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The Works of George Lord Lyttleton

Lyttelton, George <Lord>

London, 1774

XVI. Louise De Coligni, Princess of Orange - Frances Walsingham,
Countess of Essex and of Clanrickard; before, Lady Sidney.

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DIALOGUE XVI.

LOUISE DE COLIGNI, Princess of Orange.

FRANCES WALSINGHAM, Countess of Essex and of Clanrickard; before Lady SIDNEY.

PRINCESS OF ORANGE.

OUR destinies, madam, had a great and surprising conformity. I was the daughter of admiral Coligni, you of secretary Walsingham, two persons who were the most consummate statesmen and ablest supports of the Protestant religion, in France, and in England. I was married to Coligni, the finest gentleman of our party, the most admired for his valour, his virtue, and his learning: you to Sir Philip Sidney, who enjoyed the same pre-eminence among the English. Both these husbands were cut off, in the flower of their youth and of glory, by violent deaths, and we both married again with still greater men; I with William Prince of Orange, the founder of the Dutch Commonwealth; you with Devereux earl of Essex, the favourite of Elizabeth, and of the whole English nation. But, alas! to compleat the resemblance of our fates, we both saw those second husbands, who had raised us so high, destroyed in the full meridian of their glory and greatness; mine by the pistol of an assassin; your's still more unhappily, by the axe, as a traitor.

See Du Maurier Memoires de Hollande, from p. 177 to 190. Biographia Britannica. Essex.

COUNTESS OF CLANRICKARD.

There was indeed in some principal events of our lives the conformity you observe. But your destiny, though it raised you higher than me, was more unhappy than mine. For my father lived honourably, and died in peace: your's was assassinated in his old age. How, madam, did you support or recover your spirits under so many misfortunes?

PRINCESS OF ORANGE.

The prince of Orange left an infant son to my care. The educating of him to be worthy of so illustrious a father, to be the heir of his virtue as well as of his greatness, and the affairs of the commonwealth, in which I interested myself for his sake, so filled my mind, that they in some measure took from me the sense of my grief, which nothing but such a great and important scene of business, such a necessary task of private and public duty, could have ever relieved. But let me enquire in my turn; how did your heart find a balm to alleviate the anguish of the wounds it had suffered? what employed your widowed hours after the death of your Essex?

COUNTESS OF CLANRICKARD.

Madam, I did not long continue a widow: I married again.

PRINCESS OF ORANGE.

Married again! With what prince, what king did you marry? The widow of Sir Philip Sidney and of my lord Essex could not descend from them to a subject of less illustrious fame; and where could you find one that was comparable to either?

COUNTESS OF CLANRICKARD.

I did not seek for one, madam: the heroism of the former, and the ambition of the latter, had made me very unhappy. I desired a quiet life and the joys of wedded love, with an agreeable, virtuous, well-born, unambitious, unenterprising husband. All this I found in the earl of Clanrickard: and, believe me, madam, I enjoyed more solid felicity in Ireland with him, than I ever had possessed with my two former husbands, in the pride of their glory, when England and all Europe resounded with their praise.

PRINCESS OF ORANGE.

Can it be possible, that the daughter of Walsingham, and the wife of Sidney and Essex, should have sentiments so inferior
to

to the minds from which she sprung, and to which she was matched! Believe me, madam, there was no hour of the many years I lived after the death of the prince of Orange, in which I would have exchanged the pride and joy, I continually had in hearing his praise, and seeing the monuments of his glory in the free commonwealth his wisdom had founded, for any other delights the world could give. The cares that I shared with him, while he remained upon earth, were a happiness to my mind, because they exalted its powers. The remembrance of them was dear to me after I had lost him. I thought, his great soul, though removed to a higher sphere, would look down upon mine with some tenderness of affection, as its fellow-labourer in the heroic and divine work of delivering and freeing his country. But to be divorced from that soul! to be no longer his wife! to be the consort of an inferior, inglorious husband! I had much rather have died a thousand deaths, than that my heart should one moment have conceived such a thought.

COUNTESS OF CLANRICKARD.

Your highness must not judge of all hearts by your own. The ruling passion of *that* was apparently ambition. My inclinations were not so noble as your's, but better suited, perhaps, to the nature of woman. I loved Sir Philip Sidney, I loved the earl of Essex, rather as amiable men than as heroes and statesmen. They were so taken up with their wars and state-affairs, that my tenderness for them was too often neglected. The earl of Clanrickard was constantly and wholly mine. He was brave, but had not that *spirit of chivalry*, with which Sir Philip Sidney was absolutely possessed. He had, in a high degree, the esteem of Elizabeth, but did not aspire to her *love*; nor did he wish to be the rival of Carr or of Villers in the affection of James. Such, madam, was the man on whom my last choice bestowed my hand, and whose kindness compensated for all my misfortunes! Providence has as-

signed to different tempers different comforts. To you it gave the education of a prince, the government of a state, the pride of being called the wife of a hero; to me a *good living husband*, quiet, opulence, nobility, and a fair reputation, though not in a degree so exalted as your's. If our whole sex were to chuse between your consolations and mine, your highness, I think, would find very few of your taste. But I respect the sublimity of your ideas. Now that we have no bodies, they appear less unnatural than I should have thought them in the other world.

PRINCESS OF ORANGE.

Adieu, madam; our souls are of a different order, and were not made to sympathize or converse with each other.

DIALOGUE XVII.

MARCUS BRUTUS—POMPONIUS ATTICUS.

BRUTUS.

WELL, Atticus, I find, that, notwithstanding your friendship for Cicero and for me, you survived us both many years, with the same chearful spirit you had always possessed, and, by prudently wedding your daughter to Agrippa, secured the favour of Octavius Caesar, and even contracted a close alliance with him by your grand-daughter's marriage with Tiberius Nero.

ATTICUS.

You know, Brutus, my philosophy was the Epicurean. I loved my friends, and I served them in their wants and distresses with great generosity; but I did not think myself obliged to die when they died, or not to make others, as occasions should offer.