

depravity, of good and bad fortune, of great talents and high accomplishments with cunning intrigues and murderous conspiracies; an accomplice in the murder of her husband consort, King of Scotland, and for the assassination of Elizabeth, Queen of England; faithless to all the obligations of morality and virtue, but true to her religious professions.

But years before this final conspiracy which brought Mary Stuart to the scaffold, she had been in correspondence with the leaders of the papal faction on the continent for the dethronement of Elizabeth, and setting herself in Elizabeth's place, by the invasion of England, not later than the spring of 1585. For the accomplishment of these purposes, the Pope, the Guises in France, and Philip, King of Spain, combined together in what was called "The Holy League"; and Mary Queen of Scots held a secret correspondence with them. This correspondence was discovered by the seizure of some of the letters. In one of the letters, passed from Mary to Sir Francis Englefield, an English refugee and pensioner in Spain, and endorsed by Lord Treasurer Burleigh in his own hand, "The Queen of Scots to Sir Francis Englefield, October 9, 1584," Mary says: "Of the treaty between the Queen of England and me, I may neither hope nor look for any good issue. Whatsoever shall become of me, by whatsoever change of my state and condition, let the execution of the *great plot* go forward, without any respect of peril or danger to me; for I will account my life very happily bestowed if I may, with the same, help and relieve so great a number of the oppressed children of the Church. And this I give you as my last and final resolution; for I doubt I shall not have the commodity to write it hereafter; to the end you should impart the same to whomsoever you think convenient. And further, I pray you, use all possible diligence to pursue and promote, at the Pope's and other King's hand, such speedy execution of their former designments, that the same may be effectuated some time next spring: which is the longest time the same can be expected."*

But if Philip was firm and persevering in his purposes once decided upon, he was slow in forming his plans and careful in

* Strype's Annals, Vc^l. III., pp. 356, 357.