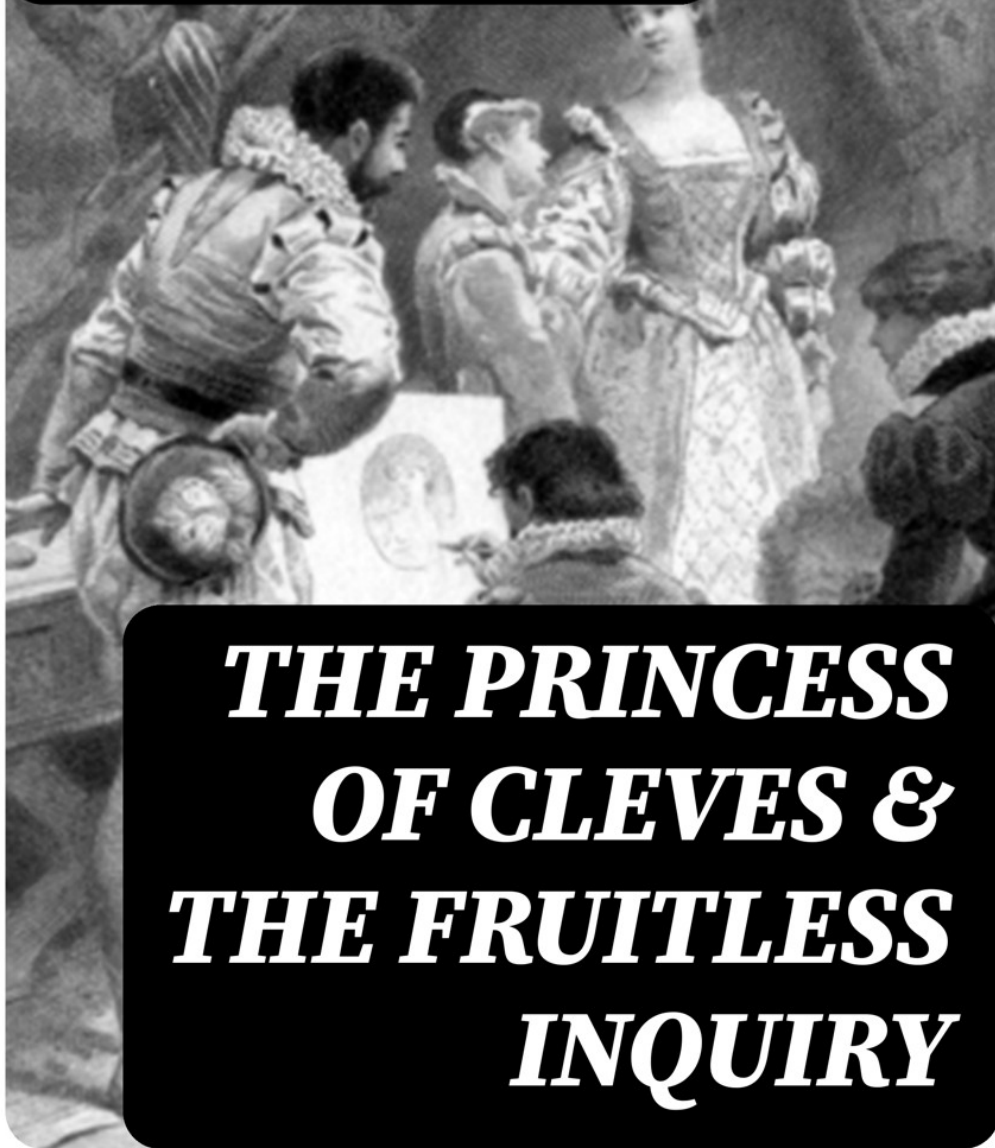


***MARIE-
MADELEINE
PIOCHE
DE LA VERGNE,
ELIZA HAYWOOD***



***THE PRINCESS
OF CLEVES &
THE FRUITLESS
INQUIRY***

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The Princess of Cleves & The Fruitless Inquiry

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THE story of the Princess of Cleves^[1], which we now present to our readers, has been long universally allowed to stand foremost in that peculiar species of writing, where historical facts are intermixed with the anecdotes and adventures of private personages. The scene is laid in the court of France, at an era when galantry had risen to its greatest height in that polite nation; though the romantic notions of ancient chivalry had begun to grow obsolete, but were not yet intirely exploded; for we here meet with a tournament, appointed in honour of the princess Elizabeth's marriage with the king of Spain; which, however, was the last that ever was exhibited in France.

From this particular circumstance, the reader may form an idea, that the manners and sentiments of those times differed widely from those of the present; and of course, the delicacy with which, the princess of Cleves and the duke of Nemours conducted themselves, though under the influence of an unjustifiable passion, ought not to be deemed unnatural, though, perhaps, in these more licentious days it may be supposed improbable.

There are some situations in the following Novel, more refined and elegant than any we ever remember to have met with before; particularly, that of our heroine's flying for sanctuary, as it were, from herself, into the bosom of her husband, by revealing to him her passion for another. What a confidant for a modern dame! The line which the princess of Cleves pursues through the whole story, is doubtless worthy of emulation to those who may be so unhappy as to stand in the same predicament; but her conduct, after the

death of her husband, will, we fear, rather be considered as a subject for admiration, than imitation.

1. ↑ The original of this Novel is in French. The author has not put any name to the piece, and gives this modest reason for it; "That he would wait 'till he found how it was received by the public, before he would venture to declare himself." The secret has never since transpired. In this uncertainty, every one is left at liberty to frame a conjecture about the Author; and, in my opinion, this work seems to have been written by some ingenious woman of the age in which it appeared; as the delicacy of sentiment, and peculiar nicety of manners, with which the princess of Cleves conducted herself in the most difficult situations, could only have arisen in the female breast. Men are not apt to imagine such refinements; and even, perhaps, less so to impute them to the sex.



THE PRINCESS OF CLEVES

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PART I.

GRANDEUR and gallantry never appeared with more lustre in France, than in the last years of Henry the Second's reign. This prince was amorous and handsome, and though his passion for Diana of Poitiers, duchess of Valentinois, was of above twenty years standing, it was not the less violent, nor did he give less distinguishing proofs of it.

As he was happily turned to excel in bodily exercises, he took a particular delight in them, such as hunting, tennis, running at the ring, and the like diversions. Madam de Valentinois gave spirit to all entertainments of this sort, and appeared at them with grace and beauty equal to that of her grand-daughter, madam de la Marke, who was then unmarried; the queen's presence seemed to authorise her's.

The queen was handsome, though not young; she loved grandeur, magnificence and pleasure; she was married to the king while he was duke of Orleans, during the life of his elder brother, the dauphin, a prince whose great qualities promised in him a worthy successor of his father Francis the first.

The queen's ambitious temper made her taste the sweets of reigning, and she seemed to bear with perfect ease the king's passion for the duchess of Valentinois, nor did she express the least jealousy of it; but she was so skilful a dissembler, that it was hard to judge of her real sentiments, and policy obliged her to keep the duchess about her person, that she might draw the king to her at the same time. This prince took great delight in the conversation of women, even of such as he had no passion for; for he was every day at the queen's court, when she held her assembly, which was a concourse of all that was beautiful and excellent in either sex.

Never were finer women or more accomplished men seen in any court; and nature seemed to have taken pleasure in lavishing her greatest graces on the greatest persons. The princess Elizabeth, since queen of Spain, began now to manifest an uncommon wit, and to display those beauties,

which proved afterwards so fatal to her. Mary Stuart, queen of Scotland, who had just married the dauphin, and was called the queen-dauphin, had all the perfections of mind and body; she had been educated in the court of France, and had imbibed all the politeness of it; she was by nature so well formed to shine in everything that was polite, that notwithstanding her youth, none surpassed her in the most refined accomplishments. The queen, her mother-in-law, and the king's sister, were also extreme lovers of music, plays and poetry; for the taste which Francis the First had for the Belles Lettres was not yet extinguished in France; and as his son was addicted to exercises, no kind of pleasure was wanting at court. But what rendered this court so splendid, was the presence of so many great princes, and persons of the highest quality and merit: those I shall name, in their different characters, were the admiration and ornament of their age.

The king of Navarre drew to himself the respect of all the world, both by the greatness of his birth, and by the dignity that appeared in his person; he was remarkable for his skill and courage in war. The duke of Guise had also given proofs of extraordinary valour, and had been so successful, that there was not a general who did not look upon him with envy; to his valour he added a most exquisite genius and understanding, grandeur of mind, and a capacity equally turned for military or civil affairs. His brother, the cardinal of Lorraine, was a man of boundless ambition, and of extraordinary wit and eloquence, and had besides acquired a vast variety of learning, which enabled him to make himself very considerable by defending the Catholic religion,

which began to be attacked at that time. The chevalier de Guise, afterwards called Grand Prior, was a prince beloved by all the world, of a comely person, full of wit and address, and distinguished through all Europe for his valour. The prince of Conde, though little indebted to nature in his person, had a noble soul, and the liveliness of his wit made him amiable even in the eyes of the finest women. The duke of Nevers, distinguished by the high employments he had possessed, and by the glory he had gained in war, though in an advanced age, was yet the delight of the court: he had three sons very accomplished; the second, called the prince of Cleves, was worthy to support the honour of his house; he was brave and generous, and showed a prudence above his years. The viscount de Chartres, descended of the illustrious family of Vendome, whose name the princes of the blood have thought it no dishonour to wear, was equally distinguished for gallantry; he was genteel, of a fine mien, valiant, generous, and all these qualities he possessed in a very uncommon degree; in short, if anyone could be compared to the duke de Nemours, it was he. The duke de Nemours was a masterpiece of nature; the beauty of his person, inimitable as it was, was his least perfection; what placed him above other men, was a certain agreeableness in his discourse, his actions, his looks, which was observable in none beside himself: he had in his behaviour a gaiety that was equally pleasing to men and women; in his exercises he was very expert; and in dress he had a peculiar manner, which was followed by all the world, but could never be imitated: in fine, such was the air of his whole person, that it was impossible to fix one's eye on anything else, wherever

he was. There was not a lady at court, whose vanity would not have been gratified by his address; few of those whom he addressed, could boast of having resisted him; and even those for whom he expressed no passion, could not forbear expressing one for him: his natural gaiety and disposition to gallantry was so great, that he could not refuse some part of his cares and attention to those who made it their endeavour to please him; and accordingly he had several mistresses, but it was hard to guess which of them was in possession of his heart: he made frequent visits to the queen-dauphin; the beauty of this princess, the sweetness of her temper, the care she took to oblige everybody, and the particular esteem she expressed for the duke de Nemours, gave ground to believe that he had raised his views even to her. Messieurs de Guise, whose niece she was, had so far increased their authority and reputation by this match, that their ambition prompted them to aspire at an equality with the princes of the blood, and to share in power with the constable Montmorency. The king entrusted the constable with the chief share in the administration of the government, and treated the duke of Guise and the mareschal de St. André as his favourites; but whether favour or business admitted men to his presence, they could not preserve that privilege without the good-liking of the duchess of Valentinois; for though she was no longer in possession of either of youth or beauty, she yet reigned so absolutely in his heart, that his person and state seemed entirely at her disposal.

The king had such an affection for the constable, that he was no sooner possessed of the government, but he

recalled him from the banishment he had been sent into by Francis the First: thus was the court divided between messieurs de Guise, and the constable, who was supported by the princes of the blood, and both parties made it their care to gain the duchess of Valentinois. The duke d'Aumale, the duke of Guise's brother, had married one of her daughters, and the constable aspired to the same alliance; he was not contented with having married his eldest son with madam Diana, the king's daughter by a Piemontese lady, who turned nun as soon as she was brought to bed. This marriage had met with a great many obstacles from the promises which monsieur Montmorency had made to madam de Piennes, one of the maids of honour to the queen; and though the king had surmounted them with extreme patience and goodness, the constable did not think himself sufficiently established, unless he secured madam de Valentinois in his interest, and separated her from messieurs de Guise, whose greatness began to give her uneasiness. The duchess had obstructed as much as she could the marriage of the dauphin with the queen of Scotland; the beauty and forward wit of that young queen, and the credit which her marriage gave to messieurs de Guise, were insupportable to her; she in particular hated the cardinal of Loraine, who had spoken to her with severity, and even with contempt; she was sensible he took the party of the queen, so that the constable found her very well disposed to unite her interests with his and to enter into alliance with him, by marrying her granddaughter madam de la Marke with monsieur d'Anville, his second son, who succeeded him in his employment under the reign of

Charles the Ninth. the constable did not expect to find the same disinclination to marriage in his second son which he had found in his eldest, but he proved mistaken. The duke d'Anville was desperately in love with the Dauphin-Queen, and how little hope soever he might have of succeeding in his passion, he could not prevail with himself to enter into an engagement that would divide his cares. The mareschal de St. André was the only person in the court that had not listed in either party: he was a particular favourite, and the king had a personal affection for him; he had taken a liking to him ever since he was dauphin, and created him a mareschal of France at an age in which others rarely obtain the least dignities. his favour with the king gave him a lustre which he supported by his merit and the agreeableness of his person, by a splendour in his table and furniture, and by the most profuse magnificence that ever was known in a private person, the king's liberality enabling him to bear such an expense. This prince was bounteous even to prodigality to those he favoured, and though he had not all the great qualities, he had very many; particularly he took delight and had great skill in military affairs; he was also successful, and excepting the battle of St. Quintin, his reign had been a continued series of victory; he won in person the battle of Renti, Piemont was conquer'd, the English were driven out of France, and the emperor Charles V found his good fortune decline before the walls of Mets, which he besieged in vain with all the forces of the empire and of Spain: but the disgrace received at St. Quintin lessened the hopes we had of extending our conquests, and as fortune

seemed to divide herself between two kings, they both found themselves insensibly disposed to peace.

At this time, the king received the news of the death of queen Mary of England; his Majesty dispatched forthwith the count de Randan to queen Elizabeth, to congratulate her on her accession to the crown, and they received him with great distinction; for her affairs were so precarious at that time, that nothing could be more advantageous to her, than to see her title acknowledged by the King. The Count found she had a thorough knowledge of the interests of the French Court, and of the characters of those who composed it; but in particular, she had a great idea of the Duke of Nemours: she spoke to him so often, and with so much earnestness concerning him, that the Ambassador upon his return declared to the King, that there was nothing which the Duke of Nemours might not expect from that Princess, and that he made no question she might even be brought to marry him. The King communicated it to the Duke the same evening, and caused the Count de Randan to relate to him all the conversations he had had with Queen Elizabeth, and in conclusion advised him to push his fortune: the Duke of Nemours imagined at first that the King was not in earnest, but when he found to the contrary, "If, by your advice, Sir," said he, "I engage in this chimerical undertaking for your Majesty's service, I must entreat your Majesty to keep the affair secret, till the success of it shall justify me to the public; I would not be thought guilty of the intolerable vanity, to think that a Queen, who has never seen me, would marry me for love." The King promised to let nobody into the design but the Constable, secrecy being necessary,

he knew, to the success of it. The Count de Randan advised the Duke to go to England under pretence of travelling; but the Duke disapproving this proposal, sent Mr. Lignerol, a sprightly young gentleman, his favourite, to sound the Queen's inclinations, and to endeavour to make some steps towards advancing that affair: in the meantime, he paid a visit to the Duke of Savoy, who was then at Brussels with the King of Spain. The death of Queen Mary brought great obstructions to the Treaty; the Congress broke up at the end of November, and the King returned to Paris.

There appeared at this time a lady at Court, who drew the eyes of the whole world; and one may imagine she was a perfect beauty, to gain admiration in a place where there were so many fine women; she was of the same family with the Viscount of Chartres, and one of the greatest heiresses of France, her father died young, and left her to the guardianship of Madam de Chartres his wife, whose wealth, virtue, and merit were uncommon. After the loss of her husband she retired from court, and lived many years in the country; during this retreat, her chief care was bestowed in the education of her daughter; but she did not make it her business to cultivate her wit and beauty only, she took care also to inculcate virtue into her tender mind, and to make it amiable to her. The generality of mothers imagine, that it is sufficient to forbear talking of gallantries before young people, to prevent their engaging in them; but Madam de Chartres was of a different opinion, she often entertained her daughter with descriptions of love; she showed her what there was agreeable in it, that she might the more easily persuade her wherein it was dangerous; she related to her

the insincerity, the faithlessness, and want of candour in men, and the domestic misfortunes that flow from engagements with them; on the other hand she made her sensible, what tranquillity attends the life of a virtuous woman, and what lustre modesty gives to a person who possesses birth and beauty; at the same time she informed her, how difficult it was to persevere this virtue, except by an extreme distrust of one's self, and by a constant attachment to the only thing which constitutes a woman's happiness, to love and to be loved by her husband.

This heiress was, at that time, one of the greatest matches in France, and though she was very young several marriages had been proposed to her mother; but Madam de Chartres being ambitious, hardly thought anything worthy of her daughter, and when she was sixteen years of age she brought her to court. The viscount of Chartres, who went to meet her, was with reason surprised at the beauty of the young lady; her fine hair and lovely complexion gave her a lustre that was peculiar to herself; all her features were regular, and her whole person was full of grace.

The day after her arrival, she went to choose some jewels at a famous Italian's; this man came from Florence with the queen, and had acquired such immense riches by his trade, that his house seemed rather fit for a prince than a merchant; while she was there, the prince of Cleves came in, and was so touched with her beauty, that he could not dissemble his surprise, nor could Mademoiselle de Chartres forbear blushing upon observing the astonishment he was in; nevertheless, she recollected herself, without taking any further notice of him than she was obliged to do in civility to

a person of his seeming rank; the prince of Cleves viewed her with admiration, and could not comprehend who that fine lady was, whom he did not know. He found by her air, and her retinue, that she was of the first quality; by her youth he should have taken her to be a maid, but not seeing her mother, and hearing the Italian call her madam, he did not know what to think; and all the while he kept his eyes fixed upon her, he found that his behaviour embarrassed her, unlike to most young ladies, who always behold with pleasure the effect of their beauty; he found too, that he had made her impatient to be gone, and in truth she went away immediately: the prince of Cleves was not uneasy at himself on having lost the view of her, in hopes of being informed who she was; but when he found she was not known, he was under the utmost surprise; her beauty, and the modest air he had observed in her actions, affected him so, that from that moment he entertained a passion for her. In the evening he waited on his majesty's sister.

The prince of Cleves went there according to his custom; he was so touched with the wit and beauty of Mademoiselle de Chartres, that he could talk of nothing else; he related his adventure aloud, and was never tired with the praises of this lady, whom he had seen, but did not know; Madame told him, that there was nobody like her he described, and that if there were, she would be known by the whole world. Madam de Dampiere, one of the princess's ladies of honour, and a friend of madam de Chartres, overhearing the conversation, came up to her highness, and whispered her in the ear, that it was certainly Mademoiselle de Chartres whom the Prince had seen. Madame, returning to her

discourse with the Prince, told him, if he would give her his company again the next morning, he should see the beauty he was so much touched with. Accordingly Mademoiselle de Chartres came the next day to Court, and was received by both Queens in the most obliging manner that can be imagined, and with such admiration by everybody else, that nothing was to be heard at Court but her praises, which she received with so agreeable a modesty, that she seemed not to have heard them, or at least not to be moved with them. She afterwards went to wait upon Madame; that Princess, after having commended her beauty, informed her of the surprise she had given the Prince of Cleves; the Prince came in immediately after: Come hither, said she to him, see, if I have not kept my word with you; and if at the same time that I show you Mademoiselle de Chartres, I don't show you the lady you are in search of. You ought to thank me, at least, for having acquainted her how much you are her admirer.

The Prince of Cleves was overjoyed to find that the lady he admired was of quality equal to her beauty; he addressed her, and entreated her to remember that he was her first lover, and had conceived the highest honour and respect for her, before he knew her.

The Chevalier de Guise, and the Prince, who were two bosom friends, took their leave of Madame together. They were no sooner gone but they began to launch out into the praises of Mademoiselle de Chartres, without bounds; they were sensible at length that they had run into excess in her commendation, and so both gave over for that time; but they were obliged the next day to renew the subject, for this