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a lady of lower rank. Her subjects think it so important to them, that it has to be arranged for her. A great many princes were proposed to her on all sides. Ambassadors hurried here and there, and there were scores of important state consultations and court gossips on the subject; all the great people in England, and in the Court of France, and of Spain, and a great many less important ones, laying their crowned and coroneted heads together, and plotting or wondering whom the Queen of Scots was to marry.

At last, however, there was suggested to her, in secret, the very worst match of all. There was a certain young Lord Darnley, the son of the Earl of Lennox, a Scottish nobleman who had been banished to England, who was nearly related to both the royal families. He was neither great enough, nor wise enough, nor even old enough to be the husband of the Queen of Scots, and all the best authorities were opposed to him. But Queen Mary saw him, and took a sudden fancy to the handsome and pleasant youth. And they were married, therefore, on the 29th of July, 1565, in the chapel of Holyrood.

Little cared the pair, for the moment, who quarrelled and who disapproved. The Queen pleased herself, as people say. Once more she had her way, but paid bitterly for it afterwards, as self-willed people so often do.

For this young Darnley, whom she so loved and honored, to whom she had given the name of king, as he was a Stuart and of royal blood like herself, and for whom she had displeased so many of her friends, was as self-willed and not nearly as wise as Mary herself. He was younger by three years than she; he was merely a handsome boy, while she was a woman, full of intellect, intelligence, and high spirit. She had very much more character than he had; and she had been brought up to understand state affairs and do state business, but he had not. He did not even respect the high position of the lady who had done so much for him, but was ill-tempered and rude to her, as men in all ranks often are to their wives; neglected her at one time, and at another teased her with demands for more power and authority, and showed himself to be quite unworthy of the position in which her love had placed him, and in six months they were as far apart as if they had been strangers. The queen had much on her hands at this time. Some of her great nobles, and especially her half-brother, the Earl of Murray, had rebelled against her after her marriage, and she herself had ridden at the head of her army and had subdued the rebels.

But success turned her head, and she began to dream of restoring the Catholic faith, and even of marching to London and overthrowing Elizabeth, and taking possession of the English crown, her rightful inheritance, as she believed. In these schemes she was helped and pushed on by her Italian secretary, David Rizzio, who had been recommended to her by her relations in France, and who knew all the plans of the Catholic party. But the people about the court hated him, some of them out of mere jealousy, some because they knew or suspected that he had great schemes in his mind, and was a dangerous plotter against the reformed faith. Darnley was the chief of those who were jealous of Rizzio. One evening Queen Mary was in her cabinet at supper, fearing no evil. She had her half-sister with her, the Countess of Argyle; a half-brother, and several others of her household, and among them Rizzio. When the supper was half over, Darnley, the king, as he was called, came in by a private passage, which led from his room to Mary's. Then, a few minutes after, came Lord Ruthven, the chief of the conspirators, and a number of others, armed and angry.

Mary, who feared no man, at once asked Ruthven what was his business there and who had let him in, and ordered him to leave her presence. Ruthven made a haughty answer, and said he had come to drag Rizzio from her presence.

"Madame, save my life!" cried David, clinging to her dress. But the murderers forced the clinging hands of their victim loose from the clothing of the queen, and dragged him roughly out of her presence. Darnley himself holding her that she might do nothing further in behalf of the poor Italian, who was killed at the door of the adjoining room, in her hearing, if not in her sight. Then his body, mangled with

many wounds, was thrown out of the window into the court-yard below. Then the conspirators had possession of the palace, and Mary was a prisoner in their hands.

This outrage was the beginning of all the darker side of her life. Next morning, Mary began another existence. She was in the hands of her deadly enemies. The only way in which she could get free was by flattering and deceiving them.

When the morning dawned, and the king, miserable wretch that he was, the poor traitor and murderer Darnley, went into Mary's room, she began at once the new part which she felt it necessary to play. She humbled herself before him, flattered him and roused his pity, and at last worked upon him so far that he undertook, with the conspirators, to answer for her that she would not punish them for what they had done, but would sign an indemnity and pardon, and forget all that had occurred, if they would withdraw and leave her undisturbed. They consented to do so reluctantly, with very little faith in the promises made them, feeling themselves betrayed as Mary had been, and by the same hand. It was on the Saturday evening that Rizzio had been murdered. On Monday Ruthven and all the rest withdrew from Holyrood sullenly with their men, leaving Mary under the guardianship of her false and foolish husband. At midnight, on the same night, her bold heart revived by the first chance of liberty, Mary left the defenseless walls of Holyrood, and, accompanied by Darnley and the Captain of her guard, rode off secretly, flying through the dark and cold March night to the castle of Dunbar, and was soon at the head of Public affairs once more. She called her faithful nobles about her at Dunbar, and quickly collected an army, before which the conspirators fled, and she once more entered Edinburgh in triumph.

A few months later, their only child, James, who was afterward James VI. of Scotland, and I. of England, was born in a little room in Stirling Castle. It was a strongly fortified place, and only in such a castle could the Queen of Scotland hope to be safe, she and her baby, from the fierce bands that were roaming the country. Armed men, angry faces, and drawn swords might soon have surrounded her if she had been in the more commodious rooms of Holyrood.

Now all was dark and terrible before this unhappy queen. Not long before, she had recalled from exile a young nobleman, James Hepburn, Earl of Bothwell. He was a man as brave and daring as herself, fond of pleasure as she was, full of resolution and boldness,—not a weak youth, like Darnley, but a bold and strong man.

And here begins the question which has disturbed historians ever since, and still makes people angry in argument, almost as ready to fight for Mary, or against her, as when she was a living woman. Some say that Mary and Bothwell loved each other, and that from this time it became the great object of both to get rid of Darnley, in order that they might marry; while others tell us that Mary was innocent both of loving Bothwell, and of desiring to procure her husband's removal, and that it was Bothwell alone that was guilty. I can not clear up this question for you. I do not think Mary was innocent; and yet I can not believe that she was so guilty as some think her. But her nobles, among whom were some of the conspirators she had pardoned, began to pity the unhappy queen; and there was a proposal made to her to get a divorce, and so be free of the husband who was her worst enemy. She did not accept this proposal, but neither did she reject it. But this is the history that followed; Darnley fell ill at Glasgow, where he then was. He had small-pox, which, you know, is a dangerous and dreadful disease. Mary had been altogether estranged from him, and had not seen him for a long time; but when he was getting better she went to him suddenly, without any warning and became reconciled to him. They mutually promised to each other that all was to be with them as at first; as soon as Darnley should be well enough to resume his usual life. In the interval, he was to be brought back to Edinburgh, but not to Holyrood, lest the little prince should take small-pox from his father, but to an airy and open place, just outside the gates of Edinburgh. Mary slept in a room immediately below that of her husband, with a staircase between them, which was left open and unprotected. For

was not the queen the guardian of the invalid?

One night, the Sunday after his arrival, Mary, who was with Darnley, suddenly recollected that she must go back to Holyrood, to the marriage supper of one of her servants and left the sick man lonely and alarmed in his room with his page. What happened in the darkness of that night is imperfectly known. A number of Bothwell's men were in full possession of the house, occupying the room which Mary had left vacant. Darnley went to bed and fell asleep, with these enemies under the same roof; but woke by and by, and stumbled to the door in the darkness, where he was seized and strangled, he and his page, and their bodies were thrown into the garden. Then there was a blaze of light, an explosion, and the house was blown up to conceal the secret crime. But the bodies were found unharmed next morning, notwithstanding this precaution; the secret was not one that could be hid.

You may imagine what a tumult and confusion was in Edinburgh next morning, when the dreadful news was known. Everybody had heard the explosion, and the people were wild with excitement. Mary shut herself up in Holyrood, as if overwhelmed with grief, and saw nobody but Bothwell, to whom every suspicion pointed as the murderer and the horror and suspicion ran like fire through all the courts of Europe. Wherever the story was told, Mary was suspected. Everywhere, from England, from France, from her own kingdom, entreaties came to her to investigate the murder, but it was not until a month after that she would do anything. Then there was a mock trial of Bothwell, before a jury of his partisans, where no one dared to bring evidence against him, and he was acquitted shamefully.

Three months after Darnley's death, Mary married his murderer. Poor Mary! She was as much disappointed in Bothwell as she had been in Darnley. The one was too feeble and too fickle to be worth her consideration, the other was harsh and cruel, and treated her like a master from their wedding-day. And now everybody was against her,—Elizabeth of England, the king of France, all her relations and allies; and, within a month, all Scotland was roused in horror of her and her new husband. She summoned her forces round her, an appeal which always, heretofore, had placed her at the head of a gallant army; but this time no one heeded the summons; and she had to flee in disguise from one castle to another, in order to escape the hands of her revolted nobles. Some little time after Bothwell and she had a last interview apart. They took leave of each other "with great anguish and grief"; they had been a month married, and it was for this that they had shown themselves monsters of falsehood and cruelty before all the world. They parted there and then for the last time. Bothwell rode away with half a dozen followers, and Mary gave herself up into the hands of those nobles who had opposed her so often, who had been overcome so often by her, but who now were the victors in their turn. She was taken to Holyrood, not as a queen, but as a criminal, surrounded by frowning faces and cries of insult. Thence she was sent a prisoner to the castle of Lochleven.

She remained about a year in Lochleven, suffering all kinds of indignities; was forced to sign her abdication, and was allowed no communication with her friends save when she could, by elaborate artifices, elude the vigilance of her gaolers; but at last, in May, 1568, she escaped with one small page, a boy of sixteen, who rowed her across the lake to where her friends awaited her.

In a moment she was again the Mary of old, with courage undaunted, and hope that was above all her troubles. She rode all through the summer night to Niddry Castle, knowing neither fatigue nor fear; and there issued a proclamation, and called, as so often before, her nobles round her. This time many answered the call, and she was soon riding in high hope at the head of a little army. But the Regent Murray, on the other side,—who was a wise and great statesman,—collecting a large force, hurried after her, and at once gave battle. Soon, it became apparent that Mary's day was over. Her army was defeated, her followers dispersed. She herself, thinking it better to take refuge with her cousin Elizabeth, in England, than to fall once more into the hands of her enemies at home, crossed the

Border and there ended all her hopes. She was promised hospitality and help. She found a prison, or rather a succession of prisons, and death.

You must remember, at the same time, that it was very difficult for the English government to know what to do with this imprisoned queen. Had Elizabeth died, Mary was the next heir, and she was a woman accused by her own subjects of terrible crimes. And she was a Catholic, who would have thrown the whole country into commotion; and risked everything to restore the Catholic faith. If they had let her go free, she would have raised the Continent and all the Catholic powers against the peace of England. In every way she was a danger. At last, after twenty years, Elizabeth pronounced against this dangerous guest, this heiress whom she feared, this cousin whom she had never seen.

Mary was removed to Fotheringay Castle, in Northamptonshire, and there tried for conspiring against Elizabeth, and trying to embroil the kingdom and she was found guilty. She appealed to the queen; but of all unlikely things there was none so unlikely as that Elizabeth should consent to see or hear her kinswoman. After her condemnation, however, a considerable time elapsed before Elizabeth would give the final order for her execution. It was sent at last, arriving suddenly one morning in the gloomy month of February.

Nothing is more noble and touching than the story of her end. She thought of every one as she stood there smiling and looking death in the face; made her will, provided for her poor servants who loved her, sent tender messages to her friends, and then laid down her beautiful head, still beautiful, through all those years and troubles, upon the block, and died. It was on the 8th of February, 1587, almost on the twentieth anniversary of that cruel murder of her husband, which had been the beginning of all her woes.

Thus died one of the most beautiful and renowned, one of the ablest and bravest, and perhaps the most unfortunate, beyond comparison, of queens. A queen in her cradle, an orphan from her youth, every gift of fortune bestowed upon her, but no happiness, no true guidance, no companion in her life. The times in which she was born; and the training she had, and the qualities she inherited, may account for many of her faults; but nothing can ever take away the interest with which people hear of her; and see her pictures, and read her story. Had she been a spotless and true woman, she might have been one of the greatest in history; but in this, as in everything else, what is evil crushes and ruins what is great. As it is, no one can think of Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots, but with interest and sympathy, and there are many in the world, and especially in Scotland, who even now, three hundred years after her death, are almost as ready to fight for her as were the men among whom she lived and on whom she smiled.—Condensed from *St. Nicholas*.

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