

## MARY, QUEEN OF SCOTS.

There has recently obtained amongst critics, a passion for attacking every established historic character. It seems a received axiom, that no man can tell truly the events of his own time, so that whatever has been written in the form of observations upon men and their actions, must be considered as only seeming truth—most writers being entirely unable to understand actions however patent, or fathom the motives of the actors, however familiar they may have been with them; while the remainder have been either ignorant, or so unprincipled, as to falsify their accounts of the proceedings with which they were acquainted. Personages who have come down to us with all the prestige, that the possession of manly virtue, religion, and patriotism, can give to adorn humanity, are ruthlessly stripped, and exposed as dastardly, hypocritical, and treacherous. Whereas others, who had been charged, and always believed to have been guilty of the worst crimes that can disgrace humanity, are shown forth as much traduced individuals; men against whom all the world had conspired. There is no doubt that much truth can be elicited by close historical criticism; but to have all well-understood facts or characters assailed and robbed of even the semblance of stability; to be told that one, who has been believed for hundreds of years to have introduced trial by jury, and other wise laws for the maintenance of order, did no such thing; or another, who has been blamed for nearly two thousand years, as having basely betrayed a loving master, for a few paltry pieces of silver, actually performed such deed with a thoroughly good, though short-sighted intention. To ask us to believe such as these, is expecting too much from our good faith in the skill displayed in this modern inquisitiveness. Sir Francis Palgrave proves to the satisfaction of some, that almost all the improvements hitherto ascribed to Alfred the Great, existed before that monarch was born. De Quincey, whose death happened shortly since, attempted to whitewash Judas Iscariot, by proving that he was a man who knew the world, and wish-

ed to bring the Saviour face to face with the rulers of his country, believing that they would be forced to recognise the God-man in his beloved Master. Lord Macaulay displays Cranmer as a miserable puppet and time-server, and Penn, the Quaker, as a servile courtier and double-traitor. Homer has been treated as a myth; and "Who wrote Shakspeare?" has been asked in real earnest.

Amongst those who have been subjected to such searching enquiry, none seems to have elicited opinions so diverse, as Mary, the lovely Queen of Scots.

"O, lovelier than the fairest flower,  
That ever bloomed on green,  
Was she, the lily of the land,  
That young and spotless Queen!"

Such is the descriptive interjection that Aytoun puts into the mouth of his imprisoned hero, Bothwell; but she has been described in other style. She has been held up to obloquy as a decided bigot and persecutor in religion—an instigator of murder the most foul—a shamelessly unfaithful wife—a very leopard, pleasing to the eye, but of a most evil nature.

Her admirers, and she has, even now, many who might be called lovers, declare that she was ill-used by the religious demagogues of the day, upon whom they charge the illiberality in religion; that as a wife, she had been long-suffering with a brutal husband; as a sister, forgiving to a plotting, treacherous brother; as a mother, loving to a silly son, who left her to the tender mercies of her rival; and that she was murdered by a cousin.

Mary was indeed no common woman. The incidents of her life surpass the most glaring fiction. Ten thousand men fell at Pinkie, because Scotland refused to betroth the child of a half dozen years to the young King of England. At seventeen she was Queen of Scotland and France, and had laid claim to the English Crown. Two different Parliaments had declared Elizabeth illegitimate, and Mary was the next in succession. She landed at Leith, Queen Dowager of France, and Queen Regnant of Scotland, when only nineteen. At twenty-three, she