THE

LIFE AND HISTORY

OF

MARY,

QUEEN OF SCOTS.

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MARY STUART, Queen of Scots, was the third child of James the Fifth and his wife Mary of Guise. That lady had already born him two sons, who died in infancy. Mary was born on the 7th December, 1542, at Linlithgow, and was only seven days old when she lost her father. James, it is said, died of a broken heart, occasioned by the defection of his nobles at the battle of Solway, where they rebelled against their sovereign, and suffered themselves to be defeated and dispersed by a handful of English.

This disgraceful transaction affected him so much, that he retired to his palace at Falkland and refused to listen to any consolation. When on his death-bed, they brought him word that hi wife had given birth to a daughter, he only re

plied, " It (meaning the crown) came with a lass, and it will go with a lass!"

When Mary attained her fifth year, it was determined to send her to France, that she might receive an education befitting her exalted station. She was accompanied by four young ladies of her own age, destined to be her play-fellows in infancy, and her companions when she grew up. They all bore the same name with their mistress, and were called the Queen's Maries.

Mary's education in France was strictly attended to, and she profited by the opportunities of instruction she enjoyed. She was mistress of several languages, and was not only the most accomplished of her sex, but was also, without exception, the most beautiful woman of her time. Her countenance was lovely; she was tall, well formed, graceful in all her actions, and her amiable and condescending manners gained the heart of all who approached her.

At this period, two powerful parties contended for the favour of the Scottish Queen. Henry VIII. of England, her paternal uncle, backed by the interest of her Protestant subjects in Scotland, wished her to marry his son, Prince Edward; and, on the other hand, her mother, the Queen Regent, with her uncles the Dukes of Guise, laboured to bring about a marriage betwixt her and the eldest son of the King of France. This they ultimately accomplished; and she was accordingly

married to the Dauphin, or eldest son of the French King. The old King soon after died, and Mary became Queen of France.

This period seems to have been the brightest portion of Mary's life. But it did not continue long; for, little more than a year after his accession to the throne of France, her husband died, and Mary was left a widow at the age of eighteen.

This melancholy change in her fortunes was, in some measure, alleviated by the pressing entreaties of her own subjects in Scotland that she would return to her native country, and take the government into her own hands. This she consented to do, and set sail for Scotland on the 15th of August, 1561. She lingered long on the deck of the galley which was conveying her home, her eye fixed on the coast of France; and when they vanished from her eyes, she exclaimed in sorrow,—" Farewell, farewell, happy France; I shall never see thee more!"

On the 20th of August Mary arrived in Leith; but little or no preparation had been made to receive her. Horses were sent to bring her and her train to Edinburgh, but they were wretched ponies, and had such tattered furniture and accoutrements, that poor Mary, when she thought of the splendid palfreys and rich apartments at the court of France, could not forbear shedding tears. The people were, however, in their way, glad to see her and about two hundred citizens

of Edinburgh, each doing his best upon a three-stringed fiddle, played below her window all night by way of welcome—a noisy serenade, which deprived her of sleep, after her fatigue.

Unfortunately for the happiness of Mary's future life, she had been educated in the strictest doctrines of the Catholic religion: the progress of the Reformation, therefore, added to the turbulent state of parties in Scotland at the time, filled her mind with anxious forebodings. She, however, behaved with great prudence, and, by her affability and condescension to all, soon made herself extremely popular.

Mary had been left a widow without children; and she was sole heir not only to the Scottish throne, but also to that of England, after the death of Queen Elizabeth. Her subjects were therefore very desirous that she should marry a second husband, a purpose which she herself encouraged and entertained. Several noblemen at home were proposed, and her hand was also solicited by foreign princes. Her views, however, were drawn towards Henry Stuart, Lord Darnley, eldest son of the Earl of Lennox. Young Darnley was remarkably tall and handsome, and perfect in all external and shewy accomplishments, but, unhappily, destitute of prudence or steadiness of character, and very loose and immoral in his habits. He was, moreover, no favourite with Queen Elizabeth of England, who began at this

time to have very great influence in the affairs of Scotland. The Queen's illegitimate brother, the Earl of Murray, a man of great abilities and power, was also strongly opposed to the marriage, and used all his influence to prevent it. Notwithstanding of all these obstacles, they were married at Edinburgh on the 29th July, 1565.

But she soon found to her cost, that she was to experience any thing but happiness in the husband she had chosen. In a very short time after the marriage, he began to treat her with great disrespect, and by his headstrong temper, and the indulgence of low and disgraceful vices, her affections were soon completely alienated from him.

Amongst other subjects of disagreement, Darnley was jealous of the power and influence of David Rizzio, Mary's Italian secretary. This man had been formerly his chosen friend, but he now hated him as his deadliest foe, and, with the assistance of some discontented noblemen, determined to destroy him.

This horrid design was effected in the most barbarous manner. One evening, while Mary was sitting at supper in a small cabinet adjoining to her bed-chamber, in company with the Countess of Argyle, Rizzio, and some other attendants, Darnley suddenly entered by a private passage. He was immediately followed by Lord Ruthven, clad in complete armour, looking pale and ghastly,

having just recovered from long sickness, and others crowded in after him, till the closet was full of armed men. While Mary demanded the purpose of their coming, Darnley stood for a moment gloomily eyeing his victim; and Rizzio, who saw that his life was aimed at, ran behind the Queen, seized hold of her gown, and implored her protection. The assassins threw down the table, and seized on the unfortunate object of their vengeance, while Darnley himself took hold of the Queen, and in spite of her tears and entreaties, Rizzio was dragged from her presence into an anti-chamber, and despatched with fifty-six wounds.—*(See Frontispiece.)*

Ruthven, after all was over, fatigued with his exertions, sat down in the Queen's presence, and called for a drink to refresh him, as if he had been doing the most harmless thing in the world.

"The witnesses, the actors, and the scene of this cruel tragedy," says an elegant historian, "render it one of the most extraordinary which history records to us. The cabinet and the bedroom still remain in the same condition in which they were at the time; and the floor near the head of the stair bears visible marks of the blood of the unhappy Rizzio."

The Queen continued to beg his life with prayers and tears; but when she learned that he was dead, she dried her tears—"I will now," she said, "study revenge!"

It was not to be expected, after this shocking outrage, that Mary could ever be reconciled to her husband. His brutal conduct entirely destroyed her happiness, and a deep and settled melancholy preyed upon her heart.

A few months after this tragical event, she was delivered of a son in the Castle of Edinburgh. A curious account is recorded of the behaviour of Elizabeth at this time.—When news of this event reached London, Queen Elizabeth was merrily engaged in dancing; but upon hearing what had happened, she left the dance, and sat down, leaning her head on her hand, and exclaiming passionately to her ladies, "Do you not hear how the Queen of Scots hath a fine son, and I am but a barren stock!"

The birth of her son did not by any means reconcile Mary to her husband: on the contrary, her dislike continued to increase to such a degree, that many of the nobility about her court began to think, that it would not be disagreeable to her to be entirely freed from such an ill-tempered husband.

Amongst those who first agitated this scheme was James, Earl of Bothwell, a man in middle age, and the head of the powerful family of Hepburn in East Lothian. He had always shown great zeal for Mary's service, and being one of those who strongly opposed the murder of Rizzio, this naturally led her to distinguish him with

many marks of her favour and regard; so much so, that the public voice, and among others that of John Knox, the distinguished reformer, accused her of being fonder of Bothwell than she ought to have been, he being a married man, and herself a married woman.

While these schemes were in agitation, Darnley fell ill at Glasgow of the small-pox. The Queen, whose affection seemed to have revived with his illness, sent him her own physician, and afterwards went herself to him. They came together to Edinburgh; and that he might enjoy free air, and be removed from the noise and bustle of the city, he was lodged without the walls, in a house called Kirk of Field. The Queen, with her infant prince, lodged in the Palace of Holyrood, from whence she frequently visited her husband, and they never seemed to have been on better terms than at the time a dreadful conspiracy against his life was on the eve of being executed.

"On the evening of the 9th February, several persons, kinsmen, retainers, and servants of the Earl of Bothwell, came in secret to the Kirk of Field. They had with them a great quantity of gunpowder; and by means of false keys they obtained entrance into the cellars of the building, where they disposed the powder in the vaults below Darnley's apartment, and especially below the spot where his bed was placed.

"About two hours after midnight, upon the ensuing morning, Bothwell himself came, disguised in a riding-cloak, to see the execution of the cruel project. Two of his ruffians went in and took means of firing the powder, by lighting a piece of slow-burning match at one end, and placing the other amongst the gunpowder. They remained for some time watching the event. The explosion presently took place, blew up the Kirk of Field, and alarmed the whole city. The body of Darnley was found in the adjoining orchard."

This horrible murder excited the strongest sensation throughout the kingdom, and all eyes were turned on Bothwell as the perpetrator; nor did Mary herself escape from partaking of the general odium.

Bothwell now no longer concealed his ambitious views. Having applied for, and obtained, a divorce from his former wife, he prevailed upon some of the most powerful nobles to recommend him as the most proper husband for the Queen; and although Mary could not with decency at once accept of the hand stained with the blood of her late husband, yet, it must be confessed, she showed little inclination to resist the efforts made by Bothwell to accomplish his purpose. Being on a visit to the young prince at Stirling, on her return to Edinburgh, she was met by Bothwell at Cramond Bridge with a thousand horse. Having disarmed her attendants, he seized the bridle of the Queen's palfrey, and without much resistance

on her part, carried her to the strong Cas
Dunbar in East Lothian. Mary, soon after
with the most unpardonable indiscretion,
to Edinburgh, and publicly married this
gate and ambitious nobleman.

But this ill-fated marriage, instead of promo
ing Mary's happiness, had the contrary effect, fo
Bothwell used her grossly ill, and being disap
pointed in getting the young prince into his keep-
ing, used such upbraiding language to her, that
she was heard to pray for a knife to stab herself
rather than endure his cruel treatment. To add
to her distress, many of the most powerful nobles
rose in arms, and avowed their determination to
rescue the young prince,—revenge the death of
Darnley,—and remove Bothwell from his usurped
power.

Bothwell and Mary assembled a body of troops
to oppose this confederacy, and the two armies
met on Carberry Hill, seven miles to the eastward
of Edinburgh. The troops of Mary were, how-
ever, ill affected to her cause, and Bothwell, after
various attempts to animate their courage, was
persuaded by the Queen to leave the field. Mary,
upon a promise of kind treatment, delivered her-
self up to the Laird of Grange, who conducted
her to Edinburgh.

As the unhappy Queen approached the capital,
led as it were in triumph, the most coarse and

insulting language was used towards her by the
populace. A banner was exhibited before her,
displaying on the one side the portrait of Darnley
as he lay murdered under a tree in the fatal orch-
ard, with these words embroidered, "Judge and
avenge my cause, O Lord!" and on the other side
the little prince on his knees, holding up his hands,
as if praying to Heaven against his father's mur-
derers; and as the Queen rode through the streets,
with her hair loose, her garments disordered,
covered with dust, and overpowered with grief,
the multitude loudly upbraided her with having
been an accomplice in her husband's murder.

The Lords of the confederacy, however, ap-
prehending danger to their cause from some symp-
toms of returning loyalty amongst the better order
of citizens, conveyed her to the strong Castle of
Lochleven, which stands on a little island sur-
rounded by a lake of the same name, and detained
her as a prisoner.

Bothwell escaped in a boat to Denmark, but
being suspected of plundering some vessel at sea,
he was thrown into prison; and, after languishing
ten years in confinement, died without the sym-
pathy of one friendly tear.

Mary was imprisoned in a rude and incon-
venient tower, where there was scarcely room to
walk thirty yards, and her brother the Earl of
Murray, was made Regent of the kingdom during
the minority of her son. They even compelled

her to sign a deed, surrendering her crown to her son; and Lord Lindsay, the most brutal and bigoted of the confederated Lords, was so unmanly as to pinch with his iron glove the arm of the poor Queen, to compel her to subscribe the deeds.

A singular incident, however, for a short time, changed the face of things, and gave a gleam of hope to the unfortunate Queen of Scots. Sir William Douglas, the Laird of Lochleven, discharged the task of Mary's jailor with considerable severity; but his youngest brother, George Douglas, a youth of eighteen, was deeply interested by her beauty and misfortunes, and had for some time been anxiously meditating her deliverance. By the help of a little boy, a kinsman of his own, called Little Douglas, he contrived to steal the key of the castle while the family were at supper. He let Mary and her attendant out of the tower when all had gone to rest,—locked the gate behind them to prevent pursuit,—placed the Queen in a little boat provided for that purpose, and rowed them to the shore, throwing the keys of the castle into the lake in the course of their passage. Lord Seaton, a party of the Hamiltons, and many of her friends, were waiting at the landing-place. They hurried her off to Niddry in West-Lothian, from which she went next day to Hamilton.

The news of the Queen's escape flew like lightning, and spread enthusiasm every where. Her

errors were now forgotten—they thought only of her misfortunes, her gentleness, grace and beauty. At the end of the week, she found herself at the head of a powerful confederacy, by which nine Bishops, eighteen Lords, and many gentlemen of high rank, engaged to defend her person, and restore her power.

But these bright prospects were soon obscured. The Regent Murray was lying at Glasgow, and although his troops were much inferior to Mary's in point of number, yet, with a just confidence in his own abilities, assisted by the experience of Kirkaldy, Morton, and other tried officers, he determined to meet the Queen's Lords, and give them battle.

The two armies met at the village of Langside, near Paisley. Too confident in their number and valour, the Hamiltons, and others of Mary's party, rushed heedlessly on to the engagement. Both parties fought with obstinacy, but the Earl of Morton decided the battle, by attacking the Hamiltons in flank, while their columns were closely engaged in front. This movement was decisive, and the Queen's army was completely routed.

From a rising ground in the neighbourhood Mary witnessed this fatal defeat, whereby all her brilliant prospects were completely extinguished. Filled with distress and terror, she instantly rode off at full speed, accompanied by a few faithful followers, and never closed her eyes till she reached

the Abbey of Dundrennan in Galloway, sixty miles from the field of battle. From this place she had it in her power either to go to France, or cross the frontier to England, and put herself under the protection of Queen Elizabeth. This last step she determined upon, contrary to the advice of her wiser attendants, who kneeled and entreated in vain.

In throwing herself upon the protection of the English Queen, Mary seems to have acted from the impulses of her own generous nature, and trusted to her feelings as a woman, and a near relation. But Elizabeth considered the Scottish Queen, not as a sister or friend in distress, but as an enemy, and determined to reduce her to the condition of a captive.

In pursuance of this line of conduct, the unfortunate Mary was surrounded with guards, and removed to Bolton Castle in Yorkshire.

For eighteen long years was Mary detained a prisoner under various pretexts of plotting with the enemies of the state, as if it was a crime for the poor Scottish Queen to long for liberty, and to favour the plans contrived by her friends for her deliverance.

Meantime, Scotland was filled with war and bloodshed; all natural ties were forgotten in the distinction of Kingsmen and Queensmen, and fathers, sons, and brothers took opposite sides, and

fought against each other. The very children of the towns and villages are said to have formed themselves into bands for King James or Queen Mary, and fought inveterately with stones, sticks, and knives.

The Earl of Murray, being now Regent of the kingdom, had attained to the height of his ambition. But it happens frequently, that when men appear most secure of the object they have been long toiling for, their views are suddenly and strangely disappointed. A blow was impending over Murray from a quarter, which, if named to the haughty Regent, he would probably have despised, since it originated in the resentment of a private man.

After the battle of Langside, six of the Hamiltons were condemned to die, but through the intercession of John Knox, received a pardon, although with the loss of their property. One of these persons was Hamilton of Bothwellhaugh, a man of a fierce and vindictive character. His lands of Woodhouselee, near Roslin, were given to one of Murray's favourites, who, in taking possession, rudely turned Hamilton's wife out of her own house, undressed, and exposed to a stormy and tempestuous night. In consequence of this brutal treatment, she became insane and died. Her husband vowed revenge against the Regent Murray, whom he considered the author of all his misfortunes.

Learning that the Regent was to pass through Linlithgow on a certain day, Bothwellhaugh secretly introduced himself into a house whose window looked to the street. He hung a black cloth on the wall of the apartment where he lay, that his shadow might not be seen from without, and spread a mattress on the floor, that the sound of his feet might not be heard from beneath. To secure his escape, he fastened a fleet horse in the garden behind the house, and barricaded the door which opened to the street. Thus prepared, he armed himself with a loaded carabine, and waited the arrival of his unsuspecting victim.

It is said that the Regent was warned of the danger, but thinking it beneath him to show any signs of fear, he kept on his way down the crowded street. As he came opposite to the fatal window, his horse was retarded by the crowd. This gave Bothwellhaugh time to take a deliberate aim; he fired his carabine, and the Regent fell, mortally wounded.

The ball, after passing through his body, killed the horse of a gentleman who rode on his right hand. His attendants rushed furiously at the door of the house from which the shot had issued; but Bothwellhaugh's precautions had been so securely taken, that they were unable to force their entrance till he had mounted his good horse, and escaped through the garden gate. He was notwithstanding pursued so closely, that he had very

nearly been taken; but after spur and whip had both failed, he pricked his horse with his dagger, and compelled him to take a desperate leap over a ditch, which his pursuers were unable to cross, and thus made his escape.—The Regent died in the course of the night, leaving a character, which has been, perhaps, too highly extolled by one class of authors, and too much depreciated by another, according as his conduct to his sister was approved or condemned.

The death of Murray seems to have been expected by Mary's friends, for the very night after it happened, the Scotts and Kerrs, two border clans, broke into England, and laid waste the country in all directions. When threatened with the vengeance of the Regent, a borderer replied that the Regent was as cold as his bridle-bit.

In consequence of the murder of the Regent, men's minds were much exasperated against one another. Various castles still held out for Mary, and among others was Dumbarton Castle. It was, however, taken from her party in the following extraordinary manner:—

Dumbarton is one of the strongest places in Scotland. It is situated on a rock, which rises almost perpendicularly from a level plain to the height of several hundred feet. On the summit of this rock the buildings are situated, and as there is only one access from below, which rises

by steps, and is strongly guarded and fortified, the fort might be almost held to be impregnable, that is, incapable of being taken. One Captain Crawfurd of Jordanhill resolved, nevertheless, to make an attempt on this formidable castle.

He took advantage of a misty and moonless night to bring to the foot of the castle-rock the scaling-ladders which he had provided, choosing for his terrible experiment the place where the rock was highest, and where, of course, less pains were taken to keep a regular guard. This choice was fortunate; for the first ladder broke with the weight of the men who attempted to mount, and the noise of the fall must have betrayed them, had there been any sentinel within hearing. Crawford, assisted by a soldier who had deserted from the castle, and was acting as his guide, next scrambled up, and contrived to make fast the second ladder, by tying it to the roots of a tree, which grew about midway up the rock. Here they found a small flat surface, that held the whole party, which was, of course, very few in number. In scaling the second precipice, another accident took place: One of the party, subject to epileptic fits, was seized by one of those attacks, brought on perhaps by terror, while he was in the act of climbing up the ladder. His illness made it impossible for him either to ascend or descend. To have slain the man would have been a cruel expedient, besides that his fall from the ladder must have alarmed the garrison. Crawford caused him,

therefore, to be tied to the ladder: then all in rest descending, they turned the ladder, and thus mounted with ease over the belly of the epileptic person. When the party gained the summit, they slew the sentinel ere he had time to give the alarm, and easily surprised the slumbering garrison, who had trusted too much to the security of their castle. This exploit of Crawford may compare with any thing of the kind which we read of in history.

In the meantime, poor Mary was kept in close confinement, carried from castle to castle, and put under various keepers. At last Elizabeth determined to bring her unhappy cousin to a public trial, for having encouraged and aided some zealous Catholics to assassinate Queen Elizabeth. And, in spite of the absurdity of trying the Queen of Scotland by the laws of England, she was found guilty by her judges, and the Parliament of England ratified this iniquitous sentence. A warrant for her execution immediately followed, and the Earls of Kent and Shrewsbury, with the High Sheriff of the county, were commanded to see this fatal mandate carried into effect.

Mary received the news of her immediate execution with the utmost firmness. "The soul," she said, "was undeserving of the joys of heaven, which would shrink from the blow of an executioner. She had not," she added, "expected that her kinswoman would have consented to her

death, but submitted not the less willingly to fate." She earnestly requested the assistanc a Catholic priest; but this favour, although gr ed to the worst of criminals, was cruelly denied her. The Queen then wrote her will, short and affectionate letters to her friends France.—Amidst the tears and lamentations her attendants, she distributed her little valuable among them, and desired them to keep them for her sake. This occupied the evening before the day appointed for her execution.

On the 8th February, 1587, the Queen, still maintaining the same calm and undisturbed appearance that she had displayed at her trial, was brought down to the great hall of the Castle of Fotheringay, where a scaffold was erected, on which was placed a block and a chair, covered with black cloth. As she passed through the hall, Sir Andrew Melville, the master of her household, was permitted to take a last leave of the mistress whom he had served long and faithfully. He burst into tears, loudly bewailing her fate, and lamenting his own in being destined to carry such news to Scotland

"Weep not, my good Melville," said the Queen "but rather rejoice, for thou shalt this day see Mary Stuart relieved from all her sorrows."

She obtained permission, with some difficulty, that her maids should be permitted to accompany her to the scaffold.

Seated in the fatal chair, she heard the death-warrant read with an unmoved countenance. The Dean of Peterborough exhorted her to renounce the errors of the Church of Rome. She listened to him with impatience, repeatedly assuring him that his exhortations were in vain, since she was resolved to die in the Catholic faith. She implored the mercy of Heaven, after the form prescribed by that church, and then prepared herself for execution, by taking off such parts of her dress as might interfere with the deadly blow. The executioners offered their assistance, but she modestly refused it, saying, she had neither been accustomed to undress before so many spectators, nor to be assisted by such servants.

The grief of her attendants now broke forth in loud lamentations; but she put her finger to her lips, as a sign for them to be silent, gave them her blessing, and desired their prayers. One of her maids covered her eyes with a handkerchief. She then laid her head upon the block, and while one of the executioners held her hands, the other, at the second stroke, severed her head from her body. The headsman held it up in his hand, streaming with blood, and the Dean of Peterborough cried out, "So perish all Queen Elizabeth's enemies!" No voice save that of the Earl of Kent answered *Amen;* the rest of the spectators stood in silent horror, their voices choked with sighs and tear

We cannot conclude this account of the unfortunate Mary better than in the words of an eminent author :—

"Thus died Mary, aged a little above forty-four "years. She was eminent for beauty, for talents, "and accomplishments, nor is there reason to "doubt her natural goodness of heart, and coura-"geous manliness of disposition. Yet she was, "in every sense, one of the most unhappy prin-"cesses that ever lived, from the moment when "she came into the world, in an hour of defeat "and danger, to that in which a bloody and vio-"lent death closed a weary captivity of eighteen "years."

THE END.