



Golden Age Ladies: Women Who Shaped the Courts of Francis I and Henry VIII

Sylvia Barbara Soberton

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“Two such courts as those of France and England have not been witnessed for the last fifty years.” Niccolo Sagudino, 1515

They had to be strong if they wanted to make it in a man’s world. They lived on the brink of the golden age of the European Renaissance and witnessed social and religious upheavals as the medieval world they knew crumbled to dust, replacing the old with the new.

In this new book, Sylvia Barbara Soberton paints a vivid picture of the rivalry between the courts of England and France during the reigns of Henry VIII and Francis I. Set against the backdrop of sixteenth-century court life are the interwoven stories of individual French and English noblewomen whose dramatic lives even the best of novelists would have trouble inventing.

Louise of Savoy knows that her son Francis is destined for greatness, but he faces new challenges after his accession, trusting his mother to become regent during his absence.

Mary Tudor agrees to marry Louis XII, a man thirty-four years her senior, but after his unexpected death, she decides to become no man’s pawn and marries for love, creating one of the greatest scandals in Renaissance Europe.

Claude of France may have been meek and submissive, but there is more to her character than meets the eye.

Brought up at the French court, Anne Boleyn boldly refuses to become Henry VIII’s mistress. Her refusal triggers the King’s divorce case and eventually leads to the change of religious persuasion of the entire nation.

Margaret of Alençon, Francis I’s sister, faces new challenges as her brother’s captivity after the Battle of Pavia propels her onto the diplomatic stage of Europe.

Queen Eleanor, Charles V’s sister, marries Francis I and struggles to find her place at the French court, where his glittering mistress, Anne de Pisseleu, reigns supreme and exerts more influence than any royal mistress before her.

Witnessing the warring political factions at court, the young Catherine de Medici, humiliated by her husband’s relationship with Diane de Poitiers, learns how to navigate the murky waters of courtly intrigue to emerge as the leading force on the international stage of sixteenth-century Europe.

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