

MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS: THE YOUNG QUEEN

Elizabeth Ann Bonner

It is just over four hundred years since Mary Queen of Scots was executed at Fotheringay Castle on 8 February 1587. In acknowledgement of this anniversary, a number of historians have published books, essays and articles which seek to re-evaluate and place in perspective the historical Mary as Queen of Scots, rather than the figure of myth and legend that she has become in the past four hundred years. In the preface of her contribution to these writings, *Mary Queen of Scots: A Study in Failure*, Dr Jenny Wormald observes that 'it is frankly inconceivable that any centenary of any English ruler would be so swamped with tours, plays, conferences, exhibitions, books, pamphlets, newspaper articles, radio and television programmes, which have been such a prolific feature of the Marian centenary in 1987— mainly in Scotland, but also, be it said, in England as well. From the Mass said in the parish church at Fotheringay on 7 February right through to the Edinburgh—or perhaps more accurately Marian—Festival and beyond'. The public enthusiasm for the legend, continues Wormald, 'has far less to do with the historical Mary than with that particular tendency of the Scots to follow the lead given by Sir Walter Scott and turn their history into tartan romance, making folk-heroes of failures and thugs, be they Mary Queen of Scots, Rob Roy or Bonnie Prince Charlie. No amount of scholarly history ... will ever combat it completely; that is the frustration of being a historian of Scotland, aware that the reality which was the kingdom of Scotland is so much more fascinating than the romantics could ever make it.'¹ Nevertheless, says Wormald, 'as the subject of historical studies, and heroine of romantic fiction, Mary Queen of Scots has a massive lead over all other earthly Maries, only the Virgin scoring more heavily'. In the 1962 *Catalogue of Printed Books* at the British Library, for example, Mary Queen of Scots has 455 books devoted to her whilst her contemporary in England, Mary Tudor, has but 73.²

An earlier version of this paper was presented at the N.S.W. Parliament House on 30 November 1988, on the occasion of the International Meeting of the Clans which was held in Sydney in recognition of the bicentenary of European settlement in Australia.

¹ J. Wormald, *Mary Queen of Scots: A Study in Failure* (London, 1988), pp. 7–8.

² Wormald, *Mary Queen of Scots*, pp. 12–13.

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Moreover, as Professor Michael Lynch points out, 'Mary Queen of Scots was a legend before she was born. At the time of the Pilgrimage of Grace in 1536, there were excited rumours in the North of England of a child queen's imminent arrival, which would liberate the Catholic north from the oppression and heresy of Henry VIII.'³ And it was not long after her arrival in France in 1548 that French poets, such as Ronsard, were composing poems praising her beauty and charms. For the sixteenth century alone H. E. Phillips identifies over three hundred tracts, treatises, poems, pamphlets, eulogies, condemnations and books of diverse genre and scholarship, many of them still in manuscript form, reflecting contemporary opinion as it unfolded over the course of Mary's life. These sixteenth-century works established, says Lynch, 'a Marian Mythology, but it needs to be distinguished from the genre of Marian Martyrology which came later and was largely confessional in motivation'.⁴ From contemporary literature emerged opposing opinions of Mary as 'Catholic Martyr' or 'Papist Plotter'. According to Lynch, it is, in part, this black and white opinion about her that has fuelled the 'Mary-Queen-of-Scots' industry. The perennial fascination of Mary is shared by historians with writers of every genre and can be explained by the fact that it shares the essential ingredients of popular fiction: sex, murder and intrigue, with a dash of religiosity. 'Equally, the material is endlessly recyclable because, like a good murder mystery the evidence can point in different directions; as indeed it was designed to do, for much of it was the product of competing intelligence networks, which operated in a half-real world ... conditioned to think in terms of plotting and counter espionage.'⁵

The eulogies and poems from her girlhood years extolling her beauty and charms came not only from French poets, but also were composed in a similar vein by the Scottish poet and religious reformer, George Buchanan, who used his position at the French court to petition the king for a comfortable ecclesiastical benefice in France; and who followed Mary to Scotland, where she rewarded his attentions with the Abbey of Crossraguel. Buchanan eventually exchanged the Abbey for a not inconsiderable pension along with his Catholic religion to become Mary's most vicious detractor. This was in the wake of her disastrous second and third marriages to Darnley and Bothwell and her flight to England, which gave rise to writing of a much more partisan nature. 'The heights were reached,' asserts Wormald, 'with her execution in 1587, when accusers and defenders alike rushed into print,

³ M. Lynch, ed., 'Mary Stewart: Queen in Three Kingdoms', *Innes Review*, vol. XXXVIII (1987), p.1; also published by Blackwell (Oxford, 1988), p. 1.

⁴ Lynch, *Mary Stewart*, p. 2.

⁵ Lynch, *Mary Stewart*, p. 3.

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producing works with titles like *An excellent dytte made as a generall rejoycinge for the cuttinge of the Scottishe queene*, compared with *The Martyrdom of the Queen of Scotland*.⁶ The language from both sides was emotive and impassioned. Adam Blackwood, one of Mary's earliest and most strenuous defenders, collected and contributed to a set of poems known as *de Jezebelis*. 'Jezebel was Elizabeth of England,' he wrote, 'that she-wolf, monster of vice and cruelty, sprung of vicious and degenerate stock, for she was born of the incestuous relationship between Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn, who was not only his wife, but his illegitimate daughter.'⁶

Professor Lynch observes that 'although the volume of contemporary evidence is huge, it needs to be understood ... that other evidence was deliberately destroyed, such as the copies of the personal correspondence from the 1580s between Mary and David Chalmers, her former privy councillor, which were held at one stage by Elizabeth's minister, William Cecil, Lord Burghley.'⁷ There is also a serious imbalance in the evidence of Mary's personal reign from 1561 to 1567 says Lynch: 'the most sustained and compelling accounts of it come from the pens of Protestant apologists such as John Knox and Sir Thomas Randolph, English ambassador in Scotland during most of the 1560s';⁸ and, most important of all, from George Buchanan, who wrote *De jure regni apud Scotos* 'to provide, among other things a theoretical justification of the rebellion of the Scottish Lords against Mary; he wrote *Ane detectioun of the doinges of Marie quene of Scottes*, to prove her guilt in the murder of Darnley; and eventually he wrote the *Complete History of Scotland*, the grand climax of which purported to show that throughout her personal reign Mary had schemed to establish a tyranny, and behaved recklessly and maliciously at all times, and had ultimately devised the murder of her husband [Darnley] at the hands of her paramour [Bothwell].'⁹ In 1958, following a detailed examination of these texts, W. A. Gatherer concluded that 'Buchanan's account of Mary's reign', the accuracy of which, he says, 'has not been re-assessed since the eighteenth century', contains 'a substratum of truth but it is constructed on a mass of falsehood'. That is to say, continues Gatherer:

Buchanan had before him a sequence of events of undeniable authenticity, while there was also available to him a great deal of

⁶ Wormald, *Mary Queen of Scots*, p. 13.

⁷ Lynch, *Mary Stewart*, p. 3.

⁸ Lynch, *Mary Stewart*, p. 3.

⁹ W. A. Gatherer, *The Tyrannous Reign of Mary Stewart: George Buchanan's Account* (Edinburgh: University Press, 1958), pp. vii–viii.

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circumstantial evidence which could have been used against the Queen with much effect; but instead of relying upon irrefutable evidence he saw fit to build his indictment on allegations and insinuations which are demonstrably suspect. [Buchanan's] case is blatantly over-stated: so much so that there is just cause for suspecting that he had much to hide. He seems to have adopted the principle that his best means of defending his own faction was to attack the other side, and he singled out the Queen, accusing her of crimes which resulted from actions initiated by others, including the very people whom he was most anxious to protect. The truth about Mary's rôle in the action cannot be established from an examination of Buchanan's work: But what can be established is that his case against her is inaccurate and dishonest.¹⁰

Against the formidable array of talented Protestant writers, observes Lynch, Mary's Catholic apologists, such as 'John Leslie, Bishop of Ross, largely disappoint in both their scope and the amount of detail they provide. Much of the impression of an aimless drift in Mary's policy between 1561 and 1566 stems from the absence of a specifically contemporary apologia; the accounts of the Marian courtiers, Sir James Melville and Lord Herries, both written much later, have the whiff of rationalized memoirs about them.'¹¹ After the furious clamour of the sixteenth century of the debate of Mary's innocence or guilt, which has always been international in nature, the next 150 years excited little more than publication and re-publication of the sixteenth-century material. The accession of Mary's Protestant son, James VI of Scotland as James I of England in 1603, however, cooled anti-Marian passion. James constructed magnificent tombs for the two protagonists, Mary and Elizabeth, in Westminster Abbey; and the more-or-less 'official' account of Elizabeth's reign by William Camden in his *Annals* (1615) emphasised Mary's evil fortunes rather than her evil character.¹²

Then, says Wormald, in the mid-eighteenth century the storm broke, when in 1754 the antiquary and historian, William Goodall, published *An examination of the letters said to be written by Mary Queen of Scots to James, Earl of Bothwell; shewing by intrinsick and extrinsick evidence that they are forgeries*. Mary, the historical ruler, who might or might not have made disastrous political mistakes, gave way to the woman who might or might not have written the 'Casket Letters'; and scholars plunged into the

¹⁰ Gatherer, *Tyrannous Reign*, p. ix.

¹¹ Lynch, *Mary Stewart*, pp. 3-4.

¹² William Camden, *Annales Rerum Anglicarum et Hibernicarum Regnante Elizabetha* (London, 1615); and Wormald, *Mary Queen of Scots*, p. 14.

absorbing task of deciding whether letters, whose originals had not been seen since 1584, and whose texts had been translated from French into Scots and then back into French, were forgeries or not. 'Scholarly ink mixed with scholarly gall, was poured forth upon this fascinating and wholly insoluble mystery.' Goodall's opinion inspired almost immediate counterblasts. In their respective histories of Scotland and England, published in 1759, those great figures of the Enlightenment, William Robertson and David Hume, both argued for Mary's guilt of adultery (with Bothwell) and murder (of Darnley) on the grounds that the 'Casket Letters' were genuine; and they in turn were attacked a year later by William Tytler in his *Historical and Critical Enquiry in the Evidence against Mary Queen of Scots*. The complaint of the eighteenth-century historian, David, Lord Hailes, that 'the Marian controversy has already become too angry and too voluminous' was prophetic. The hurricane would never blow itself out; and at its eye was a figure already taking on the lineaments of a familiar enough twentieth-century 'type', the male-dominated, passion-ridden female so well-known to the readers of Mills and Boon or the novels of Barbara Cartland.¹³ Thus the stage was set, the plot, sub-plots and endless variations were already fleshed out for numerous novels, plays, an opera and, more recently, films; all of which have almost totally submerged the historical public figure of Mary as Queen of Scots with dramatic innuendo and a frequent over-indulgence of poetic licence, by a relentless pursuit of the private morality of the private Mary Stewart.

However, in the past twenty years or so a more serious mantle has descended upon the life and times of Mary Queen of Scots of which Lady Antonia Fraser's biography, says Wormald, is a substantial example of what may be regarded as a new and sober school of historians: 'Professors Gordon Donaldson and Ian Cowan have both tried to assess her as a character of history rather than drama, going further than Lady Antonia in considering her political rôle.'¹⁴ More recently, in 1983, Professor Donaldson has gone even further in *All the Queen's Men*: a fascinating study of Mary's supporters and opponents during her personal reign. Yet there is still more to uncover. In his book, *The Enigma of Mary Stuart*, Professor Cowan observed:

The enigma (of innocent martyr or adulterous murderess, the dual legend created in the sixteenth century) will persist until histories of the Queen of Scots no longer command attention. Historians will never agree to her character, and in these circumstances, it is perhaps inevitable that the picture of a romantic but ill-fated queen painted by

¹³ Wormald, *Mary Queen of Scots*, pp. 15–16.

¹⁴ Wormald, *Mary Queen of Scots*, p. 17.

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Schiller and Swinburne, amongst others, is the one most likely to engage popular sympathy.¹⁵

Some writers have argued that many of the problems Mary encountered during her personal reign, after she returned to Scotland in 1561, were due to the fact that she had been brought up at the French court and was unused to Scottish ways. There is no denying that Mary was profoundly affected by her education in France, but whether this was the cause of later problems is less certain. Professor Cowan says that these arguments 'carry little weight'.¹⁶ Of perhaps greater importance was the relationship with the French of the Scots nobles, lay and ecclesiastic, who accepted French gold, pensions, military orders, lands and benefices. Also important were relations with France during the Regency of Marie de Guise-Lorraine, mother of Mary Queen of Scots. Of equal importance were the opinions of scholars, such as Buchanan and Knox, whose extremist views in their respective *Histories* have produced such unbalanced interpretations of Scottish history, even unto the present day. To cite a cogent example: chapters three and four of Dr Wormald's, *Mary Queen of Scots*, covering the period 1542–1560, owe much to John Knox's bigoted interpretation, although Knox is not specifically cited—the author having elected not to substantiate with footnotes any of these claims, theories, theses or ideas in her book. Lynch's review article of Wormald's book in the *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, and Sybil Jack's book-review in the *Journal of Religious History* (1990) should both be given worthy consideration when examining any aspect of Mary Queen of Scots.¹⁷ Other important aspects to be taken into consideration were the attitudes taken by all these 'Queen's Men', as Professor Donaldson calls them, towards the 'new' religion and towards England, following the death of the French king, Henri II in 1559, the expulsion of the French from Scotland by the English in 1560, and the establishment of the Scottish Reformation in the same year.

The period 1542 to 1560 was unique in Scottish history. Mary was not only the youngest monarch, but she was also the first sovereign queen of Scotland, and her mother was the longest serving and most influential of all the Queen Dowagers, and the only one appointed to rule as Regent, from April 1554 until her death in June 1560, by the Parliament of Scotland. Furthermore, the French king's eldest son, François, following his marriage

¹⁵ I. B. Cowan, *The Enigma of Mary Stuart* (London, 1971), p. 34.

¹⁶ Cowan, *Enigma*, p. 38.

¹⁷ M. Lynch, 'Mary Queen of Scots: A New Case for the Prosecution', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, vol. 41, no. 1 (1990).

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on 24 April 1558 to Mary Queen of Scots, was the first and last king of both Scotland and France, following his father's death on 10 July 1559. Mary was born on 8 December 1542 at a time when the army of Henry VIII was waging war on Scotland, and the unexpected death of her father, James V, six days later, created a situation whereby the young Queen of Scots was to become a pawn—or rather knight or even queen—on the Anglo/French and Scottish political chessboard. If you look at the genealogical tables of the English, French and Scottish monarchies in the sixteenth century, you will see that Mary Queen of Scots is significant to all three. She was related to all the Tudors as the grand-daughter of Margaret Tudor, Henry VIII's sister; she was Queen of Scots as James V's sole heir; and she was queen-consort of François II, king of France, from July 1559 to December 1560.

Immediately after the infant queen's accession, Henry VIII resolved upon the union of the kingdom of Scotland to England by securing Mary's marriage to his only son and heir, the future Edward VI. The betrothal was negotiated by the Peace and Marriage Treaties of Greenwich on 1 July 1543, only to be renounced by the Scottish Parliament six months later, owing to Henry's failure to ratify the treaties, his failure to observe the peace, his less than subtle diplomacy and threats of force, and to French concerns of English intervention in Scotland. Thus began the 'Rough Wooing' whereby the English strove, from 1543 to 1550, to force the Scots to accept the marriage of Mary to Edward.¹⁸ The French concerns were focused on the Queen Dowager, Marie de Guise; the dead king James V's closest adviser, Cardinal David Beaton; and the Dauphin, after 1547 Henri II, King of France. Caught between the two, or at times with a foot in either or in both camps was the vacillating, prevaricating James Hamilton, 2nd Earl of Arran, who had been acknowledged by the Scottish Parliament on 13 March 1543 as presumptive to the crown and governor of Scotland with full power until the infant Mary Queen of Scots reached her 'perfect age' of twelve years.¹⁹

In the meantime, Henry VIII had clearly lost the initiative, notwithstanding the trump cards he had seemingly held following the decisive English victory at Solway Moss on 24 November 1542 and the capture of 1,200 Scots. Ten of the captured nobles had promised Henry VIII as a condition of their release, to secure the betrothal of Mary to Edward, to arrange for her removal to England, and to send Cardinal Beaton south at the

¹⁸ M. H. Merriman, 'The Assured Scots', *Scottish Historical Review*, XLVII, (1968), p. 10.

¹⁹ That is, the age at which Mary could legally ascend the throne.

same time.²⁰ Following the Scottish Parliament's renunciation of the treaties of Greenwich on 11 December 1543, Henry VIII began his 'Rough Wooing'. His conventional tactics had their antecedents in previous Anglo/Scottish relations: bribery of disaffected nobles, encouragement of a rival claimant to the established regency, massive military assaults (on Edinburgh in 1544 and on the Tweed Valley in 1545), constant harassment of the Borders and additionally, encouragement of religious reformation.

The death of Henry VIII at the end of January 1547, and two months later of François I, changed the whole complexion of French policy in Scotland. In April 1547, Sir Adam Otterburn, the Scottish ambassador in London, reported to Marie de Guise that he had news from the French court 'that your friends are great councillors and rulers ... the old rulers both men and women are passed'.²¹ In June, further assurances came directly from the French court that Henri II praised her work in Scotland and he also promised substantial help.²² Henri kept his word and a French fleet arrived at St Andrews on 24 July.²³ The French forces, assisted by Arran, ended a fourteen-month siege of St Andrews Castle held by the 'Castilians': a group of mainly Protestant sympathisers, including John Knox, who had

²⁰ *Acts of the Privy Council of England*, ed. J. R. Dasent (London, 1890–1907), vol. 1, p. 69. They included Gray, Cassillis, Glencairn, Fleming, Somerville reinforced by Angus, George Douglas and Bothwell, who were already in exile. See G. Donaldson, *James V–James VII* (Edinburgh, 1965) repr. (1978) p. 64. According to Holinshed, the prisoners, genuinely impressed by Henry's leniency and liberty, themselves suggested the marriage, *Chronicle*, pp. 829–30.

²¹ A. I. Cameron, ed., *The Scottish Correspondence of Mary of Lorraine, 1542–1560*, Scottish History Society, 3rd series (Edinburgh, 1927) p. 180. The editor comments that 'the ascendancy of the Guises in the Councils of France became assured on the accession of Henri II. Besides their own predominating influence, they had the support of the King's all-powerful mistress, Diane de Poitiers, Madame de Valentinois.' See Cameron, n. 1, p. 180.

²² Marguerite Wood, ed., *Foreign Correspondence with Marie de Lorraine, 2 vols.*, translated from the Balcarres Papers, Scottish History Society, 3rd series (Edinburgh, 1923 & 1925), vol. 1, p. 166; cited hereafter as *Balcarres Papers*.

²³ T. Thomson, ed., *The Diurnal of Remarkable Occurents ... in Scotland, 1513–1575*, Bannatyne Club, 45 (Edinburgh, 1833) p. 44.

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assassinated Cardinal David Beaton on 29 May 1546, and who had been supported during their occupation by English money and munitions.²⁴

Whilst Henri II backed up his hegemonic aims in Scotland with gifts, arms, men and money, in what might be described as 'peaceful persuasion' of the Scots, the Duke of Somerset, uncle and Protector of Edward VI, pursued Henry VIII's 'Rough Wooing' even more assiduously than his dead master. In fact, Somerset came very close to success. On 10 September 1547, he destroyed a Scottish army in the battle of Pinkie, the occasion of Huntly's memorable quip and the origin of the sobriquet: 'I ... haud well wyth the mariage, but i lyke not this wooying'.²⁵ Shortly after Pinkie, permanent English garrisons were laid out along the Anglo-Scottish Border and the south-eastern area and coast of Scotland. These strategically placed forts created an area of almost complete English domination, which they called the 'Pale'. By control of this area, Somerset hoped to dissipate the ability of the Scottish regency to resist the demand for the marriage to Edward. It is therefore not too difficult to understand, in the aftermath of Pinkie, and in face of overwhelming English domination of the Borders that the Scottish Council 'discussed the possibility of Mary Queen of Scots going to France'.²⁶

Henri II was not slow to take advantage of the anti-English sentiment and fears of English hegemony in Scotland. On 27 January 1548 Arran accepted Henri II's *douceur* of a French duchy in return for an assurance from the governor that he would secure the consent of the Scottish Parliament to the marriage of Mary Queen of Scots to the Dauphin, the conveyance of the young queen to France, and the delivery of strongholds into French hands. Furthermore, Henri II strengthened his bribe by persuading Pope Paul III to delay the confirmation of John Hamilton, Arran's half-brother, to the Archbishopric of St Andrews, until the Scots agreed to the marriage. As an

²⁴ For further analysis on this subject see Elizabeth Bonner, 'The Recovery of St. Andrews Castle in 1547: French Naval Policy and Diplomacy in the British Isles', *English Historical Review* (1996).

²⁵ W. Patten, *The Expedition into Scotlande of the most woorthely fortunate Prince Edward, Duke of Soomerset ... by way of a diarie* (1548). Facsimile of Cambridge University Library, MS. Syn. 8.54.38, repr. (Amsterdam, 1972). The sobriquet, however, did not gain currency until Sir Walter Scott coined the phrase: 'Even those who liked the proposed match best, were, to use an expression of the time, disgusted with so rough a mode of wooing', *Tales of a Grandfather; being Stories from the History of Scotland*, 3 vols. (Edinburgh, 1828), III, 85.

²⁶ Donaldson, *James V-James VII*, p. 78.

added incentive, the French king also promised Arran that his son and heir would marry the elder daughter of the Duke of Montpensier. On 7 July 1548, the Scottish Parliament 'agreed that Mary should marry the Dauphin, while an undertaking was given on behalf of the King of France, in general terms, to maintain the realm and lieges of Scotland in their customary freedom, liberties and laws'.²⁷ In the same month Mary was removed to France, Arran was rewarded by the completion of his half-brother's appointment to St Andrews, and in February 1549 he became Duke of Châtellerault. When the six-year-old Queen of Scots arrived at Roscoff in Brittany on 20 August 1548, Henri II gave her the rank of Dauphine. He instructed the governor of the royal children, Monsieur d'Humières, that 'he intended that she should walk ahead of his own children until the marriage is concluded, and until she was crowned queen he wished her to be honoured as such'.²⁸ From that time 'the King of France considered Scotland to be the realm of his son, the dauphin, François'.²⁹

Mary's upbringing in France was supervised by her grandmother the Duchess of Guise, Antoinette de Bourbon. She lived in the household of the royal children of Henri II and Catherine de Medici, which increased from three children at the time of Mary's arrival in 1548 to ten by 1556, seven of whom survived childhood. From the beginning Mary had a warm and loving friendship with François, her betrothed, who was a year younger. Lamartine says that 'the poets of the court soon began to celebrate in their verses the marvels of her beauty and the treasures of her mind'. By general consent she was one of the most irresistible young women in France. In person she was tall and graceful, with dark brown eyes, chestnut hair, and a pale delicate complexion. Her main course of study was directed towards the attainment of the best European languages. So graceful was her French that the judgement of the most learned men recognised her command of the language; nor did she

²⁷ *Balcarres Papers*, vol. I, p. 197 and vol. II, p. xxxvi; see also Donaldson, *James V–James VII*, pp. 78–79.

²⁸ L. Romier, *Les Origines Politiques des Guerres de Religion*, 2 vols., (Paris, 1913–14) vol. I, p. 77, n. 4, cf. Henri II au duc d'Aumale, 18 Oct. 1548, *Mémoires-Journaux de Guise*, p. 2; 24 Aug. 1548, Torino, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, Fonds Français 3120, fol. 69.

²⁹ Romier, *Les Origines*, vol. I, p. 77, n. 5. cf. 'Il regno del delfino', L'év. de Ceneda au Card. Farnèse, 19 Nov. 1548, Poissy, Archivio Segreto Vaticano, Rome, Registro Principi, vol. XIV, fol. 102.

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neglect Spanish, Italian or Latin, although she followed Latin more readily than she spoke it.³⁰

Although she did not realise it at the time the happiest years of her life were coming to an end. Mary and François were married on 24 April 1558 in a magnificent ceremony at the Cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris. The air was filled with shouting and music, for the trumpeters, drummers and fiddlers accompanied the procession from the Palais de Louvre. There were noblemen in jeweled satins and velvets, churchmen in exquisitely embroidered vestments and servants in scarlet and yellow livery. Previously, by negotiation and the documents signed in secret three weeks before the marriage, Mary bequeathed Scotland to the King of France. Failing issue of the marriage, she put her kingdom in pledge to him for sums spent on its defence and on her education. 'The belief in France was that the sovereignty of Scotland had, quite simply, been transferred to the French Royal House'.³¹ On 29 November 1558 the Scottish Parliament gave its consent that the queen might 'honour hir spous ... with the crowne matrimoniale ... during the marriage'. Professor Donaldson observes that 'the prospect for Scotland was rule by Francis II and Mary and their descendants, under whom Scotland could hardly fail to be governed as a province of France'.³²

Also in November 1558, soon after the death of Mary Tudor, Henri II claimed the throne of England for his daughter-in-law, Mary, who was, according to Henri II, the rightful and legitimate inheritor. (Elizabeth was declared to be the illegitimate offspring of the heretic and schismatic and excommunicated, Henry VIII. This was the official opinion of Pope Paul IV and the states and kingdoms of Western Europe, the vast majority of whom, in 1558, were still Catholic.) The grand display which was intended for the public assertion of Mary's right to the crown of England was reserved for the day of the tournament on 30 June 1559, which was held in the great square in front of the Palais de Tournelles in Paris, to celebrate the Peace of Cateau-Cambrésis, the marriage of Henri II's daughter, Elisabeth, to Philip II of Spain, and the betrothal of the French king's sister Marguerite, to the Duke of Savoy. On the first day of the tournament, 'Mary was born to her place in the royal balcony in a sort of triumphal car, emblazoned with the royal

³⁰ Cowan, *Enigma*, pp. 40–41, cf. Conn, *Vitae Mariae Stuartae* in Jebb, *De Vita et Rebus*, vol. II, p. 15.

³¹ Donaldson, *James V–James VII*, p. 88, n. 16, cf. Teulet, *Relations Politiques*, vol. II, pp. 121–22.

³² Donaldson, *James V–James VII*, p. 89, n. 17 cf. Teulet, *Relations Politiques*, vol. II, pp. 312–17.

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escutcheon of England and Scotland', explained a Latin distich, of which Strype has given this quaint version:

The Armes of Marie Quene Dolphines of France,
The nobillest lady in earth for till advance;
Of Scotland Quene, of Ingland also,
Of Ireland also God hath providit so.³³

It was at this same tournament that Henri II suffered a mortal wound in the jousts which was accidentally inflicted by Gabriel de Montgomery, son of Jacques de Montgomery, Sieur de Lorges, captain of the king's own *garde écossaise*. The king died ten days later of an overwhelming infection of the brain, leaving the fifteen-year-old François and the sixteen-year-old Mary as king and queen of both France and Scotland. Mary's claim to the English throne had suddenly taken on a significance of much greater proportions, which was to bedevil Mary's relationship with England and Elizabeth for the remainder of her life.

In the aftermath of the King's death, the French court and government was a turmoil of competing factions from which Mary's uncles, François duc de Guise and Charles, Cardinal de Lorraine, emerged as victors. Mary struggled to understand affairs of state under instruction from the Cardinal, whilst the young king spent most of his time hunting. On 11 June 1560, Mary's mother died in Edinburgh, and the Scots signed a peace treaty with England a few weeks later. By the end of the year Mary again found herself in mourning; the young king of France having died of a brain abscess on 5 December 1560, three days before Mary's eighteenth birthday, leaving her the second Queen Dowager of France after Catherine de Medici.

Mary returned to Scotland on 19 August 1561, arriving at Leith in a thick fog which to John Knox, at least, was a portent of bitter troubles ahead:

The very face of heaven, the time of her arrival, did manifestly speak what comfort was brought into this country with her, to wit, sorrow, dolour, darkness and all impietie; for in the memorie of man, that day of the year, was never seen a more dolorous face of the heaven, than was at her arrival, which two days after did so continue; ... The sun was not seen to shine two days before, nor two days after. That for warning gave God unto us; but alas the most part were blind.³⁴

³³ Cowan, *Enigma*, p. 45.

³⁴ Cowan, *Enigma*, pp. 46–7, cf. John Knox, *Works*, vol. II., pp. 268–69.

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Knox at this time was writing verbose letters to Queen Elizabeth begging to be allowed to return to England, and asking her forgiveness for his tract: *The First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment of Women*, written and published in Geneva in early 1558 against Mary Tudor and Marie de Guise who were ruling England and Scotland respectively at that time and both of whom were Catholic. Elizabeth never allowed him to return to England nor did she ever forgive him or his words. The first few lines of Knox's *The First Blast* are sufficient to demonstrate Queen Elizabeth's objections:

To promote a woman to bare rule, superiority, dominion or Empire above any realme, nation, or city is repugnant to nature, contumely to God, a thing most contrarious to his revealed will and approved ordinance, and finally it is a subversion of good order, of all equity and justice.³⁵

According to Professor Cowan, 'few of Mary's subjects saw the arrival of their queen at the age of eighteen in such gloomy light and the festivities which welcomed her were sincere if tinged with reminders that Scotland was a kingdom in which the Protestants had gained ascendancy; a point which Mary had herself recognized by accepting the advice of her half-brother, Lord James Stewart, and landing at Leith (near Edinburgh) rather than the pro-Catholic north. While opinions may vary on Mary's political sagacity on her arrival in Scotland,' continues Cowan, 'most commentators, Knox and a few like-minded bigots excepted, have usually accepted and respected Mary's wish to have the mass for herself and her household. Her ostensible policy of private Catholicism and public Protestantism was, however, a dangerous platform for even the most skilful politician, and had Mary not shown willingness to place herself in the hands of two Protestant advisers, Lord James Stewart and William Maitland of Lethington, her secretary of state, her personal reign might have been placed in jeopardy not long after her arrival.'³⁶

For the first four years of her personal reign from 1561 until 1565, Mary's domestic policies were to enjoy outstanding success in both political and religious spheres. On the international scene, moreover, diplomatic communications were retained between Scotland and the continental Catholic powers, including the papacy. At the same time friendly relations were maintained with Elizabeth of England in the hope of persuading her to

³⁵ Cited in Wormald, *Mary Queen of Scots*, p. 71.

³⁶ Cowan, *Enigma*, p. 46.

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recognise Mary's claim to the English succession. In Scotland, with the co-operation of Lord James Stewart (created Earl of Moray in 1562) and Maitland of Lethington, the nobility was kept in check, a task more easily accomplished after the defeat of the Earl of Huntly at Corrichie in October 1562. As regards religion, Mary acted on more than one occasion as though the statutes which she refused to ratify had the force of law. Thus, while the act forbidding the saying of the Mass lacked legal sanction, a proclamation of the Privy Council with similar intent was frequently acted upon. Under its terms several priests were punished for saying Mass and for a time the Archbishop of St Andrews, John Hamilton, was also imprisoned. Likewise, in contradistinction to papal authority, Mary could declare in charters confirming the sale of church lands in 1565, that her assent was 'as lauchful and of als griet strenth and avale as from the Pope and the sete of Rome'. This attitude is also to be seen in the fact that while she resolutely refused to recognise the Protestant Church, she accepted, in 1562, some measure of financial compromise by which the Reformed Church should be maintained from general taxation of the old church. By this arrangement two-thirds of their former revenues were left with the old incumbents, and the remaining one-third was to be collected by the government for allocation between itself and the reformed ministry.³⁷

In political terms these policies had much to recommend them. For the first four years of her personal reign, Mary walked the political tightrope with the expertise of her mother, governing her Protestant kingdom and yet retaining her Catholicism as a passport to European importance and with it her claim to the English throne. Nevertheless, it is open to question how far these policies were personal, or rather those of Mary's two chief advisers. The queen is certainly to be found carrying through the traditional duties of the monarch by presiding at meetings of the council, attending the opening of Parliament and holding Justice Ayres in various parts of the kingdom throughout which she traversed at regular intervals, but her critics aver that her real interest lay only in the pleasures of music, dancing and the chase. Mary's dependence upon Moray and Maitland may have made this inevitable, and in an age in which sovereignty was increasing in importance, she may have found this intolerable. Marriage alone could free her from this bondage and Darnley may have been seen, not only as an adjunct to the claim to the English throne (succession to which she failed to secure) but also as the means of disposing with the advice of others. Perhaps it was for this reason that Mary eventually abandoned a system which had served her so well. She

³⁷ Cowan, *Enigma*, p. 52.

could not have foreseen that her policies, and the husband whom she had chosen to help her, would both prove unequal to the occasion.³⁸

From almost the moment of her widowhood, the question of Mary's remarriage became the subject of discussion throughout Europe. Her brother-in-law, Charles IX of France, the Kings of Denmark and Sweden, the heir to the Spanish throne, Don Carlos, the Archduke Charles of Austria, and Henry Stewart, Lord Darnley, and James Hamilton, 3rd Earl of Arran, were deemed possible competitors for Mary's hand. Mary's preference was undoubtedly for a continental marriage. However, most of the foreign contenders had too little to offer by way of return, for Mary was almost certainly seeking the necessary resources to help her to implement her claim to the English succession. This left only those closer to home since Charles IX was never a serious contender because of the strenuous objections to the match by his mother, Catherine de Medici, and the insanity of Don Carlos was finally admitted in 1564. With Arran also insane, Mary's choice of suitors became extremely limited. Hence, perhaps, Elizabeth's disparaging offer of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, and the permission granted to Henry, Lord Darnley—next in succession to the English throne after Mary herself—to return to Scotland.³⁹ Dr Simon Adams says that Elizabeth feared that Mary would accept the marriage proposal of Leicester. In fact, Adams asserts, 'Elizabeth sought simply to keep Mary unmarried indefinitely, using whatever device came to hand'.⁴⁰

Several problems surround Mary's marriage. The reaction of Elizabeth was one of indignation. Thomas Jeney's contemporary poem 'Master Randolfes Phantasey' advanced passion and lust as the principal motivation for this match, and many writers since have followed this line of thought. There is little doubt that Mary did take an instant liking to Darnley, but without the great recommendation which the marriage possessed, it is doubtful whether the affair would have prospered. Marriage to Darnley, however, would strengthen her claim to the English throne while as his mother, Countess Lennox (Margaret Tudor's daughter), if not Darnley himself, was a staunch Catholic, such a match would be to the liking of continental Catholic powers and the Pope. Although there were sound political reasons for the marriage, these had to be balanced against the inherent disadvantages of defying Elizabeth and of arousing the opposition of Moray in particular and her Protestant subjects in general. Mary's indecision

³⁸ Cowan, *Enigma*, p. 53.

³⁹ Cowan, *Enigma*, 80–81.

⁴⁰ S. Adams, 'The Release of Lord Darnley and the Failure of the Amity' in Lynch, *Mary Stewart: Queen in Three Kingdoms*, p. 127.

can be seen in a letter of Randolph to Cecil on 27 March 1565 in which he wrote, 'What to do or wherein to resolve she is marvelously in doubt'. If the awareness of the political realities of such a match were evenly balanced, the growing affection for Darnley, which blossomed as she nursed him through an attack of measles in early April, made up her mind. On 22 July 1565, before the papal dispensations had been granted, the banns were proclaimed and the marriage solemnised a week later. The forces of opposition to the marriage were massing under Moray, and it was undoubtedly deemed politically expedient to marry in order to crush the incipient revolt, a result which was quickly achieved by the 'Chase-about-raid' in which Mary demonstrated her new found authority by making Moray and his accomplices take refuge in England.⁴¹

After the abject failure of the rising by Protestant Lords and lairds in August 1565, and the flight of Moray and his supporters to England, Mary was at the height of her power. Yet it was now, only weeks into the marriage, that she discovered the harsh truth about Darnley; immature, brutal, weak and inconstant, intolerant and impulsive, her ambitious husband was not fit to be a consort, let alone a king, and she continued (unlike in her first marriage to François) to withhold the crown matrimonial from him. For solace and advice she turned more and more to David Riccio, her thirty-two-year-old Italian musician-secretary. Already an arrogant and interfering upstart in the eyes of the nobility, and a papal agent in the view of the extreme Protestants, Riccio now incurred the jealousy of a very possessive and unstable man—Darnley.

The key date for Darnley's plan was 12 March 1566: the day Parliament was due to forfeit the lives and properties of the leaders of the 'Chase-about-raid'. Darnley made a bond with these men, whereby they would be pardoned and allowed to return; in exchange, Darnley would receive the crown matrimonial and by law be king if Mary died without issue. The first stage of this plan was, it seems, the murder of Riccio. While the lords may not have been sincere in their pledges to Darnley, the first stage was duly executed. On the evening of 9 March 1566, while Morton secured the approaches to Holyrood, Darnley and his associates (among them Lindsay and Ruthven and his son) placed themselves in the Royal Palace. Mary was having supper in her private chamber when armed men burst in and dragged Riccio away, stabbing him to death in an adjoining room. It is claimed that while Mary pleaded with Darnley, Ruthven plunged Darnley's own dagger into the chest of the Italian.

⁴¹ Cowan, *Enigma*, p. 88.

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In the queen's own words: 'they dragged David with great cruelty forth from our cabinet and at the entrance of our chamber dealt him 56 dagger wounds'. Riccio's body was then, on Darnley's command, thrown down a staircase and dragged into the porter's lodge, there to be stripped. The following day Darnley discharged the imminent Parliament and the 'Chase-about' lords were pardoned. That evening Moray (notably absent from the scene of the crime) rode with his Protestant friends into Edinburgh. The next day, Monday, Mary received the lords and was effectively in their hands, but after promising to forgive them she persuaded Darnley to join her; in the early hours of Tuesday morning the couple escaped to the Earl of Bothwell's castle at Dunbar. By Sunday, Mary had gathered enough secret support to scuttle the opposition: Riccio's murderers fled to England, Moray and his friends withdrew from Edinburgh, and John Knox, who had applauded the crime, retreated to the West country. On Monday 18 March 1566, Mary made a triumphal return to Edinburgh.

Darnley's claims of innocence of Riccio's murder were soon disproved to Mary by his fellow conspirators. Darnley was now not merely friendless: almost everyone of note had some motive for killing him, a factor that would help cloud the identity of his killers the following March. Professor Lynch speculates that Darnley's bid for power would have meant little even if successful were Mary to produce an heir to the throne. When the assassins broke into her rooms they terrified a woman who was six months pregnant with the child she so desperately needed. It is possible, argues Lynch, that Darnley's fevered mind saw the possibility of killing (at least) two birds with the murder of Riccio. No doubt the victim could have been taken somewhere away from the gaze of the queen; so was Darnley's secret hope that the ordeal would induce a miscarriage? Mary might die as well, of course, leaving the way open to the throne.⁴²

The Riccio murder, even if it was a Protestant plot, did not result in the collapse of royal government or panic at court. Mary's Catholic policy continued, asserts Lynch, albeit in a more subdued fashion, for shortly afterwards it had a new vehicle, her son, to give it a fresh focus and security despite the increasingly unpredictable and bizarre behaviour of the father. Their son, born on 19 June 1566, was baptised by Catholic rites in the chapel royal at Stirling Castle in December 1566, with Darnley sulking and absent. The infant was named Charles James, taking his first name from his two

⁴² M. Lynch, 'Fatal Attraction', *Story of Scotland*, no. 13 (Glasgow, 1988), p. 350.

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uncles, Charles IX, King of France (Mary's former brother-in-law) and Darnley's brother. Young Charles James Stewart was to be crowned the following year as James VI of Scotland and in 1603 as James I of England.⁴³ Prior to the young king's coronation, however, his father was killed at Kirk o' Field which was, according to Professor Donaldson, one of the great 'whodunits' of all time and for four hundred years writer after writer has pored over the evidence. No theory has been generally accepted, however, and the likelihood is that the mystery will never be solved.

At two o'clock on the morning of 10 February 1567 Edinburgh was startled by an explosion in a building on the site of the present Old College of the University. The body of the queen's twenty-year-old husband, Darnley, was found in a garden adjoining the house where he was lodging, but he had not been 'blawn up wi' pooder', as some accounts stated; he had been smothered or strangled, but he was unmarked. Mary moaned that 'she could wish to be dead' whilst those attached to her assured Mary that she could be divorced from her husband without compromising the legitimacy of her child. For months Mary had been aware of schemes against her consort. In December 1566 she suddenly showered financial benefits on the Protestant ministers, as if to ensure their support in an imminent crisis, and she restored to John Hamilton, the Archbishop of St Andrews, the jurisdiction that would enable him to grant a divorce. She also pardoned the murderers of Riccio, who had been exiled in England and had not forgotten how Darnley, after being involved in murder, had abandoned them; to set them loose in Scotland was almost tantamount to signing her husband's death-warrant. While Mary had known that something was afoot which would probably lead to Darnley's death, it is far less certain that she was party to his murder. Something happened in January to change her attitude, possibly a sudden fear that she might be pregnant with child (perhaps Bothwell's) which everyone knew could not be her husband's.

Darnley had been pursuing his own pleasures, sulking and talking of going abroad, and had fallen ill in Glasgow, possibly of smallpox but more probably of syphilis. Now Mary suddenly decided to bring him to Edinburgh. There she lodged him in a secure house near a now abandoned church, the Kirk o' Field, adjoining the town wall and close to Holyrood. Far from luring Darnley to his doom, her aim seems to have been to preserve his life. She visited him frequently, twice spent the night in a room beneath his, and was expected to be there again on the night of 9–10 February. His convalescence

⁴³ M. Lynch, 'Queen Mary's Triumph: the Baptismal Celebrations at Stirling in December 1566', *Scottish Historical Review*, LXIX (1990).

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was progressing, and it was understood that on the following day he would return to Holyrood Palace.

Others had less interest in preserving Darnley. Politicians had no desire to see him restored to his wife's side and to be an influence in public affairs; the Riccio murderers (Morton, Lindsay and the Ruthvens) wanted their revenge; and the Earl of Bothwell, who saw Darnley's life as an obstacle to his own union with Mary, must have been confident (especially if he thought the queen might be carrying his child) that he would achieve his own ends by slaying Darnley. Neither had the politicians and the Riccio murderers reason for wanting to preserve Mary's life, and both groups may have hoped instead to run the country in the name of the infant Charles James. On the other hand, Darnley himself saw no prospect of gaining power through the agency of any Scottish faction, had recently abandoned Protestantism and adopted a novel rôle as a Papal champion whom continental Roman Catholics, disappointed with the favour Mary showed to the Protestants, might recognise as king if his wife died. Here were motives for something like four plots, three of them against Darnley (with or without Mary) and one of them by Darnley against Mary.

A single victim could surely have been killed by means simpler than a major explosion. The placing, in the vaults under the house, of sufficient gunpowder to reduce the whole building to rubble had surely been designed to destroy several people. The powder may have been put there by power-seeking conspirators who wanted to dispose of both Darnley and Mary and their immediate circle; it may have been placed there on Darnley's instructions to murder his wife and her courtiers while he himself escaped; or it may have been designed merely to put it beyond doubt that the murder of Darnley was no accident and so to draw suspicion on Mary and perhaps Bothwell as well, although Bothwell, as the most obvious suspect, was generally blamed at the time.⁴⁴

If Mary's relationship with Bothwell before the murder of Darnley is doubtful, there is less room for conjecture following that event. Mary's state of mind after her husband's death has been variously interpreted, but clearly the steps which she took to ascertain the truth were exceedingly half-hearted. The trial of Bothwell, which was fixed for 12 April 1567, was manifestly collusive. Bothwell's accuser—Darnley's father, Matthew Stewart, 4th Earl of Lennox—could not safely appear and Bothwell was consequently

⁴⁴ G. Donaldson, 'Mystery Murder at Kirk o' Field', *Story of Scotland*, no. 13 (Glasgow, 1988), pp. 352–53.

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acquitted. Mary's motives in pursuing this course are not entirely clear. Her detractors have seen her deeds as a manifest sign of her inordinate passion for Bothwell, but her defenders have urged her innocence on the grounds that she believed in the justice of his acquittal. The latter theory has little to commend it, but passion should not be too readily accepted as the only reason for her actions. Three months separated the murder and her subsequent marriage to Bothwell, and this period saw several sound political moves by which Mary attempted to reconcile church and nobility to her side. Bothwell likewise canvassed for political support and on 19 April 1567 obtained such help in the 'Ainslie's Tavern Bond', signed by eight bishops and twenty-one lords, many of whom may have hoped Bothwell could restore the situation. Even this has been interpreted as part of a wider plot devised by the nobility to encompass the downfall of both Mary and Bothwell and belief in it as such has frequently appealed to defenders of Mary. Nevertheless, this suggestion overlooks the fact that by mid-April 1567, Bothwell had become her only means of political survival, and that her abduction by him on 24 April appears to have been an acknowledgement of this fact. The case for forcible abduction is not strong and Mary was to stress thereafter that she had not married under duress. Before marriage could take place, however, the arrangements for Bothwell's divorce from his wife, Lady Jean Gordon, had to be expedited, and the explanation of Mary's part in this taxes the ingenuity of even her most devoted admirers. Finally, on the occasion of her marriage to Bothwell on 15 May 1567, Mary presented her supporters with their greatest problem as the ceremony of marriage was conducted by Adam Bothwell, the reformed bishop of Orkney, according to the Protestant form. Nevertheless, even at this juncture passion or love may not have been the central factor in a union which had become for both parties an act of political necessity.

Following the marriage, Mary continued to bargain for political support, but her calculations failed. Her lords might have countenanced her adulterous affair with Bothwell, but the permanent triumph of Bothwell through this marriage they could not stomach. The Edinburgh mob might play on Mary's moral shortcomings when they declaimed her a whore, but it was her political alignment with Bothwell which caused the nobility to take up arms. Lack of morality might in retrospect be sufficient grounds for deposing a queen, but it required political opposition to effect it. Nevertheless, if there is no doubt that it was Mary's marriage which caused her downfall, and led a month later to her defeat at Carberry on 15 June 1567, care must be taken in following Buchanan and his imitators in combining cause and effect and concluding that it was passion alone which led to her marriage and thus encompassed her downfall. Bothwell's interest in the union was almost certainly political and the reverse may be equally true. Marriage for both was

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a desperate political gamble, and while Mary may have retained some affection for Bothwell, there are indications following their marriage of convenience that the queen was not wildly enamoured of her new husband. These feelings must have inevitably quickened by the realisation that the political tide had turned against her.⁴⁵

Whatever the truth, and despite his reputation as dissolute and vicious, Mary's attraction for Bothwell is understandable, for he possessed many of the qualities lacking in the faithless Darnley. He was intelligent and well-educated, having been tutored by his kinsman, the bishop of Moray, and he became the author of treatises on mathematics and the art of war. In addition he was well-travelled and fluent in French, which must have appealed to the Queen. A flamboyant figure whose influence stretched right across the south of Scotland, Bothwell's record of loyalty to the Scottish Crown had been rewarded by the guardianship of royal castles such as Hermitage and Dunbar. But if these attributes were in his favour, his interest in the black arts and his hostility towards the Catholic Mass might have given Mary cause to doubt his sincerity. Insight into this part of his character was perhaps denied to her, for his conceit and ambition were boundless and his strong personality would have mesmerised most companions. Above all, Bothwell was a lady's man, but marriage was a more serious business than sexual gratification. While his marriage to Lady Jean Gordon was a rich picking, the queen herself was a prize almost beyond expectation.⁴⁶

It was after their defeat at Carberry that the pregnant Mary was imprisoned by the lords at Lochleven Castle. There she suffered a miscarriage losing twin babies. On 24 July 1567 Mary resigned her crown in favour of her son, who was crowned King James VI of the Scots on 29 July 1567; and Lord James Stewart, Earl of Moray was appointed as Regent. Mary remained a prisoner at Lochleven for the next ten months, eventually escaping on 2 May 1568 to her supporters in the West. On 13 May her forces were defeated at Langside by the Earl of Moray, at which point, her options closed, she fled to England. Mary Stewart stepped ashore at the small Cumbrian port of Workington at about seven in the evening of 16 May 1568. It was only about three days since the defeat of her forces at Langside. According to her own account she rode ninety-two miles to the Solway 'without stopping or alighting, and then I have had to sleep upon the ground and drink sour milk and eat oatmeal without bread, and have been three nights like owls'. It was a

⁴⁵ Cowan, *Enigma*, pp. 127–28.

⁴⁶ I. B. Cowan, 'Road to Ruin', *Story of Scotland*, no. 13, (Glasgow, 1988) p. 359.

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very long way indeed from the lavish Renaissance Court of Henri II. Presently, in the suitably stately if somewhat threatening surroundings of Carlisle Castle, she was greeted by a ranking member of the English government, Sir Francis Knollys. Mary, who was only twenty-six years old, was to spend the rest of her life until her execution on 8 February 1587 at Fotheringay Castle, as Queen Elizabeth's prisoner.

University of Sydney