

HENRY BELL

LIFE OF MARY QUEEN
OF SCOTS, VOLUME 2
(OF 2)

Henry Bell

**Life of Mary Queen of
Scots, Volume 2 (of 2)**

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Содержание

CHAPTER I.	5
CHAPTER II.	12
CHAPTER III.	19
CHAPTER IV.	26
CHAPTER V.	34
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	39

Henry Glassford Bell

Life of Mary Queen of Scots, Volume 2 (of 2)

CHAPTER I.

THE PROPOSAL OF A DIVORCE BETWEEN MARY AND DARNLEY, AND THE CHRISTENING OF JAMES VI

It was in December 1566, during Mary's residence at Craigmillar, that a proposal was made to her by her Privy Council, which deserves particular attention. It originated with the Earl of Bothwell, who was now an active Cabinet Minister and Officer of State. Murray and Darnley, the only two persons in her kingdom to whom Mary had been willing to surrender, in a great degree, the reins of government, had deceived her; and finding her interests betrayed by them, she knew not where to look for an adviser. Rizzio had been faithful to her, and to him she listened with some deference; but it was impossible that he could ever have supplied the place of a Prime Minister. The Earl of Morton was not destitute of ambition sufficient to have made him aspire to that office; but he chose, unfortunately for himself, to risk his advancement in espousing Darnley's cause, in opposition to the Queen. Both, in consequence, fell into suspicion; Morton was banished from Court, and Murray again made his appearance there. But, though she still had a partiality for her brother, Mary could not now trust him, as she had once done. Gratitude and common justice called upon her not to elevate him above those men, (particularly Huntly and Bothwell), who had enabled her to pass so successfully through her recent troubles. She made it her policy, therefore, to preserve as nice a balance of power as possible among her ministers. Bothwell's rank and services, undoubtedly entitled him to the first place; but this the Queen did not choose to concede to him. The truth is, she had never any partiality for Bothwell. His turbulent and boisterous behaviour, soon after her return from France, gave her, at that period, a dislike to him, which she testified, by first committing him to prison, and afterwards ordering him into banishment. He had conducted himself better since his recall; but experience had taught Mary the deceitfulness of appearances; and Bothwell, though much more listened to than before, was not allowed to assume any tone of superiority in her councils. She restored Maitland to his lands and place at Court, in such direct opposition to the Earl's wishes, that, so recently as the month of August (1566), he and Murray came to very high words upon the subject in the Queen's presence. After Rizzio's murder, some part of Maitland's lands had been given to Bothwell. These Murray wished him to restore; but he declared positively, that he would part with them only with his life. Murray, enraged at his obstinacy, told him, that "twenty as honest men as he should lose their lives, ere he saw Lethington robbed;" and through his influence with his sister, Maitland was pardoned, and his lands given back.¹ Thus Mary endeavoured to divide her favours and friendship among Murray, Bothwell, Maitland, Argyle the Justice-General, and Huntly the Chancellor.

It was in this state of affairs, when the contending interests of the nobility were in so accurate an equilibrium, that Bothwell's daring spirit suggested to him, that there was an opening for one bold and ambitious enough to take advantage of it. As yet, his plans were immatured and confused; but he began to cherish the belief that a dazzling reach of power was within his grasp, were he only to lie in wait for a favourable opportunity to seize the prize. With these views, it was necessary for him to strengthen and increase his resources as much as possible. His first step was to prevail on Murray,

¹ Robertson, Appendix to vol. i. No. XVII.

Huntly, and Argyle, about the beginning of October, to join with him in a bond of mutual friendship and support;² his second was to lay aside any enmity he may have felt towards Morton, and to intimate to him, that he would himself petition the Queen for his recall; his third and boldest measure, was that of arranging with the rest of the Privy Council the propriety of suggesting to Mary a divorce from her husband. Bothwell's conscience seldom troubled him much when he had a favourite end in view. He was about to play a hazardous game; but if the risk was great, the glory of winning would be proportionate. Darnley had fallen into general neglect and odium; yet he stood directly in the path of the Earl's ambition. He was resolved that means should be found to remove him out of it; and as there was no occasion to have recourse to violence until gentler methods had failed, a divorce was the first expedient of which he thought. He knew that the proposal would not be disagreeable to the nobility; for it had been their policy, for some time back, to endeavour to persuade the nation at large, and Mary in particular, that it was Darnley's ill conduct that made her unhappy, and created all the differences which existed. Nor were these representations altogether unfounded; but the Queen's unhappiness arose, not so much from her husband's ingratitude, as from the impossibility of retaining his regard, and at the same time discharging her duty to the country. Though the nobles were determined to shut their eyes upon the fact, it was nevertheless the share which they held in the government, and the necessity under which Mary lay to avail herself of their assistance, which alone prevented her from being much more with her husband, and a great deal less with them. There were even times, when, perplexed by all the thousand cares of greatness, and grievously disappointed in the fulfilment of her most fondly cherished hopes, Mary would gladly have exchanged the splendors of her palace for the thatched roof and the contentment of the peasant. It was on more than one occasion that Sir James Melville heard her "casting great sighs, and saw that she would not eat for no persuasion that my Lords of Murray and Mar could make her." "She is in the hands of the physicians," Le Croc writes from Craigmillar, "and is not at all well. I believe the principal part of her disease to consist in a deep grief and sorrow, which it seems impossible to make her forget. She is continually exclaiming "Would I were dead!"³ "But, alas!" says Melville, "she had over evil company about her for the time; the Earl Bothwell had a mark of his own that he shot at."⁴

One of his bolts Bothwell lost no time in shooting; but it missed the mark. By undertaking to sue with them for Morton's pardon, and by making other promises, he prevailed on Murray, Huntly, Argyle and Lethington, to join him in advising the Queen to consent to a divorce. It could have been obtained only through the interference of the Pope, and Murray at first affected to have some religious scruples; but as the suggestion was secretly agreeable to him, it was not difficult to overcome his objections. "Take you no trouble," said Lethington to him, "we shall find the means well enough to make her quit of him, so that you and my Lord of Huntly will only behold the matter, and not be offended thereat." The Lords therefore proceeded to wait upon the Queen, and lay their proposal before her. Lethington, who had a better command of words than any among them, commenced by reminding her of the "great number of grievous and intolerable offences, the King, ungrateful for the honour received from her Majesty, had committed." He added, that Darnley "troubled her Grace and them all;" and that, if he was allowed to remain with her Majesty, he "would not cease till he did her some other evil turn which she would find it difficult to remedy." He then proceeded to suggest a divorce, undertaking for himself and the rest of the nobility, to obtain the consent of Parliament to it, provided she would agree to pardon the Earl of Morton, the Lords Ruthven and Lindsay, and their friends, whose aid they would require to secure a majority. But Lethington, and the rest, soon found that they had little understood Mary's real sentiments towards her husband. She would not at first agree even to talk upon the subject at all; and it was only after "every one of them endeavoured

² Keith, Appendix, p. 139.

³ Keith, Preface, p. vii.

⁴ Melville's Memoirs, p. 170.

particularly to bring her to the purpose,” that she condescended to state two objections, which, setting aside every other consideration, she regarded as insuperable. The first was, that she did not understand how the divorce could be made lawfully; and the second, that it would be to her son’s prejudice, rather than hurt whom, she declared she “would endure all torments.” Bothwell endeavoured to take up the argument, and to do away with the force of these objections, alleging, that though his father and mother had been divorced, there had never been any doubt as to his succession to his paternal estates; but his illustrations and Lethington’s oratory met with the same success. Mary answered firmly, “I will that you do nothing, by which any spot may be laid on my honour and conscience; and therefore, I pray ye rather let the matter be in the estate as it is, abiding till God of his goodness put a remedy to it. That you believe would do me service, may possibly turn to my hurt and displeasure.” As to Darnley, she expressed a hope that he would soon change for the better; and, prompted by the ardent desire she felt to get rid, for a season, of her many cares, she said she would perhaps go for a time to France, and remain there till her husband acknowledged his errors. She then dismissed Bothwell and his friends, who retired to meditate new plots.⁵

On the 11th of December, Mary proceeded to Stirling, to make the necessary arrangements for the baptism of her son, which she determined to celebrate with the pomp and magnificence his future prospects justified. Darnley, who had been with the Queen a week at Craigmillar Castle, and afterwards came into Edinburgh with her, had gone to Stirling two days before.⁶ Ambassadors had arrived from England, France, Piedmont, and Savoy, to be present at the ceremony. The Pope also had proposed sending a nuncio into Scotland; but Mary had good sense enough to know, that her bigoted subjects would be greatly offended, were she to receive any such servant of Antichrist. It may have occurred to her, besides, that his presence might facilitate the negotiations for the divorce proposed by her nobility, but which she was determined should not take place. She, therefore, wrote to the great spiritual Head of her Church, expressing all that respect for his authority which a good Catholic was bound to feel; but she, at the same time, contrived to prevent his nuncio, Cardinal Laurea, from coming further north than Paris.⁷

The splendour of Mary’s preparations for the approaching ceremony, astonished not a little the sober minds of the Presbyterians. “The excessive expenses and superfluous apparel,” says Knox, “which were prepared at that time, exceeded far all the preparations that ever had been devised or

⁵ Goodall, vol. ii. p. 316. – Keith, p. 355; Appendix, p. 136. – Anderson, vol. ii. p. 270. vol. iv. p. 183 and 188. – “Martyre de Marie,” in Jebb, vol. ii. p. 210. It would be difficult to explain why Robertson, who, in the Dissertation subjoined to his History, allows the authenticity of the documents which detail the particulars of this important conference at Craigmillar, should not have taken the slightest notice of it in his History. There is surely something indicative of partiality in the omission. Miss Bengier, who is not always over-favourable to Mary, remarks on her decision regarding a divorce; – “It is difficult to develop the motives of Mary’s refusal. Had she secretly loved Bothwell, she would probably have embraced the means of liberty; and had she already embarked in a criminal intrigue, she would not have resisted the persuasions of her paramour. If, influenced alone by vindictive feelings, she sought her husband’s life, she must have been sensible that, when the nuptial tie was dissolved, he would be more easily assailable. Why then did she recoil from the proposal, unless she feared to compromise herself by endangering Darnley’s safety, or that some sentiments of affection still lingered in her heart? It has been supposed, that she dreaded the censures which might be passed on her conduct in France; or that she feared to separate her interests from those of her husband, lest she should injure her title to the English crown. All these objections are valid when addressed to reason, but passion would have challenged stronger arguments.” – *Memoirs*, vol. ii. p. 301. – Blackwood, in his *Martyre de Marie*, mentions, that Mary upon this occasion told her nobility, that “her husband was yet young, and might be brought back to the right path, having left it principally in consequence of the bad advice of those who were no less his enemies than her’s.” – “This answer,” adds Blackwood, “was far from being agreeable to the Lords, proving to them that her Majesty’s present estrangement from her husband was more from the necessity of the times, than because she had ceased to love him.”

⁶ Chalmers, vol. ii. p. 173. – Keith, Preface, p. vii.

⁷ The above transaction, in which there is so little mystery, has been converted by Robertson into “a negotiation, secretly carried on by Mary, for subverting the Reformed Church.” He cannot, it is true, very easily reconcile the “negotiation” with the fact that, “at the very time, she did not scruple publicly to employ her authority towards obtaining for the ministers of that Church a more certain and comfortable subsistence.” “During this year,” he tells us, “she issued several proclamations and Acts of Council for that purpose, and readily approved of every scheme which was proposed for the more effectual payment of their stipends.” The historian might have inquired a little more closely into the real nature of her correspondence with the Court of Rome, before charging Mary with “falsehood and deceit,” and availing himself of the subject to point a moral.

set forth before in this country.” Elizabeth, as if participating in Mary’s maternal feelings, ordered the Earl of Bedford, her ambassador, to appear at Stirling with a very gorgeous train; and sent by him as a present for Mary a font of gold, valued at upwards of 1000*l*. In her instructions to Bedford, she desired him to say jocularly, that it had been made as soon as she heard of the Prince’s birth, and that it was large enough then; but that, as he had now, she supposed, outgrown it, it might be kept for the next child. It was too far in the season to admit of Elizabeth’s sending any of the Ladies of her own realm into Scotland; she, therefore, fixed on the Countess of Argyle to represent her as godmother, preferring that lady, because she understood her to be much esteemed by Mary. To meet the extraordinary expenditure occasioned by entertaining so many ambassadors, the Queen was permitted to levy an assessment of 12,000*l*. It may appear strange, how a taxation of this kind could be imposed without the consent of Parliament; but it was managed thus. The Privy Council called a meeting both of the Lords Temporal and Spiritual, and of the representatives of the boroughs, and informed them that some of the greatest princes in Christendom had requested permission to witness, through their ambassadors, the baptism of the Prince. It was therefore moved, and unanimously carried, that their Majesties should be allowed to levy a tax for “the honourable expenses requisite.” The tax was to be proportioned in this way; six thousand pounds from the spiritual estate; – four thousand from the barons and freeholders; – and two thousand from the boroughs.⁸

Till the ceremony of baptism took place, the Queen gave splendid banquets every day to the ambassadors and their suites. At one of these a slight disturbance occurred, which, as it serves to illustrate amusingly the manners of the times, is worth describing. There seems to have been some little jealousy between the English and French envoys upon matters of precedence; and Mary on the whole was inclined to favour the English, being now more connected with England than with France. It happened, however, that at the banquet in question, a kind of mummary was got up, under the superintendence of one of Mary’s French servants, called Sebastian, who was a fellow of a clever wit. He contrived a piece of workmanship, in the shape of a great table; and its machinery was so ingeniously arranged, that, upon the doors of the great hall in which the feast was to be held, being thrown open, it moved in, apparently of its own accord, covered with delicacies of all sorts. A band of musicians, clothed like maidens, singing and accompanying themselves on various instruments, surrounded the pageant. It was preceded, and this was the cause of the offence, by a number of men, dressed like satyrs, with long tails, and carrying whips in their hands. These satyrs were not content to ride round the table, but they put their hands behind them to their tails, wagging them in the faces of the Englishmen, who took it into their heads that the whole was done in derision of them, “daftly apprehending that which they should not seem to have understood.” Several of the suite of the Earl of Bedford, perceiving themselves thus mocked, as they thought, and the satyrs “wagging their tails or rumples,” were so exasperated, that one of them told Sir James Melville, if it were not in the Queen’s presence, “he would put a dagger to the heart of the French knave Sebastian, whom he alleged did it for despite that the Queen made more of them than of the Frenchmen.” The Queen and Bedford, who knew that the whole was a mere jest, had some trouble in allaying the wrath of the hot-headed Southerns.

In the midst of these festivities, Mary had various cares to perplex her, and various difficulties to encounter. When she first came to Stirling, she found that Darnley had not chosen to go, as usual, to the Castle, but was residing in a private house. He left it, however, upon the Queen’s arrival, and took up his residence in the Castle with her, – a fact of some consequence, and one which Murray has himself supplied.⁹ But Darnley’s sentiments towards Mary’s ministers, continued unchanged; and it was impossible to prevail upon them to act and associate together, with any degree of harmony, even in presence of the ambassadors. Mary was extremely anxious to prevent her husband from exposing

⁸ Keith, p. 359.

⁹ Anderson, vol. ii. p. 271.

his weakness and waywardness to foreigners; but he was as stubborn as ever; and though he had given up thoughts of going abroad, it was only because he hoped to put into execution some new plot at home. Surrounded by gayeties, he continued sullen and discontented, shutting himself up in his own apartment, and associating with no one, except his wife and the French envoy, Le Croc, for whom he had contracted a sort of friendship. To heighten his bad humour, Elizabeth, according to Camden, had forbidden Bedford, or any of his retinue, to give him the title of King. The anger inspired by his contempt of her authority, on the occasion of his marriage, had not yet subsided; and there is not a state paper extant, in which she acknowledges Darnley in other terms than as “Henry Stuart, the Queen of Scotland’s husband.” It seems likely that this, added to the other reasons already mentioned, was the cause why Darnley refused to be present at the christening of his son.¹⁰ Mary had another cause of vexation. The baptism was to be performed after the Catholic ritual, and the greater part of her nobility, in consequence, not only refused to take any share in the ceremony, but even to be present at it. All Mary’s influence with Murray, Huntly, and Bothwell, was exerted in vain. They did not choose to risk their character with the Reformers, to gratify her. “The Queen laboured much,” says Knox, “with the noblemen, to bear the salt, grease, and candles, and such other things, but all refused.”

On the 19th of December 1566, the baptism, for which so many preparations had been made, took place.¹¹ The ceremony was performed between five and six in the afternoon. The Earls of Athol and Eglinton, and the Lords Semple and Ross, being of the Catholic persuasion, carried the instruments. The Archbishop of St Andrews, assisted by the Bishops of Dumblane, Dunkeld, and Ross, received the Prince at the door of the chapel. The Countess of Argyle held the infant at the font, and the Archbishop baptized him by the name of Charles James, James Charles, Prince and Steward of Scotland, Duke of Rothesay, Earl of Carrick, Lord of the Isles, and Baron of Renfrew; and these names and titles were proclaimed three times by heralds, with sound of trumpet. Mary called her son Charles, in compliment to the King of France, her brother-in-law; but she gave him also the name of James, because, as she said, her father, and all the good kings of Scotland, his predecessors, had been called by that name. The Scottish nobles of the Protestant persuasion, together with the Earl of Bedford, remained at the door of the chapel; and the Countess of Argyle had afterwards to do penance for the share she took in the business of the day, – a circumstance which shows very forcibly the power of the clergy at this time, who were able to triumph over a Queen’s representative, a King’s daughter, and their Sovereign’s sister. It is also worthy of notice, that of the twelve Earls, and numerous Lords then in the castle, only two of the former, and three of the latter, ventured to cross the threshold of a Catholic chapel.¹²

Elizabeth was probably not far wrong, in supposing that her font had grown too small for the infant James. He was a remarkably stout and healthy child, and as Le Croc says, he made his gossips feel his weight in their arms. Mary was very proud of her son, and from his earliest infancy, the establishment of his household was on the most princely scale. The Lady Mar was his governess.

¹⁰ That Darnley was actually absent upon this occasion, we are not quite satisfied. Robertson says he was, on the authority of Le Croc’s letter in Keith, preface, p. vii.; and after him, most writers on the subject state the fact as beyond a doubt. All, however, that Le Croc says is this: – “The King had still given out, that he would depart two days before the baptism; but when the time came on, he made no sign of removing at all, only he still kept close within his own apartment. The very day of the baptism, he sent three several times, desiring me either to come and see him, or to appoint him an hour, that he might come to me in my lodgings.” This is no direct evidence that the King was absent from the christening. Neither does Buchanan furnish us with any; he merely says, with his usual accuracy and love of calumny, that “her lawful husband was not allowed necessities at the christening; nay, was forbid to come in sight of the ambassadors, who were advised not to enter into discourse with the King, though they were in the same part of the castle the most part of the day.” – History, Book XVIII. Nor does Knox say any thing definite upon the subject; but Keith, Crawford, and Spottswood, though not referred to by Robertson, seem to support his opinion. Let the fact, however, be as it may, it is not of great consequence. The erroneousness of the popular belief, that Darnley, during the whole of this time, resided in a citizen’s house in the town of Stirling, is more deserving of being pointed out and corrected.

¹¹ Knox, p. 400. – Keith, Preface, p. vii.

¹² Keith, p. 369. – Knox, p. 400. – The Historie of King James the Sext, p. 5.

A certain Mistress Margaret Little, the spouse of Alexander Gray, Burgess of Edinburgh, was his head-nurse; and for her good services, there was granted to her and her husband, in February 1567, part of the lands of Kingsbarns in Fife, during their lives. The chief nurse had four or five women under her, “Keepers of the King’s clothes,” &c. Five ladies of distinction were appointed to the honourable office of “Rockers” of the Prince’s cradle. For his kitchen, James, at the same early age, had a master-cook, a foreman, and three other servitors, and one for his pantry, one for his wine, and two for his ale-cellar. He had three “chalmer-chields,” one “furnisher of coals,” and one pastry-cook or confectioner. Five musicians or “violars,” as they are called, completed the number of his household. To fill so many mouths, there was a fixed allowance of provisions, consisting of bread, beef, veal, mutton, capons, chickens, pigeons, fish, pottages, wine and ale. Thus, upon the life of the infant, the comfortable support of a reasonable number of his subjects depended.¹³

The captivating grace and affability of Mary’s manners, won for her, upon the baptismal occasion, universal admiration. She sent home the ambassadors with the most favourable impressions, which were not less loudly proclaimed, because she enriched them, before they went, with gifts of value. To Bedford, in particular, she gave a chain of diamonds, worth about six or seven hundred pounds. To other individuals of his suite, she gave chains of pearl, rings, and pictures.¹⁴ But she was all the time making an effort to appear happier and more contented than she really was. “She showed so much earnestness,” says Le Croc, “to entertain all the goodly company, in the best manner, that this made her forget, in a good measure, her former ailments. But I am of the mind, however, that she will give us some trouble as yet; nor can I be brought to think otherwise, so long as she continues to be so pensive and melancholy. She sent for me yesterday, and I found her laid on the bed weeping sore. I am much grieved for the many troubles and vexations she meets with.” Mary did not weep without cause. One source of uneasiness, at the present moment, was the determination of her ministers to force from her a pardon for the Earl of Morton, and seventy-five of his accomplices. As some one has remarked, her whole reign was made up of plots and pardons. Her chief failing indeed, was the facility with which she allowed herself to be persuaded to forgive the deadliest injuries which could be offered to her. Murray, from the representations he had made through Cecil, had induced Elizabeth to desire Bedford to join his influence to that of Mary’s Privy Council in behalf of Morton. The consequence was, that the Queen could no longer resist their united importunities, and, with two exceptions, all the conspirators against Rizzio were pardoned. These exceptions were, George Douglas, who had seized the King’s dagger, and struck Rizzio the first blow; and Andrew Kerr, who, in the affray, had threatened to shoot the Queen herself. Robertson, with great inaccuracy, has said, that it was to the solicitations of Bothwell alone that these criminals were indebted for their recall. It would have been long before Bothwell, whose weight with Mary was never considerable, could have obtained, unassisted, her consent to such a measure; and the truth of this assertion is proved by the clearest and directest testimony. In a letter which Bedford wrote to Cecil on the 30th of December, we meet with the following passage: – “The Queen here hath now granted to the Earl of Morton, to the Lords Ruthven and Lindsay, their relaxation and pardon.¹⁵ *The Earl of Murray hath done very friendly towards the Queen for them, so have I, according to your advice*; the Earls Bothwell and Athol, and all other Lords *helped* therein, or else such pardons could not so soon have been gotten.”¹⁶ It is no doubt true, that Bothwell was glad of this opportunity to ingratiate himself with Morton, and that, in the words of Melville, he “packed up a quiet friendship with him;” – but it is strange that Robertson should have been so ignorant of the real influence which secured a remission of their offences from Mary.

¹³ Chalmers, vol. ii. p. 176.

¹⁴ Melville, p. 192.

¹⁵ The Ruthven here spoken of is the son of the Lord Ruthven, who took so active a part in the murder.

¹⁶ Chalmers, vol. ii. p. 175 and 342.

Darnley was of course greatly offended that any of his former accomplices should be received again into favour. They would return only to force him a few steps farther down the ladder, to the top of which he had so eagerly desired to climb. They were recalled too at the very time when he had it in contemplation, according to common report, to seize on the person of the young Prince, and, after crowning him, to take upon himself the government as his father. Whether this report was true or not, (and perhaps it was a belief in it which induced the Queen to remove shortly afterwards from Stirling to Edinburgh), it is certain that Darnley declared he “could not bear with some of the noblemen that were attending in the Court, and that either he or they behoved to leave the same.”¹⁷ He accordingly left Stirling on the 24th of December, the very day on which Morton’s pardon was signed, to visit his father at Glasgow. But it was not with Mary he had quarrelled, with whom he had been living for the last ten days, and whom he intended rejoining in Edinburgh, as soon as she had paid some Christmas visits in the neighbourhood of Stirling.¹⁸

¹⁷ Keith – Preface, p. viii.

¹⁸ Keith, p. 364.

CHAPTER II.

OCCURRENCES IMMEDIATELY PRECEDING DARNLEY'S DEATH

We are now about to enter upon a part of Mary's history, more important in its results, and more interesting in its details, than all that has gone before. A deed had been determined on, which, for audacity and villany, has but few parallels in either ancient or modern story. The manner of its perpetration, and the consequences which ensued, not only threw Scotland into a ferment, but astonished the whole of Europe; and, even to this day, the amazement and horror it excited, continue to be felt, whenever that page of our national history is perused which records the event. Ambition has led to the commission of many crimes; but, fortunately for the great interests of society, it is only in a few instances, of which the present is one of the most conspicuous, that it has been able to involve in misery, the innocent as well as the guilty. But, even where this is the case, time rescues the virtuous from unmerited disgrace, and, causing the mantle of mystery to moulder away, enables us to point out, on one hand, those who have been unjustly accused, and, on the other, those who were both the passive conspirators and the active murderers. A plain narrative of facts, told without violence or party-spirit, is that upon which most reliance will be placed, and which will be most likely to advance the cause of truth by correcting the mistakes of the careless, and exposing the falsehoods of the calumnious.

The Earl of Bothwell was now irrevocably resolved to push his fortunes to the utmost. He acted, for the time, in conjunction with the Earl of Murray, though independently of him, using his name and authority to strengthen his own influence, but communicating to the scarcely less ambitious Murray only as much of his plans as he thought he might disclose with safety. Bothwell was probably the only Scottish baron of the age over whom Murray does not appear ever to have had any control. His character, indeed, was not one which would have brooked control. On Mary's return home, so soon as he perceived the ascendancy which her brother possessed over her, he entered into a conspiracy with Huntly and others, to remove him. The conspiracy failed, and Bothwell left the kingdom. He was not recalled till Murray had fallen into disgrace; and though the Earl was subsequently pardoned, he never regained that superiority in Mary's councils he had once enjoyed. But Bothwell hoped to secure the distinction for himself; and, that he might not lose it as Murray had done, after it was once gained, he daringly aimed at becoming not merely a prime minister, but a king. The historians, therefore, (among whom are to be included many of Mary's most zealous defenders), who speak of Bothwell as only a "cat's-paw" in the hands of Murray and his party, evidently mistake both the character of the men, and the positions they relatively held. Murray and Bothwell had both considerable influence at Court; but there was no yielding on the part of either to the higher authority of the other, and the Queen herself endeavoured, upon all occasions, to act impartially between them. We have found her frequently granting the requests of Murray in opposition to the advice of Bothwell; and there is no reason to suppose, that, when she saw cause, she may not have followed the advice of her Lord High Admiral, in preference to that of her brother. A circumstance which occurred only a few days after the baptism of James VI., strikingly illustrates the justice of these observations. It is the more deserving of attention, as the spirit of partiality, which has been unfortunately so busy in giving an erroneous colouring even to Mary's most trifling transactions, has not forgotten to misrepresent that to which we now refer.

Darnley's death being resolved, Bothwell began to consider how he was to act after it had taken place. He probably made arrangements for various contingencies, and trusted to the chapter of accidents, or his own ingenuity, to assist him in others. But there was one thing certain, that he could never become the legal husband of Mary, so long as he continued united to his own wife, the Lady

Jane Gordon. Anticipating, therefore, the necessity of a divorce, and aware that the emergency of the occasion might not permit of his waiting for all the ordinary forms of law, he used his interest with the Queen at a time when his real motives were little suspected, to revive the ancient jurisdiction of the Catholic Consistorial Courts, which had been abolished by the Reformed Parliament of 1560, and the ordinary civil judges of Commissary Courts established in their place. In accordance with his request, Mary restored the Archbishop of St Andrews, the Primate of Scotland, to the ancient Consistorial Jurisdiction, granted him by the Canon laws, and discharged the Commissaries from the further exercise of their offices. Thus, Bothwell not only won the friendship of the Archbishop, but secured for himself a court, where the Catholic plea of consanguinity might be advanced, – the only plausible pretext he could make use of for annulling his former marriage. This proceeding, however, in favour of the Archbishop and the old faith, gave great offence to the Reformed party; and when the Primate came from St Andrews to Edinburgh, at the beginning of January, for the purpose of holding his court, his authority was very strenuously resisted. The Earl of Murray took up the subject, and represented to Mary the injury she had done to the true religion. Bothwell, of course, used every effort to counteract the force of such a representation; but he was unsuccessful. By a letter which the Earl of Bedford wrote to Cecil from Berwick, on the 9th of January 1567, we learn that the Archbishop was not allowed to proceed to the hearing of cases, and that “because it was found to be contrary to the religion, and therefore not liked of by the townsmen; *at the suit of my Lord of Murray*, the Queen was pleased to revoke that which she had before granted to the said bishop.” Probably the grant of jurisdiction was not “revoked,” but only suspended, as Bothwell subsequently availed himself of it; but even its suspension sufficiently testifies, that Mary, at this period, listened implicitly and exclusively neither to one nor other of her counsellors.¹⁹

In the meantime, Darnley, who, as we have seen, left Stirling for Glasgow on the 24th of December, had been taken dangerously ill. Historians differ a good deal concerning the nature of his illness, which is by some confidently asserted to have been occasioned by poison, administered to him either before he left Stirling, or on the road, by servants, who had been bribed by Bothwell; and by others is as confidently affirmed to have been the small-pox, a complaint then prevalent in Glasgow. On the whole, the latter opinion seems to be the best supported, as it is confirmed by the authority both of the English ambassador, and of the cotemporary historians, Lesley and Blackwood. Knox, Buchanan, Melville, Crawford, Birrell and others, mention, on the other hand, that the belief was prevalent, that the King’s sickness was the effect of poison. But as the only evidence offered in support of this popular rumour is, that “blisters broke out of a bluish colour over every part of his body,” and as this may have been the symptoms of small-pox as well as of poison, the story does not seem well authenticated. Besides, in the letter which Mary is alleged to have written a week or two afterwards to Bothwell from Glasgow, she is made to say that Darnley told her he was ill of the small-pox. Whether the letter be a forgery or not, this paragraph would not have been introduced, unless it had contained what was then known to be the fact.

Be this matter as it may, it is of more importance to correct a mistake into which Robertson has not unwillingly fallen, regarding the neglect and indifference with which he maintains Mary treated

¹⁹ Keith, p. 151. – Laing, vol. ii. p. 76. – Chalmers, vol. ii. p. 268. – Whittaker, in endeavouring to prove (vol. ii. p. 322) that the Catholic Ecclesiastical Courts had never been deprived of their jurisdiction, and that, consequently, there was no *restoration* of power to the Archbishop of St Andrews, evidently takes an erroneous view of this matter. In direct opposition to such a view, Knox, or his continuator, has the following account of the transaction: – “At the same time, the Bishop of St Andrews, by means of the Earl of Bothwell, procured a writing from the Queen’s Majesty, to be obeyed within the Diocese of his Jurisdiction, in all such causes as before, in time of Popery, were used in the Consistory, and, therefore, to discharge the new Commissioners; and for the same purpose, came to Edinburgh in January, having a company of one hundred horses, or more, intending to take possession according to his gift lately obtained. The Provost being advertised thereof by the Earl of Murray, they sent to the Bishop three or four of the Council, desiring him to desist from the said matter, for fear of trouble and sedition that might rise thereupon; whereby he was persuaded to desist at that time.” – Knox, p. 403. This account is not quite correct, in so far as the Earl of Murray alone, unsupported by Mary’s authority, is described as having diverted the Archbishop from his purpose.

her husband, during the earlier part of his sickness. We learn, in the first place, by Bedford's letter to Cecil, already mentioned, that as soon as Mary heard of Darnley's illness, she sent her own physician to attend him.²⁰ And, in the second place, it appears, that it was some time before Darnley's complaint assumed a serious complexion; but that, whenever Mary understood he was considered in danger, she immediately set out to visit him. "The Queen," says Crawford, "was no sooner informed of his danger, than she hasted after him." – "As soon as the rumour of his sickness gained strength," says Turner (or Barnestaple), "the Queen flew to him, thinking more of the person to whom she flew, than of the danger which she herself incurred." – "Being advertised," observes Lesley, "that Darnley was repentant and sorrowful, she without delay, thereby to renew, quicken, and refresh his spirits, and to comfort his heart to the amendment and repairing of his health, lately by sickness sore impaired, hasted with such speed as she conveniently might, to see and visit him at Glasgow." Thus, Robertson's insinuation falls innocuous to the ground.

It was on the 13th of January 1567 that Mary returned from Stirling to Edinburgh, having spent the intermediate time, from the 27th of December, in paying visits to Sir William Murray, the Comptroller of her household, at Tullibardin, and to Lord Drummond at Drummond Castle. As is somewhere remarked, "every moment now begins to be critical, and every minuteness and specific caution becomes necessary for ascertaining the truth, and guarding against slander." The probability is, that Bothwell was not with Mary either at Tullibardin or Drummond Castle. Meetings of her Privy Council were held by her on the 2d and 10th of January; and it appears by the Register, that Bothwell was not present at any of them. Chalmers is of opinion, that, during the early part of January he must have been at Dunbar, making his preparations, and arranging a meeting with Morton. When the Queen arrived at Edinburgh on the 13th, she lodged her son, whom she brought with her, in Holyroodhouse. A few days afterwards, she set out for Glasgow to see her husband. Her calumniators, on the supposition that she had previously quarrelled with Darnley, affect to discover something very forced and unnatural in this visit. But *Mary had never quarrelled with Darnley*. He had quarrelled with her ministers, and had been enraged at the failure of his own schemes of boyish ambition, but against his wife he had himself frequently declared he had no cause of complaint. Mary, on her part, had always shown herself more grieved by Darnley's waywardness than angry at it. Only a day or two before going to Glasgow, she said solemnly, in a letter she wrote to her ambassador at Paris, – "As for the King, our husband, God knows always our part towards him." – "God willing, our doings shall be always such as none shall have occasion to be offended with them, or to report of us any way but honourably."²¹ So far, therefore, from there being any thing uncommon or forced in her journey to Glasgow, nothing could be more natural, or more likely to have taken place. "Darnley's danger," observes Dr Gilbert Stuart, with the simple eloquence of truth, "awakened all the gentleness of her nature, and she forgot the wrongs she had endured. Time had abated the vivacity of her resentment, and after its paroxysm was past, she was more disposed to weep over her afflictions, than to indulge herself in revenge. The softness of grief prepared her for a returning tenderness. His distresses effected it. Her memory shut itself to his errors and imperfections, and was only open to his better qualities and accomplishments. He himself, affected with the near prospect of death, thought, with sorrow, of the injuries he had committed against her. The news of his repentance was sent to her. She recollected the ardour of that affection he had lighted up in her bosom, and the happiness with which she had surrendered herself to him in the bloom and ripeness of her beauty. Her infant son, the pledge of their love, being continually in her sight, inspirited her sensibilities. The plan of lenity which she had previously adopted with regard to him; her design to excite even the approbation of her enemies by the propriety of her conduct; the advices of Elizabeth by the Earl of Bedford to entertain him with respect; the apprehension lest the royal dignity might suffer any diminution by the

²⁰ Chalmers, vol. i. p. 199; and vol. ii. p. 176.

²¹ Keith, Preface p. viii.

universal distaste with which he was beheld by her subjects, and her certainty and knowledge of the angry passions which her chief counsellors had fostered against him – all concurred to divest her heart of every sentiment of bitterness, and to melt it down in sympathy and sorrow. Yielding to tender and anxious emotions, she left her capital and her palace, in the severest season of the year, to wait upon him. Her assiduities and kindnesses communicated to him the most flattering solacement; and while she lingered about his person with a fond solicitude, and a delicate attention, he felt that the sickness of his mind and the virulence of his disease were diminished.”

On arriving at Glasgow, Mary found her husband convalescent, though weak and much reduced. She lodged in the same house with him; but his disease being considered infectious, they had separate apartments. Finding that his recent approach to the very brink of the grave had exercised a salutary influence over his mind and dispositions, and hoping to regain his entire confidence, by carefully and affectionately nursing him during his recovery, she gladly acceded to the proposal made by Darnley, that she should take him back with her to Edinburgh or its vicinity. She suggested that he should reside at Craigmillar Castle, as the situation was open and salubrious; but for some reason or other, which does not appear, he objected to Craigmillar, and the Queen therefore wrote to Secretary Maitland to procure convenient accommodation for her husband, in the town of Edinburgh.²² Darnley disliked the Lords of the Privy Council too much to think of living at Holyrood; and besides, it was the opinion of the physicians, that the young Prince, even though he should not be brought into his father’s presence, might catch the infection from the servants who would be about the persons of both. But when Mary wrote to Maitland, she little knew that she was addressing an accomplice of her husband’s future murderer. The Secretary showed her letter to Bothwell, and they mutually determined on recommending to Darnley the house of the Kirk-of-Field, which stood on an airy and healthy situation to the south of the town, and which, therefore, appeared well suited for an invalid, although *they* preferred it because it stood by itself, in a comparatively solitary part of the town.²³ On Monday, January 27th, Mary and Darnley left Glasgow. They appear to have travelled in a wheeled carriage, and came by slow and easy stages to Edinburgh. They slept on Monday night at Callander. They came on Tuesday to Linlithgow, where they remained over Wednesday, and arrived in Edinburgh on Thursday.

The Kirk-of-Field, in which, says Melville, “the King was lodged, as a place of good air, where he might best recover his health,” belonged to Robert Balfour, the Provost or head prebendary of the collegiate church of St Mary-in-the-Field, so called because it was beyond the city wall when first built. When the wall was afterwards extended, it enclosed the Kirk-of-Field, as well as the house of the Provost and Prebendaries. The Kirk-of-Field with the grounds pertaining to it, occupied the site of the present College, and of those buildings which stand between Infirmary and Drummond Street. In the extended line of wall, what was afterwards called the Potter-row Port, was at first denominated the Kirk-of-Field Port, from its vicinity to the church of that name. The wall ran east from this port along the south side of the present College, and the north side of Drummond Street, where a part of it is still to be seen in its original state. The house stood at some distance from the Kirk, and the latter, from the period of the Reformation, had fallen into decay. The city had not yet stretched in this direction much farther than the Cowgate. Between that street and the town wall, were the Dominican Convent of the Blackfriars, with its alms-houses for the poor, and gardens, covering the site of the present High School and Royal Infirmary, – and the Kirk-of-Field and its Provost’s residence. The house nearest to it of any note was Hamilton House, which belonged to the Duke of Chatelherault, and some part of which is still standing in College Wynd.²⁴ It was at first supposed, that Darnley would have taken up his abode there; but the families of Lennox and Hamilton were never on such

²² Anderson, vol. iv. p. 165. – Goodall, vol. ii. p. 76.

²³ Goodall, vol. ii. p. 76. – et seq.

²⁴ Birrel’s Dairy, p. 6. – Laing, vol. i. p. 30.

terms as would have elicited this mark of friendship from the King. The Kirk-of-Field House stood very nearly on the site of the present north-west corner of Drummond Street. It fronted the west, having its southern gavel so close upon the town-wall, that a little postern door entered immediately through the wall into the kitchen. It contained only four apartments; but these were commodious, and were fitted up with great care. Below, a small passage went through from the front door to the back of the house; upon the right hand of which was the kitchen, and upon the left, a room furnished as a bedroom, for the Queen, when she chose to remain all night. Passing out at the back-door, there was a turnpike stair behind, which, after the old fashion of Scottish houses, led up to the second story. Above, there were two rooms corresponding with those below. Darnley's chamber was immediately over Mary's; and on the other side of the lobby, above the kitchen, a "garde-robe" or "little-gallery," which was used as a servant's room, and which had a window in the gavel, looking through the town-wall, and corresponding with the postern door below. Immediately beyond this wall, was a lane shut in by another wall, to the south of which were extensive gardens.²⁵

During the ten days which Darnley spent in his new residence, Mary was a great deal with him, and slept several nights in the room we have described below her husband's, this being more agreeable to her, than returning at a late hour to Holyrood Palace. Darnley was still much of an invalid, and his constitution had received so severe a shock, that every attention was necessary during his convalescence. A bath was put up for him, in his own room, and he appears to have used it frequently. He had been long extremely unpopular, as has been seen, among the nobles; but following the example which Mary set them, some were disposed to forget their former disagreements, and used to call upon him occasionally, and among others, Hamilton, the Archbishop of St Andrews, who came to Edinburgh about this time, and lodged hard by in Hamilton house. Mary herself, after sitting for hours in her husband's sick-chamber, used sometimes to breathe the air in the neighbouring gardens of the Dominican convent; and she sometimes brought up from Holyrood her band of musicians, who played and sung to her and Darnley. Thus, every thing went on so smoothly, that neither the victim nor his friends could in the least suspect that they were all treading the brink of a precipice.

Bothwell had taken advantage of Mary's visit to Glasgow, to proceed to Whittingham, in the neighbourhood of Dunbar, where he met the Earl of Morton, and obtained his consent to Darnley's murder. To conceal his real purpose, Bothwell gave out at Edinburgh, that he was going on a journey to Liddesdale; but, accompanied by Secretary Maitland, whom he had by this time won over to his designs, and the notorious Archibald Douglas, a creature of his own, and a relation of Morton, he went direct to Whittingham. There, the trio met Morton, who had only recently returned from England, and opened to him their plot. Morton heard of the intended murder without any desire to prevent its perpetration; but before he would agree to take an active share in it, he insisted upon being satisfied that the Queen, as Bothwell had the audacity to assert, was willing that Darnley should be removed. "I desired the Earl Bothwell," says Morton in his subsequent confession, "to bring me the Queen's hand write of this matter for a warrant, and then I should give him an answer; otherwise, I would not meddle (intermeddle) therewith; – which warrant he never purchased (procured) unto me."²⁶ But though Morton, refused to risk an active, he had no objections to take a passive part in this conspiracy. Bothwell, Maitland, and Douglas, returned to Edinburgh, and he proceeded to St Andrews, with the understanding, that Bothwell was to communicate with him, and inform him of the progress of the plot. Accordingly, a day or two before the murder was committed, Douglas was sent to St Andrews,

²⁵ Keith, p. 364. – Anderson, vol. ii. p. 67. – Goodall, vol. ii. p. 244. – Chalmers, vol. i. p. 203. – vol. ii. p. 180, and 271. – Laing, vol. i. p. 30. – and vol. ii. p. 17. – Whittaker, vol. iii. p. 258, and 283. – Arnot's History of Edinburgh, p. 237. Whittaker has made several mistakes regarding the House of the Kirk-of-Field. He describes it as much larger than it really was; and, misled by the appearance of a gun-port still remaining in one part of the old wall, and which Arnot supposed had been the postern-door in the gavel of the house, he fixes its situation at too great a distance from the College, and too near the Infirmary. Sir Walter Scott, in his "Tales of a Grandfather," (vol. iii. p. 187.) has oddly enough fallen into the error of describing the Kirk-of-Field, as standing "just *without* the walls of the city."

²⁶ Morton's Confession in Laing, vol. ii. p. 354; and Archibald Douglas's Letter, *ibid.* p. 363.

to let Morton know that the affair was near its conclusion. Bothwell, however, was well aware that what he had told the Earl regarding the wishes of the Queen, was equally false and calumnious. Of all persons in existence, it was from her that he most wished to conceal his design; and as for a written approval of it, he knew that he might just as well have applied to Darnley himself. Douglas was, therefore, commanded to say to Morton, evasively, “that the Queen would bear no speech of the matter appointed to him.” Morton, in consequence, remained quietly in the neighbourhood of St Andrews till the deed was done.²⁷

The Earl of Murray was another powerful nobleman, who, when the last act of this tragedy was about to be performed, withdrew to a careful distance from the scene. It is impossible to say whether Murray was all along acquainted with Bothwell’s intention; there is certainly no direct evidence that he was; but there are very considerable probabilities. When a divorce was proposed to Mary at Craigmillar, she was told that Murray would look through his fingers at it; and this design being frustrated, by the Queen’s refusal to agree to it, there is every likelihood that Bothwell would not conceal from the cabal he had then formed, his subsequent determination. That he disclosed it to Morton and Maitland, is beyond a doubt; and that Murray again consented “to look through his fingers,” is all but proved. It is true he was far too cautious and wily a politician, to plunge recklessly, like Bothwell, into such a sea of dangers and difficulties; but he was no friend to Darnley, – having lost through him much of his former power; and however the matter now ended, if he remained quiet, he could not suffer any injury, and might gain much benefit. If Bothwell prospered, they would unite their interests, – if he failed, then Murray would rise upon his ruin. Only three days before the murder, the Lord Robert Stuart, Murray’s brother, having heard, as Buchanan affirms of the designs entertained against Darnley’s life, mentioned them to the King. Darnley immediately informed Mary, who sent for Lord Robert, and in the presence of her husband and the Earl of Murray, questioned him on the subject. Lord Robert, afraid of involving himself in danger, retracted what he had formerly said, and denied that he had ever repeated to Darnley any such report. High words ensued in consequence; and even supposing that Murray had before been ignorant of Bothwell’s schemes, his suspicions must now have been roused. Perceiving that the matter was about to be brought to a crisis, he left town abruptly upon Sunday, the very last day of Darnley’s life, alleging his wife’s illness at St Andrews, as the cause of his departure. The fact mentioned by Lesley, in his “Defence of Queen Mary’s Honour,” that on the evening of this day, Murray said, when riding through Fife, to one of his most trusty servants, – “This night, ere morning, the Lord Darnley shall lose his life,” is a strong corroboration of the supposition that he was well informed upon the subject.²⁸

There were others, as has been said, whom Bothwell either won over to assist him, or persuaded to remain quiet. One of his inferior accomplices afterwards declared, that the Earl showed him a bond, to which were affixed the signatures of Huntly, Argyle, Maitland, and Sir James Balfour, and that the words of the bond were to this effect: – “That for as much as it was thought expedient and most profitable for the commonwealth, by the whole nobility and Lords undersubscribed, that such a young fool and proud tyrant should not reign, nor bear rule over them, for diverse causes, therefore, these all had concluded, that he should be put off by one way or other, and who-soever should take the deed in hand, or do it, they should defend and fortify it as themselves, for it should be every one of their own, reckoned and holden done by themselves.”²⁹ To another of his accomplices, Bothwell declared that Argyle, Huntly, Morton, Maitland, Ruthven, and Lindsay, had promised to support him; and when he was asked what part the Earl of Murray would take, his answer was, – “He does not wish to intermeddle with it; he does not mean either to aid or hinder us.”³⁰

²⁷ Idem.

²⁸ Lesley’s Defence in Anderson, vol. i. p. 75. – Buchanan’s History, p. 350. – Laing, vol. ii. p. 34.

²⁹ Ormiston’s Confession in Laing, vol. ii. p. 322.

³⁰ Paris’s Confession in Laing, vol. ii. p. 298-9.

But whoever his assistants were, it was Bothwell's own lawless ambition that suggested the whole plan of proceeding, and whose daring hand was to strike the final and decisive blow. Everything was now arranged. His retainers were collected round him; – four or five of the most powerful ministers of the crown knew of his design, and did not disapprove of it; – the nobles then at court were disposed to befriend him, from motives either of political interest or personal apprehension; – Darnley and the Queen were unsuspecting and unprotected. A kingly crown glittered almost within his grasp; he had only to venture across the Rubicon of guilt, to place it on his brow.

CHAPTER III. THE DEATH OF DARNLEY

It was on Sunday, the 9th of February 1567, that the final preparations for the murder of Darnley were made. To execute the guilty deed, Bothwell was obliged to avail himself of the assistance of those ready ministers of crime, who are always to be found at the beck of a wealthy and depraved patron. There were eight unfortunate men whom he thus used as tools with which to work his purpose. Four of these were merely menial servants; – their names were, Dalgleish, Wilson, Powrie, and Nicolas Haubert, more commonly known by the sobriquet of French Paris. He was a native of France, and had been a long while in the service of the Earl of Bothwell; but on his master's recommendation, who foresaw the advantages he might reap from the change, he was taken into the Queen's service shortly before her husband's death. Bothwell was thus able to obtain the keys of some of the doors of the Kirk-of-Field house, of which he caused counterfeit impressions to be taken.³¹ The other four who were at the "deed-doing," were persons of somewhat more consequence. They were small landed proprietors or *lairds*, who had squandered their patrimony in idleness and dissipation, and were willing to run the chance of retrieving their ruined fortunes at any risk. They were the Laird of Ormiston, Hob Ormiston his uncle, "or father's brother," as he is called, John Hepburn of Bolton, and John Hay of Tallo. Bothwell wished Maitland, Morton, and one or two others, to send some of their servants also to assist in the enterprise; but if they ever promised to do so, it does not appear that they kept their word. Archibald Douglas, however, who had linked himself to the fortunes of Bothwell, was in the immediate neighbourhood with two servants, when the crime was perpetrated.³²

Till within two days of the murder, Bothwell had not made up his mind how the King was to be killed. He held various secret meetings with his four principal accomplices, at which the plan first proposed was to attack Darnley when walking in the gardens adjoining the Kirk-of-Field, which his returning health enabled him to visit occasionally when the weather was favourable. But the success of this scheme was uncertain, and there was every probability that the assassins would be discovered.³³ It was next suggested that the house might easily be entered at midnight, and the King stabbed in bed. But a servant commonly lay in the same apartment with him, and there were always one or two in the adjoining room, who might have resisted or escaped, and afterwards have been able to identify the criminals. After much deliberation, it at length occurred that gunpowder might be used with effect; and that, if the whole premises were blown up, they were likely to bury in their ruins every thing that could fix the suspicion on the parties concerned. Powder was therefore secretly brought into Edinburgh from the Castle of Dunbar, of which Bothwell had the lordship, and was carried to his own lodgings in the immediate vicinity of Holyrood Palace.³⁴ It then became necessary to ascertain on what night the house could be blown up, without endangering the safety of the Queen, whom Bothwell had no desire should share the fate of her husband. She frequently slept at the Kirk-of-Field; and it was difficult to ascertain precisely when she would pass the night at Holyrood.³⁵ In his confession, Hay mentions, that "the purpose should have been put in execution upon the Saturday night; but the matter failed, because all things were not in readiness." It is not in the least unlikely that this delay was owing to Mary's remaining with her husband that evening.

³¹ Paris's Deposition in Laing, vol. ii. p. 296.

³² Laing, vol. ii. p. 282 and 370.

³³ Deposition of Hepburn – Anderson, vol. ii. p. 183.

³⁴ Anderson, vol. ii. p. 183.

³⁵ Keith, Preface, p. viii.

On Sunday, Bothwell learned that the Queen intended honouring with her presence a masque which was to be given in the Palace, at a late hour, on the occasion of the marriage of her French servant Sebastian, to Margaret Carwood, one of her waiting-maids. He knew therefore that she could not sleep at the Kirk-of-Field that night, and took his measures accordingly. At dusk he assembled his accomplices, and told them that the time was come when he should have occasion for their services.³⁶ He was himself to sup between seven and eight at a banquet given to the Queen by the Bishop of Argyle, but he desired them to be in readiness as soon as the company should break up, when he promised to join them.³⁷ The Queen dined at Holyrood, and went from thence to the house of Mr John Balfour, where the Bishop lodged. She rose from the supper-table about nine o'clock, and, accompanied by the Earls of Argyle, Huntly, and Cassils, she went to visit her husband at the Kirk-of-Field. Bothwell, on the contrary, having called Paris aside, who was in waiting on the Queen, took him with him to the lodgings of the Laird of Ormiston.³⁸ There he met Hay and Hepburn, and they passed down the Blackfriars Wynd together. The wall which surrounded the gardens of the Dominican monastery ran near the foot of this wynd. They passed through a gate in the wall, which Bothwell had contrived to open by stealth, and, crossing the gardens, came to another wall immediately behind Darnley's house.³⁹

Dalgleish and Wilson had, in the meantime, been employed in bringing up, from Bothwell's residence in the Abbey, the gunpowder he had lodged there. It had been divided into bags, and the bags were put into trunks, which they carried upon horses. Not being able to take it all at once, they were obliged to go twice between the Kirk-of-Field and the Palace. They were not allowed to come nearer than the Convent-gate at the foot of Blackfriars Wynd, where the powder was taken from them by Ormiston, Hepburn, and Hay, who carried it up to the house. When they had conveyed the whole, they were ordered to return home; and as they passed up the Blackfriars' Wynd, Powrie, as if suddenly conscience-struck, said to Wilson, "Jesu! whatna a gait is this we are ganging? I trow it be not good."⁴⁰ Neither of these menials had seen Bothwell, for he kept at a distance, walking up and down the Cowgate, until the others received and deposited the powder. A large empty barrel had been concealed, by his orders, in the Convent gardens, and into it they intended to have put all the bags; and the barrel was then to have been carried in at the lower back door of Darnley's house, and placed in the Queen's bedroom, which, it will be remembered, was immediately under that of the King. Paris, as the Queen's valet-de-chambre, kept the keys of the lower flat, and was now in Mary's apartment ready to receive the powder. But some delay occurred in consequence of the barrel turning out to be so large that it could not be taken in by the back door; and it became necessary therefore to carry the bags one by one into the bedroom, where they emptied them in a heap on the floor. Bothwell, who was walking anxiously to and fro, was alarmed at this delay, and came to inquire if all was ready. He was afraid that the company up stairs, among whom was the Queen, with several of her nobility and ladies in waiting, might come suddenly out upon them, and discover their proceedings. "*He bade them haste,*" says Hepburn, "*before the Queen came forth of the King's house; for if she came forth before they were ready, they would not find such commodity.*"⁴¹ At length, every thing being put into the state they wished, they all left the under part of the house, with the exception of Hepburn and Hay, who were locked into the room with the gunpowder, and left to keep watch there till the others should return.⁴²

³⁶ Anderson, vol. ii. p. 179.

³⁷ Ibid. vol. ii. p. 184.

³⁸ Laing, Appendix, p. 304.

³⁹ Deposition of John Hay in Anderson, vol. ii. p. 177.

⁴⁰ Deposition of William Powrie, in Anderson, vol. ii. p. 165.

⁴¹ Anderson, vol. ii. p. 183.

⁴² Ibid. vol. ii. p. 181.

Bothwell, having dismissed the others, went up stairs and joined the Queen and her friends in Darnley's apartment, as if he had that moment come to the Kirk-of-Field. Shortly afterwards, Paris also entered; and the Queen, being either reminded of, or recollecting her promise, to grace with her presence Sebastian's entertainment, rose, about eleven at night, to take leave of her husband. It has been asserted, upon the alleged authority of Buchanan, that, before going away, she kissed him, and put upon his finger a ring, in pledge of her affection. It seems doubtful, however, whether this is Buchanan's meaning. He certainly mentions, in his own insidious manner, that Mary endeavoured to divert all suspicions from herself, by paying frequent visits to her husband, by staying with him many hours at a time, by talking lovingly with him, by paying every attention to his health, by kissing him, and making him a present of a ring; but he does not expressly say that a kiss and ring were given upon the occasion of her parting with Darnley for the last time.⁴³ It is not at all unlikely, that the fact may have been as Buchanan is supposed to state; but as it is not a circumstance of much importance, it is unnecessary to insist upon its being either believed or discredited so long as it is involved in any uncertainty. Buchanan mentions another little particular, which may easily be conceived to be true, – that, in the course of her conversation with her husband this evening, Mary made the remark, that “just about that time last year David Rizzio was killed.” Bothwell, at such a moment, could not have made the observation; but it may have come naturally enough from Mary, or Darnley himself.⁴⁴

Accompanied by Bothwell, Argyle, Huntly, Cassils, and others, Mary now proceeded to the palace, going first up the Blackfriars' Wynd, and then down the Canongate. Just as she was about to enter Holyrood House, she met one of the Earl of Bothwell's servants (either Dalgleish or Powrie), whom she asked where he had been, that he smelt so strongly of gunpowder? The fellow made some excuse, and no further notice was taken of the circumstance.⁴⁵ The Queen proceeded immediately to the rooms where Sebastian's friends were assembled; and Bothwell, who was very anxious to avoid any suspicion, and, above all, to prevent Mary from suspecting him, continued to attend her assiduously. Paris, who carried in his pocket the key of Mary's bed-room at the Kirk-of-Field, in which he had locked Hay and Hepburn, followed in the Earl's train. Upon entering the apartment where the dancing and masquing was going on, this Frenchman, who had neither the courage nor the cunning necessary to carry him through such a deed of villany, retired in a melancholy mood to a corner, and stood by himself wrapt in a profound reverie. Bothwell, observing him, and fearing that his conduct might excite observation, went up to him, and angrily demanded why he looked so sad, telling him in a whisper, *that if he retained that lugubrious countenance before the Queen, he should be made to suffer for it*. Paris answered despondingly, that he did not care what became of himself, if he could only get permission to go home to bed, for he was ill. “No,” said Bothwell, “you must remain with me; would you leave those two gentlemen, Hay and Hepburn, locked up where they now are?” – “Alas!” answered Paris, “what more must I do this night? I have no heart for this business.” Bothwell put an end to the conversation, by ordering Paris to follow him immediately.⁴⁶ It is uncertain whether the Queen had retired to her own chamber before Bothwell quitted the Palace, or whether he left her at the masque. Buchanan, always ready to fabricate calumny, says, that the Queen and Bothwell were “in long talk together, in her own chamber after midnight.” But the falsehood of this assertion is clearly established; for Buchanan himself allows, that it was past eleven before Mary left the Kirk-of-Field, and Dalgleish and Powrie both state, that Bothwell came to his own lodgings from the Palace about twelve. If, therefore, he was at the masque, as we have seen, he had no time to talk with the Queen in private; and, if he had talked with the Queen, he could not have been at the masque. It is most likely

⁴³ Buchanan's *History*, Book XVIII. may be compared with his *Detection* in Anderson, vol. i. p. 22 and 72.

⁴⁴ Buchanan's *History*, Book XVIII.

⁴⁵ Freebairn's *Life of Mary*, p. 112 and 114.

⁴⁶ Deposition of Paris in Laing, vol. ii. p. 305.

that Mary continued for some time after Bothwell's departure at Sebastian's wedding, for Sebastian was "in great favour with the Queen, for his skill in music and his merry jesting."

As soon as Bothwell came to his "own lodging in the Abbey," he exchanged his rich court dress for a more common one. Instead of a black satin doublet, bordered with silver, he put on a white canvass doublet, and wrapt himself up in his riding-cloak. Taking Paris, Powrie, Wilson and Dalgleish with him, he then went down the lane which ran along the wall of the Queen's south gardens, and which still exists, joining the foot of the Canongate, where the gate of the outer court of the Palace formerly stood. Passing by the door of the Queen's garden, where sentinels were always stationed, the party was challenged by one of the soldiers, who demanded, "Who goes there?" They answered, "Friends." "What friends?" "Friends to my Lord Bothwell." They proceeded up the Canongate till they came to the Netherbow Port, or lower gate of the city, which was shut. They called to the porter, John Galloway, and desired him to open to friends of my Lord Bothwell. Galloway was not well pleased to be raised at so late an hour, and he kept them waiting for some time. As they entered, he asked, "What they did out of their beds at that time of night?" but they gave him no answer. As soon as they got into the town, they called at Ormiston's lodgings, who lived in a house, called Bassyntine's house, a short way up the High Street, on the south side; but they were told that he was not at home. They went without him, down a close below the Blackfriars Wynd, till they came to the gate of the Convent Gardens already mentioned. They entered, and, crossing the gardens, they stopped at the back wall, a short way behind Darnley's residence. Here, Dalgleish, Wilson, and Powrie, were ordered to remain; and Bothwell and Paris passed in, over the wall. Having gone into the lower part of the house, they unlocked the door of the room in which they had left Hay and Hepburn, and the four together held a consultation regarding the best mode of setting fire to the gunpowder, which was lying in a great heap upon the floor. They took a piece of lint, three or four inches long, and kindling one end of it, they laid the other on the powder, knowing that it would burn slowly enough to give them time to retire to a safe distance. They then returned to the Convent gardens; and having rejoined the servants whom they had left there, the whole group stood together, anxiously waiting for the explosion.

Darnley, meantime, little aware of his impending fate, had gone to bed within an hour after the Queen had left him. His servant, William Taylor, lay, as was his wont, in the same room. Thomas Nelson, Edward Simmons, and a boy, lay in the gallery, or servant's apartment, on the same floor, and nearer the town-wall. Bothwell must have been quite aware, that from the mode of death he had chosen for Darnley, there was every probability that his attendants would also perish. But when lawless ambition once commences its work of blood, whether there be only one, or a hundred victims, seems to be a matter of indifference.⁴⁷

The conspirators waited for upwards of a quarter of an hour without hearing any noise. Bothwell became impatient; and unless the others had interfered, and pointed out to him the danger, he would have returned and looked in at the back window of the bedroom, to see if the light was burning. It must have been a moment of intense anxiety and terror to all of them. At length, every doubt was terminated. With an explosion so tremendous, that it shook nearly the whole town, and startled the inhabitants from their sleep, the house of the Kirk-of-Field blew up into a thousand fragments, leaving scarcely a vestige standing of its former walls. Paris, who describes the noise as that of a storm of thunder condensed into one clap, fell almost senseless, through fear, with his face upon the earth. Bothwell himself, though "a bold, bad man," confessed a momentary panic. "I have been at many important enterprises," said he, "but I never felt before as I do now." Without waiting to ascertain the full extent of the catastrophe, he and his accomplices left the scene of their guilt with all expedition. They went out at the Convent-gate, and, having passed down to the Cowgate, they there separated, and went up by different roads to the Netherbow-Port. They were very desirous to avoid disturbing the porter again, lest they should excite his suspicion. They therefore went down a close, which still

⁴⁷ Evidence of Thomas Nelson, Anderson, vol. iv. p. 165.

exists, on the north side of the High Street, immediately above the city gate, expecting that they would be able to drop from the wall into Leith Wynd; but Bothwell found it too high, especially as a wound he had received at Hermitage Castle, still left one of his hands weak. They were forced, therefore, to apply once more to John Galloway, who, on being told that they were friends of the Earl Bothwell, does not seem to have asked any questions. On getting into the Canongate, some people were observed coming up the street; to avoid them, Bothwell passed down St Mary's Wynd, and went to his lodgings by the back road. The sentinels, at the door of the Queen's garden again challenged them, and they made the usual answer, that they were friends of the Earl Bothwell, carrying despatches to him from the country. The sentinels asked, – "If they knew what noise that was they had heard a short time before?" They told them they did not.⁴⁸

When Bothwell came home, he called for a drink; and, taking off his clothes, went to bed immediately. He had not lain there above half an hour when the news was brought him that the House of the Kirk-of-Field had been blown up, and the King slain. Exclaiming that there must be treason abroad, and affecting the utmost alarm and indignation, he rose and put on the same clothes he had worn when he was last with the Queen. The Earl of Huntly and others soon joined him, and, after hearing from them as much as was then known of the matter, it was thought advisable to repair to the Palace, to inform Mary of what had happened. They found her already alarmed, and anxious to see them, some vague rumours of the accident having reached her. They disclosed the whole melancholy truth as gradually and gently as possible, attributing Darnley's death either to the accidental explosion of some gunpowder in the neighbourhood, or to the effects of lightning. Mary's distress knew no bounds; and seeing that it was hopeless to reason with her in the first anguish of her feelings, Bothwell and the other Lords left her just as day began to break, and proceeded to the Kirk-of-Field.⁴⁹ There they found every thing in a state of confusion; – the edifice in ruins, and the town's-people gathered round it in dismay. Of the five persons who were in the house at the time of the explosion, one only was saved. Darnley, and his servant William Taylor, who slept in the room immediately above the gunpowder, had been most exposed to its effects, and they were accordingly carried through the air over the town wall, and across the lane on the other side, and were found lying at a short distance from each other in a garden to the south of this lane, – both in their night-dress, and with little external injury. Simmons, Nelson, and the boy, being nearer the town-wall, were only collaterally affected by the explosion. They were, however, all buried in the ruins, out of which Nelson alone had the good fortune to be taken alive. The bodies were, by Bothwell's command, removed to an adjoining house, and a guard from the Palace set over them.⁵⁰

Darnley and his servant being found at so great a distance, and so triflingly injured, it was almost universally supposed at the time, and for long afterwards, that they had been first strangled or assassinated, and then carried out to the garden. This supposition is now proved, beyond a doubt, to have been erroneous. If Darnley had been first murdered, there would have been no occasion to have blown up the house; and if this was done, that his death might appear to be the result of accident, his body would never have been removed to such a distance as might appear to disconnect it with the previous explosion. Before the expansive force of gunpowder was sufficiently understood, it was not conceived possible that it could have acted as in the present instance; and various theories were invented, none of which were so simple or so true, as that which accords with the facts now established. It is the depositions already quoted that set the matter at rest; for, having confessed so much of the truth, there could have been no reason for concealing any other part of it. Hepburn declared expressly, that "he knew nothing but that Darnley was blown into the air, for he was handled with no men's hands that he saw;" and Hay deponed that Bothwell, some time afterwards, said to

⁴⁸ The Confessions and Depositions in Anderson, vol. ii. and vol. iv; and in Laing, vol. ii.

⁴⁹ Melville's Memoirs, p. 174. Lesley in Anderson, vol. i. p. 24. Freebairn, p. 115.

⁵⁰ Anderson, vol. i. p. 36. – Goodall, vol. ii. p. 245.

him, “What thought ye when ye saw him blown into the air?” Hay answered, – “Alas! my Lord, why speak ye of that, for whenever I hear such a thing, the words wound me to death, as they ought to do you.”⁵¹ There is nothing wonderful in the bodies having been carried so far; for it is mentioned by a cotemporary author, that “they kindled their train of gunpowder, which inflamed the whole timber of the house, and troubled the walls thereof in such sort, that great stones of the length of ten feet, and of the breadth of four feet, were found blown from the house a far way.”⁵² Besides, after the minute account, which a careful collation of the different confessions and depositions has enabled us to give, of the manner in which Bothwell spent every minute of his time, from the period of the Queen’s leaving Darnley, till the unfortunate Prince ceased to exist, it would be a work of supererogation to seek to refute, by any stronger evidence, the notion that he was strangled.

It is, however, somewhat remarkable, that, even in recent times, authors of good repute should have allowed themselves to be misled by the exploded errors of earlier writers. “The house,” says Miss Benger, “was invested with armed men, some of whom watched without, whilst others entered to achieve their barbarous purpose; these having strangled Darnley and his servant with silken cords, carried their bodies into the garden, and then blew up the house with powder.”⁵³ This is almost as foolish as the report mentioned by Melville, that he was taken out of his bed, and brought down to a stable, where they suffocated him by stopping a napkin into his mouth; or, as that still more ridiculous story alluded to by Sanderson, that the Earl of Dunbar, and Sir Roger Aston, an Englishman, who chose to hoax his countrymen, by telling them that he lodged in the King’s chamber that night, “having smelt the fire of a match, leapt both out at a window into the garden; and that the King catching hold of his sword, and suspecting treason, not only against himself, but the Queen and the young Prince, who was then at Holyrood House with his mother, desired him (Sir Roger Aston) to make all the haste he could to acquaint her of it, and that immediately armed men, rushing into the room, seized him single and alone, and stabbed him, and then laid him in the garden, and afterwards blew up the house.”⁵⁴ Buchanan, Crawford and others, fall into similar mistakes; but Knox, or his continuator, writes more correctly, and mentions, besides, that medical men “being convened, at the Queen’s command, to view and consider the manner of Darnley’s death,” were almost unanimously of opinion that he was blown into the air, although he had no mark of fire.⁵⁵

Henry Stuart, Lord Darnley, Duke of Albany and King of Scotland, perished in the twenty-first year of his age, and the eighteenth month of his reign. The suddenness and severity of his fate excited a degree of compassion, and attached an interest to his memory, which, had he died in the ordinary course of nature, would never have been felt. He had been to Scotland only a cause of civil war, – to his nobility an object of contempt, of pity, or of hatred, – and to his wife a perpetual source of sorrow and misfortune. Any praise he may deserve must be given to him almost solely on the score of his personal endowments; his mind and dispositions had been allowed to run to waste, and were under no controul but that of his own wayward feelings and fancies. Keith, in the following words, draws a judicious contrast between his animal and intellectual qualities. “He is said to have been one of the tallest and handsomest young men of the age; that he had a comely face and pleasant countenance; that he was a most dexterous horseman, and exceedingly well skilled in all genteel exercises, prompt and ready for all games and sports, much given to the diversions of hawking and hunting, to horse-racing and music, especially playing on the lute; he could speak and write well, and was bountiful and liberal enough. But, then, to balance these good natural qualifications, he was much addicted to intemperance, to base and unmanly pleasures; he was haughty and proud, and so very weak in mind,

⁵¹ Laing, vol. ii. p. 289 et 290.

⁵² *Historie of King James the Sext*, p. 6.

⁵³ Miss Benger, vol. ii. p. 313.

⁵⁴ Sanderson’s *Life of Mary*, p. 48. – Freebairn, p. 113.

⁵⁵ Knox, p. 404.

as to be a prey to all that came about him; he was inconstant, credulous, and facile, unable to abide by any resolutions, capable to be imposed upon by designing men, and could conceal no secret, let it tend ever so much to his own welfare or detriment.”⁵⁶ With all his faults, there was no one in Scotland who lamented him more sincerely than Mary. She had loved him deeply; and whilst her whole life proves that she was incapable of indulging that violent and unextinguishable hatred which prompts to deeds of cruelty and revenge, it likewise proves that it was almost impossible for her to cease to esteem an object for which she had once formed an attachment. Murray must himself have allowed the truth of the first part of this statement; and for many days before his death, Darnley had himself felt the force of the latter. She had, no doubt, too much good sense to believe that Darnley, in his character of king, was a loss to the country; but the tears she shed for him, are to be put down to the account, not of the queen, but of the woman and the wife.

⁵⁶ Keith, p. 365.

CHAPTER IV. BOTHWELL'S TRIAL AND ACQUITTAL

During the whole of the day that succeeded her husband's death, (Monday the 10th of February 1567), Mary shut herself up in her own apartment, and would see no one. Bothwell was anxious to have conversed with her, but overpowered with grief, she was unable to listen to any thing he wished to say.⁵⁷ In the meantime all was confusion and dismay in Edinburgh, and wherever the news of this strange murder arrived, a thousand contradictory reports went abroad. Some suspected one thing, and some another; and it must be recollected, that although, at a subsequent date, facts came out sufficient to fix the guilt upon those who had really committed the crime, as yet there was nothing but mere vague conjecture. Mary herself was lost in wonder and doubt. Most of the nobility who were near her wished to persuade her, at Bothwell's instigation, that her husband's death was either the effect of accident, or that it had been brought about by the malice and villany of some obscure and ignoble traitors; and every endeavour being thus made to mislead her, she was the very last who could be expected to know the truth. Accordingly, it appears by a letter she wrote to the Archbishop of Glasgow, her ambassador at Paris, on Tuesday the 11th (two days after the murder), that she was still but very imperfectly informed even of the manner of Darnley's death. This letter, at once so simple and natural, must not be omitted here. She had, the same morning, received a despatch from her ambassador, in which he had expressed a fear, that the pardon she had lately given to Morton, Ruthven, Lindsay and others, might involve her in trouble. Mary's answer was as follows:

"Most Reverend Father in God, and trust Counsellor, we greet you well: We have received this morning your letters of the 27th January, by your servant Robert Dury, containing in part such advertisement as we find by effect over true, albeit the success has not altogether been such as the authors of that mischievous fact had preconceived in their mind, and had put it in execution, if God in his mercy had not preserved us and reserved us, as we trust, to the end that we may take a vigorous vengeance of that mischievous deed, which, before it should remain unpunished, we had rather lose life and all. The matter is horrible, and so strange, that we believe the like was never heard of in any country. This night past, being the 9th February, a little after two hours after midnight, the house wherein the King was lodged was in an instant blown in the air, he lying sleeping in his bed, with such a vehemency, that of the whole lodging, walls, and other, there is nothing remaining, – no, not a stone above another, but all either carried far away, or dung in dross to the very ground-stone. It must be done by force of powder, and appears to have been a mine.⁵⁸ By whom it has been done, or in what manner, it appears not as yet. We doubt not but, according to the diligence our Council has begun already to use, the certainty of all shall be obtained shortly; and the same being discovered, which we wot God will never suffer to lie hid, we hope to punish the same with such rigour, as shall serve for example of this cruelty to all ages to come. At all events, whoever has taken this wicked enterprise in hand, we assure ourself it was devised as well for us as for the King; for we lay all the most part of all the last week in that same lodging, and were there accompanied with the most part of the lords that are in this town, that same night at midnight, and of very chance tarried not all night, by reason of some masque in the Abbey; but we believe it was not chance, but God that put it in our head.⁵⁹ We despatch this bearer upon the sudden, and therefore write to you the more shortly.

⁵⁷ Melville, p. 174.

⁵⁸ The notion that the powder, with which the Kirk-of-Field was blown up, had been placed in a mine, dug for the purpose, was for a while very prevalent. Mary, of course, never suspected that it had been put into her own bedroom; but the truth came out as soon as the depositions of Bothwell's accomplices were published. Why Whittaker should still have continued to believe that a mine had been excavated, it is difficult to understand. Laing very justly ridicules the absurdity of such a belief.

⁵⁹ There is a sincere piety in this rejection of the word "chance." Mary was steadily religious all her life, and certainly nothing but a

The rest of your letter we shall answer at more leisure, within four or five days, by your own servant; and so, for the present, commit you to Almighty God. – At Edinburgh, the 11th day of February 1556-7. – Marie R.”⁶⁰

In accordance with the resolution intimated in the above letter, to seek out and vigorously punish her husband’s murderers, a proclamation was issued upon Wednesday the 12th, immediately after an inquisition had been taken by the Justice-General, offering a reward of two thousand pounds, and “an honest yearly rent,” to whosoever should reveal “the persons, devisers, counsellors, or actual committers of the said mischievous and treasonable murder,” and promising besides to the first revealer, although a partaker of the crime, a free pardon. The same proclamation declared, that as “Almighty God would never suffer so horrible a deed to lie hid, so, before it should remain untried, the Queen’s Majesty, unto whom of all others the case was most grievous, would rather lose life and all.”⁶¹ In the mean time, not knowing but that the same traitors who had murdered her husband, might intend a similar fate for herself, Mary removed to the Castle, as a place of greater security than Holyrood Palace. There she remained shut up in a dark chamber, hung with black, till after Darnley’s burial. He lay in the Chapel at Holyrood, from the 12th to the 15th of February. His body having been embalmed, he was then interred in the royal vault, in which King James V., together with his first wife, Magdalene, and his two infant sons, Mary’s brothers, lay. Buchanan, and his follower Laing, have both insisted upon the nocturnal secrecy and indifference with which the funeral ceremony was conducted. “The nobles that were there present,” says Buchanan, “decreed, that a stately and honourable funeral should be made for him; but the Queen ordered it so, that he was carried by private bearers in the night-time, and was buried in no manner of state.” The interpretation to be put upon this insidious passage is, that the Protestant Lords proposed to bury Darnley after the Presbyterian form, and that Mary refused her consent, and, in consequence, only the Catholics attended. “The ceremonies indeed,” says Lesley, “were the fewer, because that the greatest part of the Council were Protestants, and had before interred their own parents without accustomed solemnities.”⁶² That Mary’s calumniators should have insisted upon this circumstance at all, only shows how eager they were to avail themselves of everything which they could pervert to their own purposes. Had Mary wished to act the hypocrite, nothing could have been easier for her than to have made a great parade at Darnley’s funeral.

Bothwell, in the mean time, kept as quiet as possible, attending, as usual, at court, and taking care always to be present at the meetings of the Privy Council. But he had lighted a torch which was not to be extinguished, till it had blazed over Scotland, and kindled his own funeral pyre. On whatever grounds the suspicion had gone abroad, (and it is difficult to say why public attention should so soon have been directed to him as the perpetrator of the late murder, unless we suppose Murray, or some of his other accomplices, to have been now eager to publish his guilt, in order to accomplish his ruin), it is at all events certain, that in a few days after the proclamation for the discovery of the assassins had been issued, a placard was set up at night, on the door of the Tolbooth of Edinburgh, in which it was affirmed, that the Earl of Bothwell, together with a Mr James Balfour, a Mr David Chalmers, and a Mr John Spence, were the persons principally concerned in the crime, and that the Queen herself was “assenting thereto.” It might be reasonably concluded, that no notice whatever would be taken of an anonymous paper thus expressed; but the Queen, even although it insultingly accused herself, was so anxious to have the matter of the murder investigated, that she caused another proclamation to be issued, without waiting for the advice of her Privy Council, desiring the author of the placard to divulge his name, and promising that if he could show there was any truth in any part

pure and upright spirit could have induced her, on the present occasion, to appeal to her Creator, and say, “It was not chance, but God.”

⁶⁰ Keith, Preface, p. viii.

⁶¹ Anderson, vol. i. p. 36.

⁶² Lesley in Anderson, vol. i. p. 23.

of his averment, he should receive the promised reward.⁶³ A second placard was stuck up in answer, requiring the money to be lodged in honest hands, and three of the Queen's servants, whom it named, to be put in arrest; and undertaking, as soon as these conditions were complied with, that the author and four friends would discover themselves. This was so palpable an evasion, that it of course met with no attention. To suppose that Government would take upon itself the charge of partiality, and place the public money in what an anonymous writer might consider "honest hands," was too grossly absurd to have been proposed by any one who really wished to do his country a service.

The circumstance of Bothwell's name being mentioned in these placards, in conjunction with that of the Queen, probably operated in his favour with Mary. Conscious of her own innocence, she would very naturally suppose that the charge was equally calumnious in regard to him; for if she knew it to be false in one particular, what dependence could she place upon its truth in any other? At the same time, she could not of course see her husband murdered, almost before her eyes, without making various surmises concerning the real author and cause of his death. Her accusers, however, seem to suppose that she ought to have been gifted with an almost miraculous power of discovering the guilty. Only a few days before, every thing had been proceeding smoothly; and she herself, with renovated spirits, was enjoying the returning health and affection of her husband. In a moment the scene was overclouded; her husband was barbarously slain; and all Scotland was in a ferment. Yet around the Queen all wore the same aspect. Murray was living quietly in Fife; her secretary Maitland was proceeding as usual with the official details of public business; the Earl of Morton had not yet returned to Court, and he also was in Fife; the Archbishop of St Andrews was busied in bolstering up the last remains of Catholicism; Athol, Caithness, Huntly, Argyle, Bothwell, Cassils, and Sutherland, were attending their Sovereign, as faithful and attached servants ought. Where then was she to look for the traitor who had raised his hand against her husband's life and her own happiness? Whom was she to suspect? Was it Murray? – he had left town without any sufficient cause, on the very day of Darnley's death, and had hated him ever since he put his foot in Scotland. Was it Morton? – he had returned recently from banishment, and that banishment had been the result of Darnley's treachery, and had not Morton assassinated Rizzio, with far less grounds of offence? Was it Argyle? – the Lennox family had stripped him of some of his possessions, and the King's death might, perhaps, be the means of restoring them to him. Was it the Hamiltons? – they were the hereditary enemies of the house of Lennox, and Darnley had blasted for ever their hopes of succession to the throne. Was it Huntly? Was it Athol? Was it Bothwell? It was less likely to be any of these, because Darnley had never come into direct collision with them. By what art, or superior penetration, was Mary to make a discovery which was baffling the whole of Scotland? Was she surrounded by the very men who had done the deed, and who used every means to lead her astray from the truth; yet was she to be able to single out the criminal at a glance, and hurl upon him her just indignation?⁶⁴

Worn out by her griefs and her perplexities, her doubts and her fears, Mary's health began to give way, and her friends prevailed upon her to leave for a short time her confinement in Edinburgh Castle, and visit Seaton House, a country residence of which she was fond, only seven miles off. Lesley, after describing Mary's melancholy sojourn in the Castle, adds, that she would have "continued

⁶³ Keith, p. 368.

⁶⁴ Laing's remarks upon this subject, are exceedingly weak. He seems to suppose that Mary, for the mere sake of appearances, ought to have thrown into prison some of her most powerful nobility. He adds, – "If innocent, she must have suspected somebody, and the means of detection were evidently in her hands. The persons who provided or furnished the lodging, – the man to whom the house belonged, – the servants of the Queen, who were intrusted with the keys, – the King's servants who had previously withdrawn, or were preserved, at his death, – her brother, Lord Robert, who had apprised him of his danger, were the first objects for suspicion or inquiry; and their evidence would have afforded the most ample detection." Laing does not seem to be aware, that he is here suggesting the very steps which Mary actually took. She had not, indeed, herself examined witnesses, which would have been alike contrary to her general habits and her feelings at the time; but she had ordered the legal authorities to assemble every day, till they ascertained all the facts which could be collected. Nor does Laing seem to remember, that Bothwell had it in his power to exercise over these legal authorities no inconsiderable control, and to prevail upon them, as he in truth did, to garble and conceal several circumstances of importance which came out.

a longer time in this lamentable wise, had she not been most earnestly dehorted by the vehement exhortations and persuasions of her Council, who were moved thereto by her physicians informations, declaring to them the great and imminent dangers of her health and life, if she did not in all speed break up and leave that kind of close and solitary life, and repair to some good open and wholesome air; which she did, being thus advised, and earnestly thereto solicited by her said council.”⁶⁵ She went to Seaton on the 16th of February, accompanied by a very considerable train, among whom were the Earls of Argyle, Huntly, Bothwell, Arbroath, the Archbishop of St Andrews, the Lords Fleming and Livingston, and Secretary Maitland.⁶⁶ It was here that a correspondence took place between the Queen and the Earl of Lennox, Darnley’s father, which deserves attention.

In his first letter, the Earl thanked her Majesty for the trouble and labour she took to discover and bring to trial those who were guilty of the “late cruel act;” but as the offenders were not yet known, he beseeched her Highness to assemble, with all convenient diligence, the whole nobility and estates of the realm, that they, acting in conjunction with her Majesty, might take such steps as should seem most likely to make manifest the “bloody and cruel actors of the deed.” This letter was dated the 20th of February 1567. Mary replied to it on the 21st; and in her answer, assured Lennox that in showing him all the pleasure and goodwill in her power, she did only her duty, and that which her natural affection prompted, adding, that on that affection he might always depend, “so long as God gave her life.” As to the assembling of her nobility, she informed him, that shortly before the receipt of his letter, she had desired a Parliament to be summoned, and that as soon as it met, the death of Darnley would be the first subject which it would be called upon to consider. Lennox wrote again on the 26th, to explain, that when he advised her Majesty to assemble her nobility, he did not allude to the holding of a Parliament, which he knew could not be done immediately. But because he had heard of certain placards which had been set up in Edinburgh, in which certain persons were named as the devisers of the murder, he requested that these persons should be apprehended and imprisoned, that the nobility and Council should be assembled, and that the writers of the placards should be required to appear before them, and be confronted with those whom they had accused; and that if they refused to appear, or did not make good their charge, the persons slandered should be exonerated and set at liberty. A proposal so very unconstitutional could not have been made by Lennox, unless misled by the ardour of his paternal feelings, or instigated by some personal enmity towards Bothwell. If Mary had ventured to throw into prison every one accused in an anonymous bill, there is no saying where the abuse might have ended. The most worthless coward might have thus revenged himself upon those he hated; and law and justice would have degenerated into despotism, or civil anarchy. The Queen, therefore, informed Lennox, that although, as she had already written, she had summoned a Parliament, and should lay the matter of the murder before it, it was never her intention to allow it to sleep in the mean time. Her Lords and Council would of course continue to exert themselves, but her *whole* nobility could not be assembled till the Parliament met. As to his desire, that the persons named in the placards should be apprehended, there had been so many, and so contrary statements made in these placards, that she knew not to which in particular he alluded; and besides, that she could not find herself justified in throwing any of her subjects into prison upon such authority; but that, if he himself would condescend upon the names of such persons as he thought deserved a trial, she would order that trial to take place immediately. She was anxious that Lennox should take this responsibility upon himself, for she had hitherto been kept much in the dark, and was glad to have the assistance of one almost as desirous as herself to come to the truth. She invited him, therefore, in her letter of the 1st of March, to write to her again immediately, with any other suggestion which might occur to him, because she was determined “not to omit any occasion which might clear the matter.” It was the 17th

⁶⁵ Killigrew, the English ambassador, sent by Elizabeth to offer her condolence, mentions, that he “found the Queen’s Majesty in a dark chamber so as he could not see her face, but by her words she seemed very doleful.” – Chalmers, vol. ii. p. 209.

⁶⁶ Chalmers, vol. i. p. 208.

of March before Lennox again addressed the Queen. He thanked her Majesty for her attention to his wishes; he marvelled that the names of the persons upon the placards, against whom the greatest suspicions were entertained, “*had been kept from her Majesty’s ears;*” and, as she requested it, he now named them himself, putting the Earl of Bothwell first, and several other inferior persons after him. He did not undertake to be their accuser, confessing that he had no evidence of their guilt; but he said he greatly suspected Bothwell, and hoped “her Majesty, now knowing their names, and being a party, as well and more than he was, although he was the father, would take order in the matter according to the weight of the cause.” Mary, who had by this time returned to Edinburgh, wrote to Lennox, the very day after the receipt of his letter, that she had summoned her nobility to come to Edinburgh the first week of April; and that, as soon as they came, the persons named in his letter should “abide and underlie such trial, as by the laws of the realm was usual.” – “They being found culpable,” Mary added, “in any way of that crime and odious fact, named in the placards, and whereof you suspect them, we shall even, according to our former letter, see the condign punishment as vigorously and extremely executed as the weight of that fact deserves; for, indeed, as you write, we esteem ourself a party if we were resolute of the authors.” She further entreated Lennox to come to Edinburgh, that he might be present at the trial, and lend his assistance to it. “You shall there have experience,” she concluded, “of our earnest will and effectuous mind to have an end in this matter, and the authors of so unworthy a deed really punished.”⁶⁷

The Queen, having waited anxiously till something should occur which might lead to the detection of the murderers, hoped that a clue to the mystery was now about to be discovered. It was a bold and perhaps almost too strong a measure, to arraign a nobleman so powerful, and apparently so respected as Bothwell, of so serious a crime, upon such vague suspicion; but if Mary in this instance exceeded the due limits of her constituted authority, it was an error which leant to virtue’s side, and the feelings of an insulted Queen and afflicted wife must plead her excuse. Her Privy Council, which she summoned immediately upon the receipt of Lennox’s last letter, and before whom she laid it, passed an act directing the trial of the Earl of Bothwell, and the other suspected persons named by Lennox. The trial was fixed to take place on the 12th day of April 1567; letters were directed to the Earl of Lennox to inform him of it, and proclamations were made in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Dumbarton, and other places, calling upon all who would accuse Bothwell, or his accomplices, to appear in court on the day appointed.⁶⁸ The Council, however, would not authorize the imprisonment of the suspected persons, seeing that it was only anonymous placards which had excited that suspicion.

As soon as the Earl of Lennox got intimation of the intended trial, he set out for Edinburgh from his estate in Dumbartonshire. Not choosing to proceed thither direct, in consequence of the enmity which he knew Bothwell must bear to him, he went to Stirling, where it was understood he was engaged in collecting all the evidence in his power. Nor can Bothwell be supposed to have felt very easy, under the prospect of his approaching trial. He counted, however, on the good offices of his friends among the nobility; and having removed all who might have been witnesses against him, and brought into Edinburgh a numerous body of retainers, he resolved to brazen out the accusation with his usual audacity. He even affected to complain that he had not been treated with sufficient fairness; that a paper affixed privately to the door of the Tolbooth had been made the means of involving him in serious trouble; and that, instead of the usual term of forty days, only fifteen had been allowed him to prepare for his defence.⁶⁹ He assumed the air, therefore, of an injured and innocent man; and he was well borne out in this character by the countenance he received from most of the Lords then at court. We learn from Killigrew, that twenty days after Bothwell had been placarded, he dined

⁶⁷ *Vide* these Letters in Anderson, vol. i. p. 40, or Keith, p. 369.

⁶⁸ Anderson, vol. i. p. 50.

⁶⁹ Goodall, vol. i. p. 346, *et seq.*

with him at the Earl of Murray's, who had by this time returned from Fife, in company with Huntly, Argyle, and Lethington.⁷⁰

The day of trial now drew near; but, to her astonishment, Mary received a letter only twenty-four hours before it was to take place, from the Earl of Lennox, who did not exactly see how he was to carry through his accusation, and therefore wished that the case should be postponed. The letter was dated from Stirling, and mentioned two causes which he said would prevent him from coming to Edinburgh; one was sickness, and the other the short time which had been allowed him to prepare for making good his charge. He asked, therefore, that the Queen would imprison the suspected persons, and would delay the trial till he had collected his friends and his proofs.⁷¹ This request disappointed Mary exceedingly. She had hurried on the trial as much to gratify Lennox as herself; but she now saw that, in asking for it at all, he had been guided more by the feeling of the moment, than by any rational conviction of its propriety. To postpone it without the consent of the accused, who had by this time made the necessary preparations for their defence, was of course out of the question; and, if the time originally mentioned was too short, why did Lennox not write to that effect, as soon as he received intimation of the day appointed? If she put off the trial now, for any thing she knew it might never come on at all. Her enemies, however, were determined, whatever she did, to discover some cause of complaint; – if she urged it on, they would accuse her of precipitancy; if she postponed it, they would charge her with indifference. Elizabeth, in particular, under the pretence of a mighty anxiety that Mary should do what was most honourable and requisite, insolently suggested that suspicion might attach to herself, unless she complied with the request made by Lennox. “For the love of God, Madam,” she hypocritically and insidiously wrote to Mary, “conduct yourself with such sincerity and prudence, in a case which touches you so nearly, that all the world may have reason to pronounce you innocent of a crime so enormous, which, unless they did, you would deserve to be blotted out from the rank of Princesses, and to become odious even to the vulgar, rather than see which, I would wish you an honourable sepulchre.”⁷² Just as if any one *did* suspect Mary, or as if any monarch in Christendom would have dared to hint the possibility of her being an adulterous murderess, except her jealous rival Elizabeth, pining in the chagrined malevolence of antiquated virginity. The real motives which dictated this epistle became the more apparent, when we learn that it was not written till the 8th of April, and could not at the very soonest reach Edinburgh till the morning of the very day on which the trial was to take place, and probably not till after it was over. The truth is, the very moment she heard of Darnley's death, Elizabeth had eagerly considered in her own mind the possibility of involving “her good sister” in the guilt attached to those who had murdered him, and was now the very first who openly attempted to lead the thoughts of the Scottish Queen's subjects into that channel; – she was the very first who commenced laying the train which produced in the end so fatal a catastrophe.

On Saturday, the 12th of April 1567, a Justiciary Court was held in the tolbooth of Edinburgh, for the trial of the Earl of Bothwell. The Lord High Justice the Earl of Argyle presided, attended by four assessors, or legal advisers, two of whom, Mr James MacGill and Mr Henry Balnaves, were Senators of the College of Justice; the third was Robert Pitcairn, Commendator of Dumfermlin, and the fourth was Lord Lindsay. The usual preliminary formalities having been gone through, the indictment was read, in which Bothwell was accused of being “art and part of the cruel, odious, treasonable, and abominable slaughter and murder, of the umwhile the Right High and Mighty Prince the King's Grace, dearest spouse for the time to our Sovereign Lady the Queen's Majesty.”⁷³ He was then called as defender on the one side, and Matthew Earl of Lennox, and all others the Queen's

⁷⁰ Chalmers, vol. i. p. 209. The above fact is no proof, as Chalmers alleges, that Murray was connected with the conspirators; but it shows, that whatever his own suspicions or belief were, he did not choose to discountenance Bothwell. Could Mary ever suppose that the *godly* Earl of Murray would entertain a murderer at his table?

⁷¹ Anderson, vol. i. p. 52.

⁷² Robertson – Appendix to vol. i. No. XIX.

⁷³ Anderson, vol. ii. p. 103.

lieges, who wished to pursue in the matter, on the other. Bothwell appeared immediately at the bar, supported by the Earl of Morton, and two gentlemen who were to act as his advocates. But the Earl of Lennox, or other pursuers, though frequently called, did not appear. At length Robert Cunningham, one of Lennox's servants, stepped forward, and produced a writing in the shape of a protest, which his master had authorized him to deliver. It stated, that the cause of the Earl's absence was the shortness of time, and the want of friends and retainers to accompany him to the place of trial; and it therefore objected to the decision of any assize which might be held that day. In reply to this protest, the letters of the Earl of Lennox to the Queen, in which he desired that a short and summary process might be taken against the suspected persons, were produced and read; and it was maintained by the Earl of Bothwell's counsel, that the trial ought to proceed immediately, according to the laws of the realm, and the wish of the party accused. The judges, having heard both sides, were of opinion that Bothwell had a right to insist upon the trial going on. A jury was therefore chosen, which does not seem to have consisted of persons particularly friendly to the Earl. It was composed of the Earls of Rothes, Caithness, and Cassils, Lord John Hamilton, son to the Duke of Chatelherault, Lords Ross, Semple, Herries, Oliphant, and Boyd, the Master of Forbes, Gordon of Lochinvar, Cockburn of Langton, Sommerville of Cambusnethan, Mowbray of Barnbogle, and Ogilby of Boyne. Bothwell pled *not guilty*; and, no evidence appearing against him, the jury retired, and were out of court for some time. When they returned, their verdict, delivered by the Earl of Caithness, whom they had chosen their chancellor, unanimously acquitted Bothwell of the slaughter of the King.⁷⁴

Immediately after his acquittal, Bothwell, as was customary in those times, published a challenge, in which he offered to fight hand to hand, with any man who would avow that he still suspected him to have had a share in the King's death; but nobody ventured openly to accept it.⁷⁵ As far, therefore, as appearances were concerned, he was now able to stand upon higher ground than ever, and boldly to declare, that whosoever was guilty, he had been found innocent. Accordingly, at the Parliament which met on the 14th of April, he appeared in great state, with banners flying, and a numerous body of retainers; and in compliment to him, an act was passed, in which it was set forth, that "by a licentious abuse lately come into practice within this realm, there had been placards and bills and tickets of defamation, set up under silence of night, in diverse public places, to the slander, reproach and infamy of the Queen's majesty and diverse of the nobility; which disorder, if it were suffered to remain longer unpunished, would redound not only to the great hurt and detriment of all noblemen in their good fame, private calumniators having by this means liberty to backbite them, but also the common weal would be disturbed, and occasion of quarrel taken upon false and untrue slander;" – it was therefore made criminal to put up any such placards, or to abstain from destroying them as soon as they were seen. At this Parliament, there was also an act passed on the subject of religion, which is deserving of notice. "The same Queen," says Chalmers, "who is charged by Robertson with attempting to suppress the Reformed discipline, with the aid of the Bishops, passed a law, renouncing all foreign jurisdiction in ecclesiastical affairs, – giving toleration to all her subjects to worship God in their own way, – and engaging to give some additional privileges." This is one of the most satisfactory answers which can be given to the supposition, that Mary was in any way a party in the Continental persecution of the Hugonots.

The Earl of Murray was not present either at this Parliament, or the trial which immediately preceded it. Actuated by motives which do not exactly appear, and which historians have not been able satisfactorily to explain, he obtained permission from Mary, in the beginning of April, to leave Scotland, and, on the 9th, he set off for France, visiting London and the Court of Elizabeth on his way. There is something very unaccountable, in a man of Murray's ambition thus withdrawing from the scene of action, just at the very time when he must have been anticipating political events of the

⁷⁴ Anderson, vol. ii. p. 104, et seq. – and Keith, p. 375, et seq.

⁷⁵ Anderson, vol. ii. p. 157.

last importance. His conduct can be rationally explained, only by supposing, that it was suggested by his systematic caution. He was not now, nor had he ever been since his rebellion, Mary's exclusive and all-powerful Prime Minister; – yet he could not bear to fill a second place; and he knew that, if any civil war occurred, the eyes of many would immediately be turned towards him. If he remained in the country, he would necessarily be obliged to take a side as soon as the dissensions broke out, and might find himself again associated with the losing party; but, if he kept at a distance for a while, he could throw his influence, when he chose, into the heaviest scale, and thus gain an increase of popularity and power. These were probably the real motives of his present conduct, and, judging by the result, no one can say that he reasoned ill. That he was aware of every thing that was about to happen, and that he urged Bothwell forward into a net, from whose meshes he knew he could never be disengaged, as has been maintained so positively by Whittaker, Chalmers, and others, does not appear. The peremptoriness with which these writers have asserted the truth of this unfounded theory, is the leading defect of their works, and has tended to weaken materially the chain of argument by which they would otherwise have established Mary's innocence. That Bothwell, as they over and over again repeat, was the mere “cat's-paw” of Murray, is a preposterous belief, and argues a decided want of knowledge of Bothwell's real character. But supposing that he had been so, nothing could be more chimerical than the idea, that after having made him murder Darnley, Murray would wish to see him first acquitted of that murder, and then married to the Queen, for the vague chance that both might be deposed, and he himself called to succeed them as Regent. “Would it ever enter into the imagination of a wise man,” asks Robertson, “first to raise his rival to supreme power, in hopes that, afterwards, he should find some opportunity of depriving him of that power? The most adventurous politician never hazarded such a dangerous experiment; the most credulous folly never trusted such an uncertain chance.” Murray probably winked at the murder, because he foresaw that it was likely to lead to Bothwell's ruin. When he left the country, he may not have been altogether aware of Bothwell's more ambitious objects; but if he was, he would still have gone, for his staying could not have prevented their attempted execution; and if they induced a civil war, whosoever lost, he might contrive to be a gainer. He acted selfishly and unpatriotically, but not with that deliberate villany with which he has been charged.

CHAPTER V. BOTHWELL'S SEIZURE OF THE QUEEN'S PERSON, AND SUBSEQUENT MARRIAGE TO HER

Every thing appeared now to be going smoothly with Bothwell, and he had only to take one step more to reach the very height of his ambition. Mary's hand and Scotland's crown were the objects he had all along kept steadily in view. The latter was to be obtained only through the medium of the former, and hence his reason for removing Darnley, and willingly submitting to a trial, from which he saw he would come off triumphantly. The question he now anxiously asked himself was, whether it was likely that Mary could be persuaded to accept him as a husband. He was aware, that in the unsettled state of the country, she must feel that, unless married to a person of strength and resolution, she would hardly be able to keep her turbulent subjects in order; and he was of opinion, that it was not improbable she would now cast her eyes upon one of her own nobility, as she could no where else find a king who would be so agreeable to the national prejudices. Yet he had a lurking consciousness, that he himself would not be the object of her choice. She had of late, it was true, given him a considerable share in the administration; but he felt that she had done so, more as a matter of state policy, and to preserve a balance of power between himself and her other ministers, than from any personal regard. The most assiduous attentions which it was in his power to pay her, had failed to kindle in her bosom any warmer sentiment; for though she esteemed him for his fidelity as an officer of state, his manners and habits as a man, were too coarse and dissolute to please one of so much refinement, sensibility and gentleness, as Mary Stuart. Bothwell therefore became secretly convinced that it would be necessary for him to have recourse to fraud, and perhaps to force. Had Mary loved him, their marriage would have been a matter of mutual agreement, and would have taken place whenever circumstances seemed to make it mutually advisable; but as it was, artifice and audacity were to be his weapons; nor were they wielded by an unskilful hand.

The Parliament which met on the 14th of April 1567, continued to sit only till the 19th of the same month; and on the evening of the following day, Bothwell invited nearly all the Lords who were then in Edinburgh to a great supper, in a tavern kept by a person of the name of Ainsly, from which circumstance, the entertainment was afterwards known by the name of "*Ainsly's Supper*." After plying his guests with wine, he produced a document, which he had himself previously drawn up, and which he requested them all to sign. It was in the form of a bond; and in the preamble, after expressing their conviction that James Earl of Bothwell, Lord Hales, Crichton, and Liddisdale, Great Admiral of Scotland, and Lieutenant to the Queen over all the Marches, had been grossly slandered in being suspected of having a share in the murder of Darnley, and that his innocence had been fully and satisfactorily proved at his late trial, they bound themselves, as they should answer to God, that whatever person or persons should afterwards renew such calumny, should be proceeded against by them with all diligence and perseverance. After this introduction, evidently meant to aid in removing any lingering suspicion which the Queen might still entertain of Bothwell's guilt, the bond went on to state, that, "Moreover, weighing and considering the present time, and how our Sovereign, the Queen's Majesty, is destitute of a husband, in which solitary state the common weal of this realm may not permit her Highness to continue and endure, but at some time her Highness, in appearance, may be inclined to yield unto a marriage, – therefore, in case the former affectionate and hearty services of the said Earl (Bothwell), done to her Majesty from time to time, and his other good qualities and behaviour, may move her Majesty so far to humble herself as, preferring one of her own native born subjects unto all foreign princes, to take to husband the said Earl, we, and every one of us under subscribing, upon our honours and fidelity, oblige ourselves, and promise, not only to further, advance, and set forward the marriage to be solemnized and completed betwixt her Highness

and the said noble Lord, with our votes, counsel, fortification and assistance, in word and deed, at such time as it shall please her Majesty to think it convenient, and as soon as the laws shall permit it to be done; but, in case any should presume, directly or indirectly, openly, or under whatsoever colour or pretence, to hinder, hold back, or disturb the same marriage, we shall, in that behalf, hold and repute the hinderers, adversaries, or disturbers thereof, as our common enemies and evil-willers; and notwithstanding the same, take part with, and fortify the said Earl to the said marriage, so far as it may please our said Sovereign Lady to allow; and therein shall spend and bestow our lives and goods against all that live or die, as we shall answer to God, and upon our own fidelities and conscience; and in case we do the contrary, never to have reputation or credit in no time hereafter, but to be accounted unworthy and faithless traitors.”⁷⁶

This bond having been read and considered, all the nobles present, with the exception of the Earl of Eglinton, who went away unperceived, put their signatures to it. “Among the subscribers,” says Robertson, “we find some who were the Queen’s chief confidants, others who were strangers to her councils, and obnoxious to her displeasure; some who faithfully adhered to her through all the vicissitudes of her fortune, and others who became the principal authors of her sufferings; some passionately attached to the Romish superstition, and others zealous advocates for the Protestant faith. No common interest can be supposed to have united men of such opposite interests and parties, in recommending to their Sovereign a step so injurious to her honour, and so fatal to her peace. This strange coalition was the effect of much artifice, and must be considered as the boldest and most masterly stroke of Bothwell’s address.” It is, indeed, impossible to conceive that such a bond was so numerously subscribed on the mere impulse of the moment. Before obtaining so solemn a promise of support from so many, he must have had recourse to numerous machinations, and have brought into action a thousand interests. He must, in the first place, have influenced Morton, his brother-in-law Huntly, Argyle, and others; and having secured these, he would use them as agents to bring over as many more. The rest, finding that so formidable a majority approved of the bond, would not have the courage to stand out, for they would fear the consequences if Bothwell ever became king. Among the names attached to this bond are those of the Archbishop of St Andrews, the Bishops of Aberdeen, Dumblane, Brechin, and Ross, the Earls of Huntly, Argyle, Morton, Cassils, Sutherland, Errol, Crawford, Caithness, and Rothes, and the Lords Boyd, Glamis, Ruthven, Semple, Herries, Ogilvie, and Fleming.⁷⁷ Here was an overwhelming and irresistible force, enlisted by Bothwell in his support. The sincerity of many of the subscribers he probably had good reason to doubt; but what he wanted was to be able to present himself before Mary armed with an argument which she would find it difficult to evade, and if she yielded to it, his object would be gained. He was afraid, however, to lay the bond openly and fairly before her; he dreaded that her aversion to a matrimonial connexion with him might weigh more powerfully than even the almost unanimous recommendation of her nobility. But having already gone so far, he was resolved that a woman’s will should not be any serious obstacle to his wishes.

The whole affair of the supper was, for a short time, kept concealed from Mary; and though Bothwell’s intentions and wishes began to be pretty generally talked of throughout the country, she was the very last to hear of them. When the Lord Herries ventured on one occasion to come upon the

⁷⁶ Anderson, vol. i. p. 107; and Keith, p. 381.

⁷⁷ Keith, p. 382. – There are extant two lists of the names of the subscribers, and these differ in one or two particulars from each other; but the one was only a list given to Cecil from memory by John Reid, Buchanan’s clerk; the other is a document authenticated by the subscription of Sir James Balfour, who was at the time Clerk of Register and Privy Council. The chief difference between these two copies is, that Reid’s list contains the name of the Earl of Murray, though on the 20th of April he was out of the realm of Scotland. It has been supposed that the bond, though not produced, might have been drawn up some time before, and that Murray put his name to it before going away. This is possible, but, considering Murray’s cautious character, not probable. The point does not seem one of great importance, though by those who are anxious to make out a case against Murray rather than against Bothwell, it is deemed necessary to insist upon it at length. Perhaps Bothwell forged Murray’s signature, to give his bond greater weight both with the nobles and with the Queen; although one name more or less could not make much difference either to her or them.

subject with the Queen, and mentioned the report as one which had gained considerable credit, “her Majesty marvelled,” says Melville, “to hear of such rumours without meaning, and said *that there was no such thing in her mind*.” Only a day or two after the bond was signed, she left Edinburgh to visit the prince her son, who was then in the keeping of the Earl of Mar at Stirling. Before she went, Bothwell ventured to express his hopes to her, but she gave him an answer little agreeable to his ambition. “The bond being once obtained,” Mary afterwards wrote to France, “Bothwell began afar off to discover his intention, and to essay if he might by humble suit purchase our good will.” – “But finding an answer nothing correspondent to his desire, and casting from before his eyes all doubts that men use commonly to revolve with themselves in similar enterprises, – the backwardness of our own mind – the persuasions which our friends or his enemies might cast out for his hindrance – the change of their minds whose consent he had already obtained, with many other incidents which might occur to frustrate him of his expectation, – he resolved with himself to follow forth his good fortune, and, all respect laid apart, either to tine all in one hour, or to bring to pass that thing he had taken in hand.”⁷⁸ This is a clear and strong statement, describing exactly the feelings both of Bothwell and Mary at this period.

The Earl did not long dally on the brink of his fate. Ascertaining that Mary was to return from Stirling on the 24th, he left Edinburgh with a force of nearly 1000 men well mounted, under the pretence of proceeding to quell some riots on the Borders. But he had only gone a few miles southward, when he turned suddenly to the west, and riding with all speed to Linlithgow, waited for Mary at a bridge over the Almond about a mile from that town. The Queen soon made her appearance with a small train, which was easily overpowered, and which indeed did not venture to offer any resistance. The Earl of Huntly, Secretary Maitland, and Sir James Melville, were the only persons of rank who were with the Queen; and they were carried captive along with her; but the rest of her attendants were dismissed. Bothwell himself seized the bridle of Mary’s horse, and turning off the road to Edinburgh, conducted her with all speed to his Castle at Dunbar.⁷⁹

The leading features of this forcible abduction, or *ravishment*, as it is commonly called by the Scottish historians, have been greatly misrepresented by Robertson and Laing. Both of these writers mention, as a matter of surprise, that Mary yielded without struggle or regret, to the insult thus offered her. That she yielded without struggle, – that is to say, without any attempt at physical resistance, is exceedingly probable; for when was a party of a dozen persons, riding without suspicion of danger, able to offer resistance to a thousand armed troopers? There is little wonder that they were surrounded and carried off, “without opposition,” as Laing expresses it; for by a thousand soldiers, a dozen Sir William Wallaces would have been made prisoners “without opposition.” But the very number which Bothwell brought with him, and which even Mary’s worst enemies allow was not less than six hundred, proves that there was no collusion between him and the Queen. Had it been only a pretended violence, to afford a decent excuse for Mary’s subsequent conduct, fifty horsemen would have done as well as a thousand; but Bothwell knew the Queen’s spirit, and the danger of the attempt, and came prepared accordingly. But it is urged, that, if displeased, she must have expressed her resentment to those who were near her. And there is certainly no reason to suppose that she was silent, though neither Huntly nor Lethington would be much influenced by her complaints, for they had both secretly attached themselves to Bothwell. Sir James Melville, who was more faithful to the Queen, was dismissed from Dunbar the day after her capture, lest she should have employed him to solicit aid for her relief, as she had formerly done on the occasion of the murder of Rizzio.⁸⁰ Mary herself, in the letter already quoted, sets the matter beyond dispute, for she there gives a long and interesting detail, both of her

⁷⁸ Keith, p. 390.

⁷⁹ Keith, p. 383. – Melville’s Memoirs, p. 177. – Whittaker, vol. iii. p. 106 and 356.

⁸⁰ Melville, p. 177.

own indignation, and of the arts used by Bothwell to appease it.⁸¹ Nothing, indeed, can be more contrary to reason, than to suppose this abduction a mere device, mutually arranged to deceive the country. If Mary had really loved Bothwell and was anxious to marry him, it would have been the very last thing she would have wished to be believed, whether she thought him guilty of Darnley's murder or not, that she gave him her hand, after he had been publicly acquitted, and all her principal nobility had declared in his favour, only in consequence of a treasonable act, committed by him against her person. If she hoped to live in peace and happiness with him, why should she have allowed it to be supposed, that she acted from necessity, rather than from choice, or that she yielded to a seducer, what she would not give to a faithful subject? This pre-arranged ravishment, would evidently defeat its own purpose, and would serve as a pretence suggested by Mary herself, for every malcontent in Scotland to take up arms against her and Bothwell. It was a contrivance directly opposed to all sound policy, and certainly very unlike the open and straight-forward manner in which she usually went about the accomplishment of a favourite purpose. "But one object of the seizure," says Laing, "was the vindication of her precipitate marriage." Where was the necessity for a precipitate marriage at all? Was Mary so eager to become the wife of Bothwell, with whom, according to the veracious Buchanan, she had long been indulging an illicit intercourse, that she could not wait the time required by common decency to wear her widow's garb for Darnley? Was he barbarously murdered by her consent on the 9th of February, on the express condition that she was to have Bothwell in her arms as her husband on the 15th of May? Was she, indeed, so entirely lost to every sense of female delicacy and public shame, – so utterly dead to her own interests and reputation, – or so very scrupulous about continuing a little longer her unlicensed amours, that, rather than suffer the delay of a few months, she would thus run the risk of involving herself in eternal infamy? Even supposing that she was perfectly assured the artifice would remain undiscovered, – was her conscience so hardened, her feelings so abandoned, and her reason so perverted, as to enable her to anticipate gratification from a marriage thus hastily concluded, with so little queenly dignity, or female modesty, and with a man who was not yet divorced from his own wife? There is but one answer which can be given to these questions, and that answer comes instinctively to the lips, from every generous heart, and well-regulated mind.

For ten days Bothwell kept Mary in Dunbar "sequestered," in her own words, "from the company of all her servants, and others of whom she might have asked counsel, and seeing those upon whose counsel and fidelity she had before depended, already yielded to his appetite, and *so left alone, as it were, a prey to him.*"⁸² Closely shut up as she was, she long hoped that some of her more loyal nobles would exert themselves to procure her deliverance. But not one of them stirred in her behalf, for Bothwell was at this time dreaded or courted by all of them, and finding the person of the Queen thus left at his disposal, he did not hesitate to declare to her, that he would make her his wife, "who would, or who would not, – yea, whether she would herself or not."⁸³ Mary, in reply, charged him with the foulest ingratitude; and his conduct, she told him, grieved her the more, because he was one "of whom she doubted less than of any subject she had."⁸⁴ But he was not now to be driven from his purpose. He spent his whole time with Mary; and his whole conversation was directed to the one great object he had in view. He called to his aid every variety of passion; sometimes flinging himself at her feet, and imploring her to pardon a deed which the violence of his love had made imperative; and, at other times, giving vent to a storm of rage, and threatening dishonour, imprisonment, and death, if she hesitated longer to comply with his demands. Mary herself is the best chronicler of these distracting scenes, although it must be observed, that she did not write of them till Bothwell had achieved his purpose; and consequently, making a virtue of necessity, she was anxious to place them

⁸¹ Keith, p. 390.

⁸² Anderson, vol. i. p. 97. – Keith, p. 390.

⁸³ Melville, p. 197.

⁸⁴ Anderson, vol. i. p. 95.

in as favourable a point of view as possible. “Being at Dunbar,” she says, “we reproached him the honour he had to be so esteemed of us, the favour we had always shewn him, his ingratitude, with all other remonstrances which might serve to rid us out of his hands. Albeit we found his doing rude, yet were his answer and words but gentle, that he would honour and serve us, and would noways offend us, asking pardon of the boldness he had taken to convoy us to one of our own houses, whereunto he was driven by force, as well as constrained by love, the vehemency whereof had made him to set apart the reverence, which naturally, as our subject, he bore to us, as also for safety of his own life. And then began to make us a discourse of his whole life, how unfortunate he had been to find men his unfriends whom he had never offended; how their malice never ceased to assault him on all occasions, albeit unjustly; what calumnies they had spread of him, touching the odious violence perpetrated in the person of the King our late husband; how unable he was to save himself from the conspiracies of his enemies, whom he could not know by reason that every man professed himself outwardly to be his friend; and yet he found such hidden malice that he could not find himself in surety, unless he were insured of our favour to endure without alteration; and on no other assurance of our favour could he rely, unless it would please us to do him that honour to take him to husband, protesting always that he would seek no other sovereignty but as formerly, to serve and obey us all the days of our life; joining thereunto all the honest language that could be used in such a case.”⁸⁵ But these arguments were of no avail, and he was obliged to go a step farther. “When he saw us like to reject all his suit and offers,” says Mary, “in the end he shewed us how far he had proceeded with our whole nobility and principals of our estates, and what they had promised him under their handwriting. If we had cause then to be astonished, we leave to the judgment of the King and Queen, (of France), our uncle, and our other friends.” “Many things we resolved with ourself, but never could find an outgait (deliverance); and yet he gave us little space to meditate with ourself, ever pressing us with continual and importunate suit.” “As by a bravade in the beginning, he had won the first point, so ceased he never till, by persuasions and importunate suit, *accompanied not the less with force*, he has finally driven us to end the work begun, at such time, and in such form, as he thought might best serve his turn; wherein we cannot dissemble that he has used us otherwise than we would have wished, or yet have deserved at his hand; having more respect to content them, by whose consent granted to him beforehand, he thinks he has obtained his purpose, than regarding our contentation, or weighing what was convenient for us.”⁸⁶

Bothwell had kept Mary at Dunbar for nearly a week, when, in order to make it be believed that her residence there was voluntary, he ventured to call together a few of the Lords of the Privy Council on whom he could depend, and on the 29th of April there was one unimportant act of Council passed, concerning provisions for the Royal Household. From the influence he at that time possessed over the Scottish nobles, Bothwell might have held a Privy Council every day at Dunbar, and whether he allowed the Queen, *pro forma*, to be present or not, nobody would have objected to any thing he proposed.⁸⁷ In the meantime, mutual actions of divorce were raised by Bothwell and his wife, the Lady Jane Gordon, and being hurried through the courts, only a few days elapsed before they were obtained.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ Anderson, vol. i. p. 95.

⁸⁶ Anderson, vol. i. p. 97. et seq. There is something so peculiar in the last passage quoted above, and Bothwell's conduct was so despotic, during the whole of the time he had Mary's person at his disposal, that Whittaker's supposition seems by no means unlikely, that the *force* to which Mary alludes was of the most culpable and desperate kind. “Throughout the whole of the Queen's own account of these transactions,” he observes, “the delicacy of the lady, and the prudence of the wife, are in a continual struggle with facts, – willing to lay open the whole for her own vindication, yet unable to do it for her own sake and her husband's, and yet doing it in effect.” Vide Whittaker, vol. iii. p. 112. et seq. – Melville is still more explicit upon the subject, p. 177. And in a letter from “the Lords of Scotland,” written to the English ambassador, six weeks after the ravishment, it is expressly said, that “the Queen was led captive, and by fear, force, and (as by many conjectures may be well suspected) other extraordinary and more unlawful means, compelled to become the bedfellow to another wife's husband.” – See the letter in Keith p. 418.

⁸⁷ Vide Laing, vol. i. p. 86, and vol. ii. p. 105, and Whittaker, vol. iii. p. 116.

⁸⁸ Keith, p. 383.

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