

Anthony Babington and nine others have been arrested on charge of having conspired to assassinate the queen. The evidence is overwhelming against them; and it is said the Queen of Scots is concerned in the plot."

"Who are the witnesses?"

"Four persons, named Giffard, Greatley, Poley and Maude."

"Ha! I thought so. Walsingham's blood-thirsty minions. Well?"

"They have been condemned and sentenced to be"—

"Beheaded?"

"No, not so noble a death as that. They are to be hanged, drawn and quartered while still alive; and their heads are to ornament the pike-staves on the parapet of London Bridge."

"Horrible," ejaculated Hugh, as he passed slowly onward. "I warned them, but it was all in vain."

## V.

THE conviction and execution of the conspirators (dupes of the ministerial scoundrel, Walsingham and his subordinate ruffians) caused great excitement. Correspondence was found in Babington's possession, among which, were letters from Mary, approving and urging, it was said, the assassination of Elizabeth. This was a fiendish falsehood. Not a word could be found in the letters of the royal prisoner of Fotheringay Castle from which any such meaning could be wrested, to the excessive chagrin of the Secretary of State and his colleagues in guilt. But this difficulty was soon remedied: they procured a wretch named Davison to forge a postscript to one of the letters; in which the unfortunate Mary of Scotland was made to approve of the murder of her royal cousin.

Thirty commissioners were appointed and sent off to Fotheringay Castle to arraign the unfortunate captive, to whom they denied the assistance of counsel. They were headed by Cecil, Lord of Burleigh, Sir Francis Walsingham and the Lord Keeper, Sir Christopher Hatton (whose shrewd widow Lord Bacon afterward married.)

The unfortunate Queen of Scots lay sick in bed, and denying their authority, refused to see them. But the wily Sir

Christopher Hatton told her that if she persisted in this course, "It would be considered an acknowledgment of guilt." Whereupon the unhappy lady consented to appear before judges who had already resolved upon her murder.

She entered the chamber where they were assembled, leaning on her physician and followed by her ladies. For two weary days the mock trial lasted; and the unfortunate captive queen, broken in spirit, as her aching head sank upon her breast, said—

"My lords, it is my life you seek. No thought of justice is in your hearts. Like tigers you thirst for my blood. You know in your hearts the accusations you bring against me are infamously false. But nothing short of my murder will content you. Why then keep up this mockery any longer!"

Then a transient flame of the old royal spirit of her race lit up in her bosom and shone in her speaking eyes.

"I appeal," she cried, "I appeal from this mock tribunal to the Parliament of England—to the queen and her council, in the presence of the foreign ambassadors."

The only reply the commissioners gave to this outburst was to declare the Court adjourned to the twenty-fifth day of October; and they took their departure: they never met again at Fotheringay. Mary's murder was a foregone conclusion. The commissioners assembled in the Star Chamber at Westminster formally condemned her of "treason and compassing the queen's death," and sentenced her to die by the headsman's axe. The King of France, Henry IV., protested; the foreign ambassadors protested; but all in vain. The royal harlot and perjurer of England thirsted for her blood; and Scotland's once beautiful and beloved queen, prematurely old and gray, after long years of imprisonment and persecution, perished on the scaffold. When the murder had been consummated, Elizabeth pretended to be angry and indignant at the deed, and even tried to create the impression that her name had been forged to the order for the Scottish queen's execution; but nobody believed the lie.

Hugh Huntley was sitting in his solitary chambers as the sun began to sink beyond the Western waters. He heard