

even than godlessness; but during the period of my life of which I shall write I learned — but what I learned I shall in due time tell you.

While at the court of Guise I, like many another man, conceived for Mary Stuart a passion which lay heavy upon my heart for many years. Sweethearts I had by the scores, but she held my longings from all of them until I felt the touch of a pure woman's love, and then — but again I am going beyond my story.

I did not doubt, nor do I hesitate to say, that my passion was returned by Mary with a fervor which she felt for no other lover; but she was a queen, and I, compared with her, was nobody. For this difference of rank I have since had good cause to be thankful. Great beauty is diffusive in its tendency. Like the sun, it cannot shine for one alone. Still, it burns and dazzles the one as if it shone for him and for no other; and he who basks in its rays need have no fear of the ennui of peace.

The time came when I tasted the unutterable bitterness of Mary's marriage to a simpering fool, Francis II., whom she loathed, notwithstanding absurd stories of their sweet courtship and love.

After her marriage to Francis, Mary became hard and callous of heart, and all the world knows her sad history. The stories of Darnley, Rizzio, and Bothwell will be rich morsels, I suppose, for the morbid minds of men and women so long as books are read and scandal is loved.

Ah, well, that was long ago; so long ago that now as I write it seems but a shadow upon the horizon of time.

And so it happened that Francis died, and when the queen went back to Scotland to ascend her native throne, I went with her, and mothlike hovered near the blaze that burned but did not warm me.

Then in the course of time came the Darnley tragedy. I saw Rizzio killed. Gods! what a scene for hell was that!