EDWARD BEESLY

QUEEN ELIZABETH

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Содержание

Edward Spencer Beesly
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CHAPTER I
EARLY LIFE: 1533-1558

I HAVE to deal, under strict limitations of space, with a long life, almost the whole of its adult period passed in the exercise of sovereignty – a life which is in effect the history of England during forty-five years, abounding at the same time in personal interest, and the subject, both in its public and private aspects, of fierce and probably interminable controversies. Evidently a bird's-eye view is all that can be attempted: and the most important episodes alone can be selected for consideration.

The daughter of Henry VIII. and Anne Boleyn was born on September 6, 1533. Anne was niece of Thomas, third Duke of Norfolk, and all the great Howard kinsmen attended at the baptism four days afterwards. Elizabeth was two years and eight months old when her mother was beheaded, and she herself was declared illegitimate by Act of Parliament. It is not recorded that in after years she expressed any opinion about her mother or ever mentioned her name. She never took any steps to get the Act of attainder repealed; but perhaps she indirectly showed her belief in Anne's innocence by raising the son of Norris, her alleged paramour, to the peerage, and by the great favour she always showed to his family.

During her father's life Elizabeth lived chiefly at Hatfield with her brother Edward, under a governess. Henry had been empowered by Parliament in 1536 to settle the succession by his will. In 1544 he caused an Act to be passed placing Mary and Elizabeth next in order of succession after Edward. By his will, made a few days before his death, he repeated the provisions of the Act of 1544, and placed next to Elizabeth the daughters of his younger sister, the Duchess of Suffolk, tacitly passing over his elder sister, the Queen of Scotland.

After her father's death (Jan. 1547) Elizabeth, then a girl of thirteen, went to reside with the Queen Dowager Catherine, who had not been many weeks a widow before she married her old lover Thomas Seymour, the Lord Admiral, brother of the Protector Somerset, described as "fierce in courage, courtly in fashion, in personage stately, in voice magnificent, but somewhat empty of matter." The romping that soon began to go on between this dangerous man and Elizabeth was of such a nature that early in the next year Catherine found it necessary to send her away somewhat abruptly. From that time she resided chiefly at Hatfield.

In August 1548 Catherine died, and the Admiral at once formed the project of marrying Elizabeth. This and other ambitious designs brought him to the scaffold (March 1549). It does not appear that Elizabeth saw or directly corresponded with him after he was a widower. But she listened to his messages, and dropped remarks of an encouraging kind which she meant to be repeated to him. She knew perfectly well that the marriage would not be permitted. She was only flirting with a man old enough to be her father just as she afterwards flirted with men young enough to be her sons. We already get a glimpse of the utter absence both of delicacy and depth of feeling which characterised her through life. When she heard of the Admiral's execution she simply remarked, "This day died a man with much wit and very little judgment." With Elizabeth the heart never really spoke, and if the senses did, she had them under perfect control. And this was why she never loved or was loved, and never has been or will be regarded with enthusiasm by either man or woman. For some time after this scandal she was evidently somewhat under a cloud. She lived at her manor-houses of Ashridge, Enfield, and Hatfield, diligently pursuing her studies under the celebrated scholar Ascham.

When Edward died (July 6, 1553) Elizabeth was nearly twenty. Although Mary's cause was her own, she remained carefully neutral during the short queenship of Jane. On its collapse she hastened to congratulate her sister, and rode by her side when she made her entry into London. During the early part of Mary's reign her life hung by a thread. The slightest indiscretion would have been fatal to her. Wyatt's insurrection was made avowedly in her favour. But neither to that nor any other conspiracy did she extend the smallest encouragement. Her prudent and blameless conduct gave her the more right in after years to deal severely with Mary Stuart, whose behaviour under precisely similar circumstances was so very different.

Renard, the Spanish ambassador, demanded her execution as the condition of the Spanish match, and Mary assured him that she would do her best to satisfy him. In the time of Henry VIII. such an intention on the part of the sovereign would have been equivalent to a sentence of death. But Mary was far from being as powerful as her father. The Council had to be reckoned with, and in the Council independent and even peremptory language was now to be heard. It was not without strong protests on the part of some of the Lords that Elizabeth was sent to the Tower. Sussex, a noble of the old blood, who was charged to conduct her there, took upon him to delay her departure, that she might appeal to the Queen for an interview. Mary was furious: "For their lives," she said, "they durst not have acted so in her father's time; she wished he was alive and among them for a single month." But it was useless to storm. The absolute monarchy had seen its best days. Sussex, fearing foul play, warned the Lieutenant of the Tower to keep within his written instructions. Howard of Effingham, the Lord Admiral, had done more than any one else to place Mary on the throne. But he was Elizabeth's great-uncle, and he angrily insisted that her food in the Tower should be prepared by her own servants. A proposal in Parliament to give the Queen the power to nominate a successor was received with such disfavour that it had to be withdrawn. Finally the judges declared that there was no evidence to convict Elizabeth. Sullenly therefore the Queen had to give way. Elizabeth was sent to Woodstock, where she resided for about a year under guard. This was only reasonable. An heir to the throne, in whose favour there had been plots, could not expect complete freedom. In October 1555 she was allowed to go to Hatfield under the surveillance of Sir Thomas Pope. During the rest of the reign she escaped molestation by outward conformity to the Catholic religion, and by taking no part whatever in politics. But as it became clear that her accession was at hand there can be no doubt that she was engaged in studying the problems with which she would have to deal. She was already in close intimacy with Cecil, and it is evident that she mounted the throne with a policy carefully thought out in its main lines.

When Mary was known to be dying, the Spanish ambassador, Feria, called on Elizabeth, and told her that his master had exerted his influence with the Queen and Council on her behalf, and had secured her succession. But she declined to be patronised, and told him that the people and nobility were on her side.

CHAPTER II
THE CHANGE OF RELIGION: 1559

MARY died on the 17th of November 1558. Parliament was then sitting, and, in communicating the event to both Houses, Archbishop Heath frankly took the initiative in recognising Elizabeth, "of whose most lawful right and title in the succession of the Crown, thanks be to God, we need not to doubt." He was a staunch Catholic, and two months later refused to officiate at her coronation. But he was an Englishman, and even the most convinced Catholics, though looking forward with uneasiness to the religious policy of the new Queen, were sincerely glad that there was no danger of a disputed succession. Besides, it was by no means clear that Elizabeth would not accept the ecclesiastical constitution as established in the late reign. That there would be an end of burnings, and of the harassing tyranny of the bishops, every one felt certain; but it seemed quite upon the cards that Elizabeth would continue to recognise the headship of the Pope in a formal way and maintain the Mass. It must be remembered that the religious changes had only begun some thirty years before. All middle-aged men could remember the time when the ecclesiastical fabric stood to all appearance unbroken, as it had stood for centuries. Only twenty-four years had passed since the Act of Supremacy had transferred the headship of the Church from the Pope to the King; only eleven since the Protestant doctrine and worship had been forced on the country by the Protector Somerset, to the horror and disgust of the great majority of Englishmen. The nation had sorrowed for the death of Edward VI., because it darkened the prospects of the succession, and seemed likely sooner or later to bring on a civil war. But apart from the hot Protestant minority, chiefly to be found in London, the mass of the nation was conservative, and welcomed the re-establishment of the old religion as a return to order and common sense after a short and bitter experience of revolutionary anarchy. There was a rooted objection to restore the old meddlesome tyranny of the bishops, and the nobles and squires who had got hold of the abbey lands would not hear of giving them up. But the return to communion with the Catholic Church and the recognition of the Pope as its head gave satisfaction to three-fourths, perhaps to five-sixths, of the nation, and to a still larger proportion of its most influential class, the great landed proprietors. Mary's accession was the great and unique opportunity for the old Church. If Mary and Pole had been cool-headed politicians instead of excitable fanatics, if they had contented themselves with restoring the old worship, depriving the few Protestant clergy of their benefices, and punishing only outrageous attacks on the State religion, Elizabeth would not have had the power, it may be doubted whether she would have had the inclination, to undo her sister's work.

This great opportunity was thrown away. Mary's bishops came back brooding over the long catalogue of humiliations and indignities which their Church had suffered, and thirsting to avenge their own wrongs. For six years they had their fling, and contrived to make the country forget the period of Protestant mis-government. England had never before known what it was to be governed by clergymen. It was a sort of rule as hateful to most Catholic laymen as to Protestants. Catholics therefore for the most part, as well as Protestants, hailed the accession of Elizabeth. At any rate there would be an end of the clerical tyranny. Nor were they without hope that she would maintain the old worship. She had conformed to it for the last five years, and Philip had given the word that she was to be supported.

We are now accustomed to the Papal *non possumus*. No nation or Church can hope that the smallest deviation from Roman doctrine or discipline will be tolerated. But in 1558 the hard and fast line had not yet been drawn. France was still pressing for such changes as communion in both kinds, worship in the vulgar tongue, and marriage of priests. The Council of Trent, it is true, had already in 1545 decided that Catholic doctrine was contained in the Bible *and tradition*, and in 1551 had defined transubstantiation and the sacraments. But in 1552 the Council was prorogued, and it did not resume

till 1562. Doctrine and discipline therefore might be, and were still considered to be, in the melting-pot, and no one could be certain what would come out. If Elizabeth had contented herself with the French programme, and had joined France in pressing it, the other sovereigns, who really cared for nothing but uniformity, would probably have forced the Pope to compromise. The Lutheran doctrine of consubstantiation might have been tolerated. The Anglican formulæ have been held by many to be compatible with a belief in the Real Presence. The formal severance of England from Catholic unity might thus have been postponed – possibly avoided – in the same sense that it has been avoided in France. After the completion of the Council of Trent (1562-3) it was too late.

Two years after her accession Elizabeth told the Spanish ambassador, De Quadra, that her belief was the belief of all the Catholics in the realm; and on his asking her how then she could have altered religion in 1559, she said she had been compelled to act as she did, and that, if he knew how she had been driven to it, she was sure he would excuse her. Seven years later she made the same statement to De Silva. Elizabeth was habitually so regardless of truth that her assertions can be allowed little weight when they are improbable. No doubt, as a matter of taste and feeling, she preferred the Catholic worship. She was not pious. She was not troubled with a tender conscience or tormented by a sense of sin. She did not care to cultivate close personal relations with her God. A religion of form and ceremony suited her better. But her training had been such as to free her from all superstitious fear or prejudice, and her religious convictions were determined by her sense of what was most reasonable and convenient. There is not the least evidence that she was a reluctant agent in the adoption of Protestantism in 1559. Who was there to coerce her? The Protestants could not have set up a Protestant competitor. The great nobles, though opposed to persecution and desirous of minimising the Pope's authority, would have preferred to leave worship as it was. But upon one thing Elizabeth was determined. She would resume the full ecclesiastical supremacy which her father had annexed to the Crown. She judged, and she probably judged rightly, that the only way to assure this was to make the breach with the old religion complete. If she had placed herself in the hands of moderate Catholics like Paget, possessed with the belief that she could only maintain herself by the protection of Philip, they would have advised her to be content with the practical authority over the English Church which many an English king had known how to exercise. That was not enough for her. She desired a position free from all ambiguity and possibility of dispute, not one which would have to be defended with constant vigilance and at the cost of incessant bickering.

From the point of view of her foreign relations the moment might seem to be a dangerous one for carrying out a religious revolution, and many a statesman with a deserved reputation for prudence would have counselled delay. But this disadvantage was more than counterbalanced by the unpopularity which the cruelties and disasters of Mary's last three years had brought upon the most active Catholics. Again, Elizabeth no doubt recognised that the Catholics, though at present the strongest, were the declining party. The future was with the Protestants. It was the young men who had fixed their hopes upon her in her sister's time, and who were ready to rally round her now. By her natural disposition, and by her culture, she belonged to the Renaissance rather than to the Reformation. But obscurantist as Calvinism essentially was, the Calvinists, as a minority struggling for freedom to think and teach what they believed, represented for a time the cause of light and intellectual emancipation. Was she to put herself at the head of reaction or progress? She did not love the Calvinists. They were too much in earnest for her. Their narrow creed was as tainted with superstition as that of Rome, and, at bottom, was less humane, less favourable to progress. But whom else had she to work with? The reasonable, secular-minded, tolerant sceptics are not always the best fighting material; and at that time they were few in number and tending – in England at least – to be ground out of existence between the upper and nether millstones of the rival fanaticisms. If she broke with Catholicism she would be sure of the ardent and unwavering support of one-third of the nation; so sure, that she would have no need to take any further pains to please them. As for the remaining

two-thirds, she hoped to conciliate most of them by posing as their protector against the persecution which would have been pleasing to Protestant bigots.

In the policy of a complete breach with Rome, Cecil was disposed to go as far as the Queen, and further. Cecil was at this time thirty-eight. For forty years he continued to be the confidential and faithful servant of Elizabeth. One of those new men whom the Tudors most trusted, he was first employed by Henry VIII. Under Edward he rose to be Secretary of State, and was a pronounced Protestant. On the fall of his patron Somerset he was for a short time sent to the Tower, but was soon in office again – sooner, some thought, than was quite decent – under his patron's old enemy, Northumberland. He signed the letters-patent by which the crown was conferred on Lady Jane Grey; but took an early opportunity of going over to Mary. During her reign he conformed to the old religion, and, though not holding any office, was consulted on public business, and was one of the three commissioners who went to fetch Cardinal Pole to England. Thoroughly capable in business, one of those to whom power naturally falls because they know how to use it, a shrewd balancer of probabilities, without a particle of fanaticism in his composition and detesting it in others, though ready to make use of it to serve his ends, entirely believing that "what-e'er is best administered is best," Cecil nevertheless had his religious predilections, and they were all on the side of the Protestants. Moreover he had a personal motive which, by the nature of the case, was not present to the Queen. She might die prematurely; and if that event should take place before the Protestant ascendancy was firmly established his power would be at an end, and his very life would be in danger. A time came when he and his party had so strengthened themselves, if not in absolute numerical superiority, yet by the hold they had established on all departments of Government from the highest to the lowest, that they were in a condition to resist a Catholic claimant to the throne, if need were, sword in hand. But during the early years of the reign Cecil was working with the rope round his neck. Hence he could not regard the progress of events with the imperturbable *sang-froid* which Elizabeth always displayed; and all his influence was employed to push the religious revolution through as rapidly and completely as possible.

The story that Elizabeth was influenced in her attitude to Rome by an arrogant reply from Pope Paul IV. to her official notification of her accession, though refuted by Lingard and Hallam in their later editions, has been repeated by recent historians. Her accession was notified to every friendly sovereign except the Pope. He was studiously ignored from the first. Equally unsupported by facts are all attempts to show that during the early weeks of her reign she had not made up her mind as to the course she would take about religion. All preaching, it is true, was suspended by proclamation; and it was ordered that the established worship should go on "until consultation might be had in Parliament by the Queen and the three Estates." In the meantime she had herself crowned according to the ancient ritual by the Catholic Bishop of Carlisle. But this is only what might have been expected from a strong ruler who was not disposed to let important alterations be initiated by popular commotion or the presumptuous forwardness of individual clergymen. The impending change was quite sufficiently marked from the first by the removal of the most bigoted Catholics from the Council and by the appointment of Cecil and Bacon to the offices of Secretary and of Lord Keeper. The new Parliament, Protestant candidates for which had been recommended by the Government, met as soon as possible (Jan. 25, 1559). When it rose (May 8th) the great change had been legally and decisively accomplished.

The government, worship, and doctrine of the Established Church are the most abiding marks left by Elizabeth on the national life of England. Logically it might have been expected that the settlement of doctrine would precede that of government and worship. It is characteristic of a State Church that the inverse order should have been followed. For the Queen the most important question was Church government; for the people, worship. Both these matters were disposed of with great promptitude at the beginning of 1559. Doctrine might interest the clergy; but it could wait.

The Thirty-nine Articles were not adopted by Convocation till 1563, and were not sanctioned by Parliament till 1571.

The government of the Church was settled by the Act of Supremacy (April 1559). It revived the Act of Henry VIII., except that the Queen was styled Supreme Governor of the Church instead of Supreme Head, although the nature of the supremacy was precisely the same. The penalties were relaxed. Henry's oath of supremacy might be tendered to any subject, and to decline it was high treason; Elizabeth's oath was to be obligatory only on persons holding spiritual or temporal office under the Crown, and the penalty for declining was the loss of such office. Those who chose to *attack* the supremacy were still liable to the penalties of treason on the third offence.

Worship was settled with equal expedition by the Act of Uniformity (April 1559), which imposed the second or more Protestant Prayer-book of Edward VI., but with a few very important alterations. A deprecation in the Litany of "the tyranny of the Bishop of Rome and all his detestable enormities," and a rubric which declared that by kneeling at the Communion no adoration was intended to any real and essential presence of Christ, were expunged. The words of administration in the present communion service consist of two sentences. The first sentence, implying real presence, belonged to Edward's first Prayer-book; the second, implying mere commemoration, belonged to his second Prayer-book. The Prayer-book of 1559 simply pieced the two together, with a view to satisfy both Catholics and Protestants. Lastly, the vestments prescribed in Edward's first Prayer-book were retained till further notice. These alterations of Edward's second Prayer-book, all of them designed to propitiate the Catholics, were dictated by Elizabeth herself. In all this legislation Convocation was entirely ignored. Both its houses showed themselves strongly Catholic. But their opinion was not asked, and no notice was taken of their remonstrances.

While determining that England should have a purely national Church, and for that reason casting in her lot with the Protestants, Elizabeth, as we have seen, made very considerable sacrifices of logic and consistency in order to induce Catholics to conform. Like a strong and wise statesman, she did not allow herself to be driven into one concession after another, but went at once as far as she intended to go. At the same time the coercion applied to the Catholics, while sufficient to influence the worldly-minded majority, was, during the early part of her reign, very mild for those times. She wished no one to be molested who did not go out of his way to invite it. Outward conformity was all she wanted. And of this mere attendance at church was accepted as sufficient evidence. The principal difficulty, of course, was with the clergy. From them more than a mere passive conformity had to be exacted. To sign declarations, take oaths, and officiate in church was a severer strain on the conscience. It is said that less than 200 out of 9400 sacrificed their benefices rather than conform, and that of these about 100 were dignitaries. The number must be under-stated; for the chief difficulty of the new bishops, for a long time, was to find clergymen for the parish churches. But we cannot doubt that the large majority of the parish clergy stuck to their livings, remaining Catholics at heart, and avoiding, where they could, and as long as they could, compliance with the new regulations. It must not be supposed that the enactment of religious changes by Parliament was equivalent, as it would be at the present day, to their immediate enforcement throughout the country; especially in the north where the great proprietors and justices of the peace did not carry out the law. A certain number of the ejected priests continued to celebrate the ancient rites privately in the houses of the more earnest Catholics; for which they were not unfrequently punished by imprisonment. Of course this was persecution. But according to the ideas of that day it was a very mild kind of persecution; and where it occurred it seems to have been due to the zeal of some of the bishops, and to private busybodies who set the law in motion, rather than to any systematic action on the part of the Government.

CHAPTER III
FOREIGN RELATIONS: 1559-1563

THE successful wars waged by Edward III. and Henry V. are apt to cause an exaggerated estimate of the strength of England under the Tudors. The population – Wales included – was probably not much more than four millions. That of France was perhaps four times as large, and the superiority in wealth was even greater.[1] Before the reign of Louis XI., France, weakened by feudal disunion, had been an easy prey to her smaller but better-organised neighbour. The work of concentration effected by the greatest of French kings towards the close of the fifteenth century, and the simultaneous rise of the great Spanish empire, caused England to fall at once into the rank of a second-rate power. Such she really was under Henry VIII., notwithstanding the rather showy figure he managed to make by adhering alternately to Charles V. and Francis I. Under the bad government of Edward and Mary the fighting strength of England declined not only relatively, but absolutely, until in the last year of Mary it touched the lowest point in our history. Although we were at war with France, there were no soldiers, no officers, no arms, no fortresses that could resist artillery, few ships, a heavy debt, and deep discouragement. The loss of Calais, which had been held for 200 years, was the simple and natural consequence of this prostration. Justice will not be done to the great recovery under Elizabeth unless we understand how low the country had sunk when she came to the throne.

During the early years of her reign, it was the universal opinion at home and abroad that without Spanish protection she could not preserve her throne against a French invasion in the interests of Mary Stuart. Henry II. meant that, by the marriage of the Dauphin Francis with Mary, the kingdoms of England and Scotland should be united to one another and eventually to France. Philip would thus lose the command of the sea route to the Netherlands, and the hereditary duel with the House of Austria would be decided. This scheme could not seem fantastic in a century which had seen such immense agglomerations of territory effected by political marriages. Philip, on the other hand, made sure that the danger from France must necessarily throw Elizabeth and England into his arms. Notwithstanding the warnings he received from his ambassador Feria that Elizabeth was a heretic, he felt certain that she would not venture to alter religion at the risk of offending him. The only question with him was whether he should marry her himself or bestow her on some sure friend of his house. That she would refuse both himself and his nominee was a contingency he never contemplated.

Elizabeth, from the first, made up her mind that the cards in her hand could be played to more advantage than Philip supposed. England, no doubt, needed his protection for the present. But could he please himself about granting it? Her bold calculation was that his own interests would compel him, in any case, to prevent the execution of the Stuart-Valois scheme, and that consequently she might settle religion without reference to his wishes.

The offer of marriage came in January 1559. In his letter to Feria, Philip spoke as if Elizabeth would of course jump at it. After dwelling on its many inconveniences, he said he had decided to make the sacrifice on condition that Elizabeth would uphold the Catholic religion; but she must not expect him to remain long with her; he would visit England occasionally. Feria foolishly allowed this letter to be seen, and the contents were reported to Elizabeth. She was as much amused as piqued. Their ages were not unsuitable. Philip was thirty-two, and Elizabeth was twenty-five. But she was as fastidious about men as her father was about women; and for no political consideration would she have tied herself to her ugly, disagreeable, little brother-in-law. After some fencing, she replied that she did not mean to marry, and that she was not afraid of France.

[1] Mr. Motley conjectures that the population of Spain and Portugal may have been 12,000,000.

Before the death of Mary, negotiations for a peace between France, Spain, and England had already begun. Calais was almost the only difficulty remaining to be settled. Our countrymen have never been able to understand how their possession of a fortress within the natural boundaries of another country can be disagreeable to its inhabitants. Elizabeth shared the national feeling, and she wanted Philip to insist on the restitution of Calais. He would have done so if she had pleased him as to other matters. Even as it was, the presence of a French garrison in Calais was so inconvenient to the master of the Netherlands that he was ready to fight on if England would do her part. But Elizabeth would only promise to fight Scotland – a very indirect and, indeed, useless way of supporting Philip. When once this point was made clear, peace was soon concluded between the three powers at Câteau, near Cambray (March 1559); appearances being saved by a stipulation that Calais should be restored in eight years, or half a million of crowns be forfeited.

In thus giving way Elizabeth showed her good sense. To have fought on would have meant deeper debt, terrible exhaustion, and, what was worse, dependence on Philip. Moreover, Calais could only have been recovered by reducing France to helplessness, which would have been fatal to the balance of power on which Elizabeth relied to make herself independent of both her great neighbours. The peace of Câteau Cambresis was attended with a secret compact between Philip II. and Henry II., that each monarch should suppress heresy in his own dominions and not encourage it in those of his neighbour. By the accession of Elizabeth, and the Scotch Reformation which immediately followed, Protestantism reached its high-water mark in Europe. The long wars of Charles V. with France had enabled it to spread. Francis I. had intrigued with the Protestant princes of the Empire, and Charles had been obliged to humour them. Protestantism was victorious in Britain, Scandinavia, North Germany, the Palatinate, and Swabia. It had spread widely in Poland, Hungary, the Netherlands, and France. This rapid growth was now about to be checked. In some of these countries the new religion was destined to succumb; in some entirely to disappear. Men who could remember the first preachings of Luther lived to see not only the high-water, but the ebb, of the Protestant tide. The revolutionary tendencies inherent in Protestantism began to alarm the sovereigns; and all the more because the Church in Catholic, hardly less than in Protestant, countries was becoming a department of the State. Kings had been jealous of the spiritual power when it belonged to the Popes. They became jealous for it when it was annexed to the throne.

Notwithstanding its secret stipulations, the peace of Câteau Cambresis relieved England from the most pressing and immediate perils by which she was threatened. Neither French nor Spanish troops had made their appearance on our soil. A breathing-time at least had been gained, during which something might be done towards putting the country in a state of defence, and restoring the finances.

But the danger from France was by no means at an end. In the treaty with England, the title of Elizabeth had been acknowledged. But in that with Spain, the Dauphin had styled himself “King of Scotland, England, and Ireland.” He and Mary had also assumed the English arms. If a French army invaded England, it would come by way of Scotland. The English Catholics, who had for the most part frankly accepted the succession of Elizabeth, were disappointed and irritated by the change of religion. If Mary should go to Scotland with a French force, it was to be apprehended that a rebellion would immediately break out in the northern counties. Philip, no doubt, would land in the south to drive out the Dauphiness. But the remedy would be worse than the disease. For he was deeply discontented with the conduct of Elizabeth, and would probably take the opportunity of deposing her. To establish, therefore, her independence of both her powerful neighbours, Elizabeth had to begin by destroying French influence in Scotland.

The wisest heads in Scotland had long seen the advantage of uniting their country to England by marriage. The blundering and bullying policy of the Protector Somerset had driven the Scotch to renew their ancient alliance with France. But the attempts of the Regent Mary of Guise to increase French influence, and to establish a small standing army, in order at once to strengthen

her authority, and to serve the designs of Henry II. against England, had again made the French connection unpopular, and caused a corresponding revival of friendly feeling towards England.

Nowhere was the Church so wealthy, relatively to the other estates, as in Scotland. It was supposed to possess half the property of the country. Nowhere were the clergy so immoral. Nowhere was superstition so gross. But the doctrines of the Reformation were spreading among the common people, and in 1557 some of the nobles, hungering for the wealth of the Church, put themselves at the head of the Protestant movement. They were known as the "Lords of the Congregation."

The Scotch Reformation began not from the Government, as in England, but from the people. Hence, while change of supremacy was the main question in England, change of doctrine and worship took the lead in Scotland. The two parties were about equal in numbers, the Protestants being strongest in the Lowlands. But, with the exception of the murder of Beaton in 1546, there had, as yet, been no appeal to force, nor any attempt to procure a public change of religion. The accession of Elizabeth emboldened the Protestants. At Perth they took possession of the churches and burnt a monastery. On the other hand, after the peace of Câteau Cambresis, Henry II. directed the Regent to put down Protestantism, both in pursuance of the agreement with Philip, and in order to prepare for the Franco-Scottish invasion of England. The result was that the Protestants rose in open rebellion (June 1559). The Lords of the Congregation occupied Perth, Stirling, and Edinburgh. All over the Lowlands abbeys were wrecked, monks harried, churches cleared of images, the Mass abolished, and King Edward's service established in its place. In England the various changes of religion in the last thirty years had always been effected legally by King and Parliament. In Scotland the Catholic Church was overthrown by a simultaneous popular outbreak. The catastrophe came later than in England; but popular feeling was more prepared for it; and what was now cast down was never set up again.

It seemed at first as if the Regent and her handful of regular troops, commanded by d'Oysel, would be swept away. But d'Oysel had fortified Leith, and was even able to take the field. A French army was expected. The tumultuary forces of the needy Scotch nobles could not be kept together long, and it became clear that, unless supported by Elizabeth, the rebellion would be crushed as soon as the French reinforcements should arrive, if not sooner.

Thus early did Elizabeth find herself confronted by the Scottish difficulty, which was to cause her so much anxiety throughout the greater part of her reign. The problem, though varying in minor details, was always essentially the same. There was a Protestant faction looking for support to England, and a Catholic faction looking to France. Two or three of the Protestant leaders – Moray, Glencairn, Kirkaldy – did really care something about a religious reformation. The rest thought more of getting hold of Church lands and pursuing old family feuds. In the experience of Elizabeth, they were a needy, greedy, treacherous crew, always sponging on her treasury, and giving her very little service in return for her money. Besides, the whole Scotch nation was so touchy in its patriotism, so jealous of foreign interference, that foreign soldiers present on its soil were sure to be regarded with an evil eye, no matter for what purpose they had come, or by whom they had been invited.

The Lords of the Congregation invoked the protection of Elizabeth. They suggested that she should marry the Earl of Arran, and that he and she should be King and Queen of Great Britain. Arran was the eldest son of the Duke of Chatelherault, who, Mary being as yet childless, was heir-presumptive to the Scottish crown. There were many reasons why Elizabeth should decline interference. It was throwing down the glove to France. Interference in Scotland had always been disastrous. It might drive the English Catholics to despair, as cutting off the hope of Mary's succession to the English crown. To make a Protestant match would irritate Philip. He might invade England to forestall the French. Almost all her Council – even Bacon – advised her to leave Scotland alone, marry the Archduke Charles, and trust to the Spanish alliance for the defence of England.

These were serious considerations; and to them was to be joined another which with Elizabeth always had great weight – more, naturally, than it had with any of her advisers. She shrank from doing anything which might have the practical effect of weakening the common cause of monarchs. She felt

instinctively that with Protestants reverence for the religious basis of kingship must tend to become weaker than with Catholics. She did not desire to encourage this tendency or to familiarise her own subjects with it. Knox's *First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regimen of Women* had been directed against Mary. The Blasts that were to follow had been dropped; but the first could not be treated as unblown. And the arrogant preacher did not mend matters by writing to Elizabeth that she was to consider her case as an exception "contrary to nature," allowed by God "for the comfort of His kirk," but that if she based her title on her birth or on law, "her felicity would be short."

Nevertheless Elizabeth adopted the bolder course. The Lords of the Congregation were assured that England would not see them crushed by French arms. A small supply of money was sent to them. As to the marriage with Arran, no positive answer was given; but he was sent for to be looked at. When he came, he was found to be even a poorer creature than his father; at times, indeed, not quite right in his mind. It was hard upon the Hamiltons, among whom were so many able and daring men, that, with the crown almost in their grasp, their chiefs should be such incapables. To Elizabeth it was no doubt a relief to find that Arran was an impossible husband.

In the meantime 2000 French had arrived, and the Lords were urgent in their demands for help. But Elizabeth determined, and rightly, that they must do their own work if they could. She was willing to give them such pecuniary help as was necessary. But the demand for troops was unreasonable. Fighting men abounded in Scotland. Why should English troops be sent to do their fighting for them, with the certainty of earning black looks rather than thanks? If a large army was despatched from France, she would attack it with her fleet. If it landed, she would send an English army. But if the Lords of the Congregation did not beat the handful of Frenchmen at Leith it must be because they were either weak or treacherous. In either case Elizabeth might have to give up the policy she preferred, leave Scotland alone, and fall back upon an alliance with Philip.

In order therefore to preserve this second string to her bow, and to let the Scotch Anglophiles see that she possessed it, she reopened negotiations for the Austrian marriage. Charles, in his turn, was invited to come and be looked at. Much as she disliked the idea of marriage, she knew that political reasons might make it necessary. But, come what would, she would never marry a man who was not to her fancy as a man. She would take no one on the strength of his picture. She had heard that Charles was not over-wise, and that he had an extraordinarily big head, "bigger than the Earl of Bedford's."

The Scotch Lords, finding that Elizabeth was determined to have some solid return for her money, went to work with more vigour. They proclaimed the deposition of the Regent, drove her from Edinburgh, and besieged her and her French garrison in Leith. But this burst of energy was soon over. The Protestants were more ready to pull down images and harry monks than make campaigns. Leith was not to be taken. In three weeks their army dwindled away, and the little disciplined force of Frenchmen re-entered Edinburgh.

The position had become very critical for Elizabeth. A French army of 15,000 men was daily expected at Leith. If once it landed, the Congregation would be crushed; the Hamiltons would make their peace; and the disciplined army of d'Elbœuf, swelled by hordes of hungry Scotchmen, would pour over the Border and proclaim Mary in the midst of the Catholic population which ten years later rose in rebellion under the northern Earls.

In this difficulty the Spanish Ministers in the Netherlands were consulted. If Elizabeth expelled the garrison at Leith, and so brought upon herself a war with France, could she depend on Philip's assistance? The reply was menacing. Their master, for his own interest, could not allow the Queen of France and Scotland to enforce her title to the throne of England. But he would oppose it in his own way. If a French army entered England from the north, a Spanish army would land on the south coast. Turning to her own Council for advice, Elizabeth found no encouragement. They recommended her to take Philip's advice, and even to retrace some of her steps in the matter of religion in order to propitiate him. She made a personal appeal to the Duke of Norfolk to take the command of the forces on the Border. But he declined to be the instrument of a policy which he disapproved.

We need not wonder if Elizabeth hesitated for a while. Some of these councillors were not too well affected to her. But most of them were thoroughly loyal, and there was really much to be said for the more cautious policy. She herself was an eminently cautious politician, inclined by nature to shrink from risky courses. Never, therefore, in her whole career did she give greater proof of her large-minded comprehension of the main lines of policy which it behoved her to follow than when she determined to override the opinions of so many prudent advisers, and expel the French force from the northern kingdom.

England was not quite in the helpless, disabled position that it pleased the Spaniards to believe. Twelve months of careful and energetic administration had already done wonders. There had been wise economy and wise expenditure. Money had been scraped together, and, though there was still a heavy debt, the legacy of three wasteful reigns, the confidence of the Antwerp money-lenders had revived, and they were willing to advance considerable sums. A fleet had been equipped and manned; shiploads of arms had been imported; forces had been collected on the south coasts. The Border garrisons had been quietly raised in strength till they were able to furnish an expeditionary force at a moment's notice.

The smallest energy on the part of the Congregation might have finished the war without the presence of an English force. Elizabeth had a right to be angry. The Scotch Protestants expected to have the hardest part of the work done for them, and to be paid for executing their own share of it. Lord James and a few of the leaders were in earnest, but others were selfish time-servers. As for the lower class, their Calvinism was still new. It had not yet bred that fierce spirit of independence which before long was to outweigh the force of nobles and gentry. But if the weakness of the Anglophile party was disappointing, it had at all events shown that Elizabeth must depend upon herself to ward off danger on that side; and after some reasonable hesitation she decided to put through the work she had begun.

It says much for the patriotism of Elizabeth's Council that when they found she had made up her mind they did not stand sulkily aloof, but co-operated heartily and vigorously in carrying out the policy they had opposed. Norfolk himself accepted the command of the Border army, and acted throughout the affair with fidelity and diligence. He was not a man distinguished by ability of any kind, and the actual fighting was to be done by Lord Grey, a firm and experienced, though not brilliant, commander. But that the natural leader of the Conservative nobility should be seen at the head of Elizabeth's army was a useful lesson to traitors at home and enemies abroad, who were telling each other that her throne was insecure.

An agreement between the English Queen and the Lords of the Congregation was drawn up (February 27), with scrupulous care to avoid the appearance of dictation and encroachment which had gathered all Scotland to Pinkie Cleugh eleven years before. It set forth that the English troops were entering Scotland for no other object than to assist the Duke of Chatelherault, the heir-presumptive to the throne, and the other nobles, to drive out the foreign invaders. They would build no fortress. There was no intention to prejudice Mary's lawful authority. Cecil appears to have wanted to add something about "Christ's true religion;" but Elizabeth struck it out. Circumstances might compel her to be the protector of foreign Protestants; but neither then nor at any other time did she desire to pose in that character.

A month later (March 28th) Lord Grey crossed the Border, and marched to Leith. The siege of that place proved to be tedious. The Lords of the Congregation gave very insufficient assistance; and, when an assault had been repulsed with heavy loss, the citizens of Edinburgh would not receive the wounded into their houses. At last, when food was running short in the town, an envoy from France arrived with power to treat on behalf of the Queen of Scots. Her mother, the Regent, had died during the siege. After much haggling a treaty was signed. No French troops were in future to be kept in Scotland. Offices of State were to be held only by natives. The government during Mary's absence

was to be vested in a Council of twelve noblemen; seven nominated by her and five by the Estates. Elizabeth's title to the kingdoms of England and Ireland was recognised (July 1560).

Such was the Treaty of Edinburgh, or of Leith, as it is sometimes called, one of the most successful achievements of a successful reign. It was gained by wise counsel and bold resolve; and its fruits, though not completely fulfilling its promise, were solid and valuable. It was not ratified by Mary. But her non-ratification in the long-run injured no one but herself, besides putting her in the wrong, and giving Elizabeth a standing excuse for treating her as an enemy. England was permanently free from the menace of a disciplined French army in the northern kingdom. Nothing was settled in the treaty about religion. But this was equivalent to a confirmation of the violent change that had recently taken place; in itself a guarantee of security to England.

The moral effect of this success was even greater than its more tangible results. It had been very generally believed, at all events abroad, that Elizabeth was tottering on her throne; that the large majority were on the point of rising to depose her; that, wriggle as she might, she would find she was a mere *protégée* of Philip, with no option but to follow his directions and square her policy to his. Whatever small basis of fact underlay this delusive estimate had been ridiculously exaggerated in the reports sent to Philip by his ambassador De Quadra, a man who evidently paid more attention to hole-and-corner tattle than to the broad forces of English politics.

All these imaginings were now proved to be vain. Elizabeth had shown that she could protect herself by her own strength and in her own way. She had civilly ignored Philip's advice, or rather his injunctions. She had thrown down the glove to France, and France had not taken it up. She had placed in command of her armies the very man whom she was supposed to fear, and he had done her bidding, and done it well. England once more stood before Europe as an independent power, able to take care of itself, aid its friends, and annoy its enemies.

It is true that, as far as Elizabeth personally is concerned, her Scotch policy had not always in its execution been as prompt and firm as could be desired. Those who follow it in greater detail than is possible here will find much in it that is irresolute and even vacillating. This defect appears throughout Elizabeth's career, though it will always be ignored, as it ought to be ignored, by those who reserve their attention for what is worth observing in the course of human affairs.

In her intellectual grasp of European politics as a whole, and of the interests of her own kingdom, Elizabeth was probably superior to any of her counsellors. No one could better than she think out the general idea of a political campaign. But theoretical and practical qualifications are seldom, if ever, combined in equal excellence. Not only are the qualities themselves naturally opposed, but the constant exercise of either increases the disparity. Her sex obliged Elizabeth to leave the large field of execution to others. Her practical gifts therefore, whatever they were, deteriorated rather than advanced as she grew older. In men, who every day and every hour of the day are engaged in action, the habit of prompt decision and persistence in a course once adopted, even if it be not quite the best, is naturally formed and strengthened. It is a habit so valuable, so indispensable to continued success, that in practice it largely compensates for some inferiority in conception and design. Elizabeth's irresolution and vacillation were therefore a consequence of her position – that of an extremely able and well-informed woman called upon to conduct a government in which so much had to be decided by the sovereign at her own discretion. The abler she was, the more disposed to make her will felt, the less steadiness and consistency in action were to be expected from her. As the wife of a king, upon whom the final responsibility would have rested – her inferior perhaps in intellect and knowledge, but with the masculine habit of making up his mind once for all, and then steering a straight course – she would have been a wise and enlightened adviser, not afraid of consistently maintaining principles, when the time, mode, and degree of their application rested with another. As it was, Cecil and other able statesmen who served her had not only to take their general course of policy from their mistress – a wise course upon the whole, wiser sometimes than they would have selected for themselves – but they were embarrassed, in their loyal attempts to steer in the direction she had prescribed, by her

nervous habit of catching at the rudder-lines whenever a new doubt occurred to her ingenious mind, or some private feeling of the woman perverted the clear insight of the sovereign.

The rivalry between France and Spain had hitherto been the safety of England. Nothing but reasons of religion could bring those two powers to suspend their political quarrel. This danger seemed to be averted for the moment by the temporary ascendant of the Politiques after the death of Francis II. But the fanaticism of both Catholics and Huguenots was too bitter, and the nobles on both sides were too ambitious, to listen to the dictates of reason and patriotism. The immense majority of the nation, except in some districts of the south and south-west, was profoundly Catholic. The Huguenots, strongest amongst the aristocracy and the upper bourgeoisie, daring and intolerant like the Calvinists everywhere, had no sooner received some countenance from Catherine than they began to preach against the mass, to demand the spoliation of the Church, the suppression of monasteries, the destruction of images, and the expulsion of the Guises. Where they were strong enough they began to carry out their programme. The Guises, on the other hand, forgetting the glory they had won in the wars against Spain, were soliciting the patronage of Philip, and urging him to put himself at the head of a crusade against the heretics of all countries. To this appeal he replied by formally summoning Catherine to put down heresy in France. An accidental collision at Vassy, in which a number of Huguenots were slain, brought on the first of those wars of religion which were to desolate France for the next thirty years (March 1562). Both factions, equally dead to patriotism, opened their country to foreigners. The Guises called in the forces of Spain and the Pope. Condé applied to Elizabeth and the Protestant princes of Germany.

It was necessary to give the Huguenots just so much help as would prevent them from being crushed. Aggressive in appearance, such interference was in reality legitimate self-defence. But unfortunately neither Elizabeth nor her Council had forgotten Calais, and they extorted from Condé the surrender of Havre as a pledge for its restoration. In the case of Scotland they had come, as we have seen, to recognise that to establish a permanent war by holding fortified posts on the territory of another nation is poor statesmanship. The possession of Calais was of little military value as against France. It is true that it would enable England to make sea communication between Spain and the Netherlands very insecure, and would thus give Philip a powerful motive for desiring to stand well with this country. But such a calculation had less weight with Englishmen at that moment than pure Jingoism – the longing to be again able to crow over their French enemy.

The occupation of Havre (October 1562) gave to the Huguenot cause the minimum of assistance, and brought upon it the maximum of odium. A hollow reconciliation was soon patched up between the rival factions (March 1563), and Elizabeth was summoned to evacuate Havre. She refused, loudly complaining of the Huguenots for deserting her. She “had come to the quiet possession of Havre without force or any other unlawful means, and she had good reason to keep it.” Up to this time the fiction of peace between the two nations had been maintained. It was now open war. It is only fair to Elizabeth to say that all her Council and the whole nation were even hotter than she was. The garrison of Havre, with their commander Warwick, were eager for the fray. They would “make the French cock cry Cuck,” they would “spend the last drop of their blood before the French should fasten a foot in the town.” The inhabitants were all expelled, and the siege began, Condé as well as the Catholics appearing in the Queen-mother’s army. After a valiant defence the English, reduced to a handful of men by typhus, sailed away (July 28, 1563). Peace was concluded early in the next year (April 1564). Elizabeth did not repeat her mistake. Thenceforward to the end of her reign we shall find her carefully cultivating friendly relations with every ruler of France.

CHAPTER IV
ELIZABETH AND MARY STUART: 1559-1568

WHEN Elizabeth mounted the throne, it was taken for granted that she was to marry, and marry with the least possible delay. This was expected of her, not merely because in the event of her dying without issue there would be a dispute whether the claim of Mary Stuart or that of Catherine Grey was to prevail, but for a more general reason. The rule of an unmarried woman, except provisionally during such short interval as might be necessary to provide her with a husband, was regarded as quite out of the question. It was the custom for the husbands of heiresses to step into the property of their wives and stand in the shoes, so to speak, of the last male proprietor, in order to perform those duties which could not be efficiently performed by a woman. Elizabeth's sister, while a subject, had no thought of marrying. But her accession was considered by herself and every one else to involve marriage. If the nobles of England could have foreseen that Elizabeth would elude this obligation, she would probably never have been allowed to mount the throne. Her marriage was thought to be as much a matter of course, and as necessary, as her coronation.

Accordingly the House of Commons, which met a month after her accession, immediately requested her to select a husband without delay. Her declaration that she had no desire to change her state was supposed to indicate only the real or affected coyness to be expected from a young lady. There was no lack of suitors, foreign or English. The Archduke Charles, son of the Emperor and cousin of Philip, would have been welcomed by all Catholics and acquiesced in by political Protestants like Cecil. The ardent Protestants were eager for Arran, and Cecil, till he saw it was useless, worked his best for him, regardless of the personal sacrifice his mistress must make in wedding a man who was not always quite sane and eventually became a confirmed lunatic.

Not many months of the new reign had passed before it began to be suspected that Elizabeth's partiality for Lord Robert Dudley had something to do with her evident distaste for all her suitors. To her Ministers and the public this partiality for a married man became a cause of great disquietude. They not unnaturally feared that with a young woman who had no relations to advise and keep watch over her, it might lead to some disastrous scandal incompatible with her continuance on the throne. Marriage with Dudley at this time was out of the question. But within four months of her accession, the Spanish ambassador mentions a report that Dudley's wife had a cancer, and that the Queen was only waiting for her death to marry him.

About the humble extraction of Elizabeth's favourite much nonsense was talked in his lifetime by his ill-wishers, and has been duly repeated since. He was as well born as most of the peerage of that time; very few of whom could show nobility of any antiquity in the male line. The Duke of Norfolk being the only Duke at Elizabeth's accession, and in possession of an ancient title, was looked on as the head of his order. Yet it was only seventy-five years since a Howard had first reached the peerage in consequence of having had the good fortune to marry the heiress of the Mowbrays. Edmund Dudley, Minister of Henry VII. and father of Northumberland, was grandson of John, fourth Lord Dudley; and Northumberland, by his mother's side, was sole heir and representative of the ancient barony of De L'Isle, which title he bore before he received his earldom and dukedom. In point of wealth and influence, indeed, the favourite might be called an upstart. The younger son of an attainted father, he had not an acre of land or a farthing of money which he did not owe either to his wife or to the generosity of Elizabeth. This it was that moved the sneers and ill-will of a people with whom nobility has always been a composite idea implying, not only birth and title, but territorial wealth. Moreover his grandfather, though of good extraction, was a simple esquire, and had risen by helping Henry VII. to trample on the old nobility. After his fall his son had climbed to power under Henry VIII. and Edward VI. in the same way. Lord Robert Dudley, again, had to begin at the bottom of the ladder.

No one will claim for Elizabeth's favourite that he was a man of distinguished ability or high character. He had a fine figure and a handsome face. He bore himself well in manly exercises. His manners were attractive when he wished to please. To these qualities he first owed his favour with Elizabeth, who was never at any pains to conceal her liking for good-looking men and her dislike of ugly ones. Finding himself in favour, and inheriting to the full the pushing audacity of his father and grandfather, he professed for the Queen a love which he certainly did not feel, in order to serve his soaring ambition. Elizabeth, it is my firm conviction, never loved Dudley or any other man, in any sense of the word, high or low. She had neither a tender heart nor a sensual temperament. But she had a more than feminine appetite for admiration; and the more she was, unhappily for herself, a stranger to the emotion of love, the more restlessly did she desire to be thought capable of inspiring it. She was therefore easily taken in by Dudley's professions, and, though she did not care for him enough to marry him, she liked to have him as well as several other handsome men, dangling about her, "like her lap-dog," to use her own expression. Further she believed – and here came in the mischief – that his devotion to her person would make him a specially faithful servant.

We know, though Elizabeth did not, that in 1561, Dudley was promising the Spanish ambassador to be Philip's humble vassal, and to do his best for Catholicism, if Philip would promote his marriage with the Queen; that, in the same year, he was offering his services to the French Huguenots for the same consideration; that at one time he posed as the protector of the Puritans, while at another he was intriguing with the captive Queen of Scots; whom, again, later on, he had a chief share in bringing to the block. But we must remember that very few statesmen, English or foreign, in the sixteenth century could have shown a record free from similar blots. Those who, like Elizabeth and Cecil, were undeniably actuated on the whole by public spirit, or by any principle more respectable than pure selfishness, never hesitated to lie or play a double game when it seemed to serve their turn. William of Orange is the only eminent statesman, as far as I know, against whom this charge cannot be made. When this was the standard of honour for consistent politicians and real patriots, what was to be expected of lower natures? Dudley's conduct on several occasions was bad and contemptible; and he must be judged with the more severity, because he sinned not only against the code of duty binding on the ordinary man and citizen, but against his professions of a tender sentiment by means of which he had acquired his special influence. I have said that he was not a man of great ability. But neither was he the empty-headed incapable trifler that some writers have depicted him. He was not so judged by his contemporaries. That Elizabeth, because she liked him, would have selected a man of notorious incapacity to command her armies, both in the Netherlands and when the Armada was expected, is one of those hypotheses that do not become more credible by being often repeated. Cecil himself, when it was not a question of the marriage – of which he was a determined opponent – regarded him as a useful servant of the Queen. I do not doubt that Elizabeth estimated his capacity at about its right value. What she over-estimated was his affection for herself, and consequently his trustworthiness. Sovereigns – and others – often place a near relative in an important post, not as being the most capable person they know, but as most likely to be true to them. Elizabeth had no near relatives. If we grant – as we must grant – that she believed in Dudley's love, we cannot wonder that she employed him in positions of trust. A female ruler will always be liable to make these mistakes, unless her Ministers and captains are to be of her own sex.

On the 3rd of September 1560, two months after the Treaty of Leith, Elizabeth told De Quadra that she had made up her mind to marry the Archduke Charles. On the 8th, Lady Robert Dudley died at Cumnor Hall. On the 11th, Elizabeth told De Quadra that she had changed her mind. Dudley neglected his wife, and never brought her to court. We cannot doubt that he fretted under a tie which stood in the way of his ambition. Her death had been predicted. It is not strange, therefore, that he should have been suspected of having caused it. Nevertheless, not a particle of evidence pointing in that direction has ever been produced, and it seems most probable that the poor deserted creature

committed suicide. A coroner's jury investigated the case diligently, and, it would seem, with some animus against Foster, the owner of Cumnor Hall, but returned a verdict of accidental death.

Anyhow, Dudley was now free. The Scotch Estates were eagerly pressing Arran's suit, and the English Protestants were as eagerly backing them. The opportunity was certainly unique. Though nothing was said about deposing Mary, yet nothing could be more certain than that, if this marriage took place, the Queen of France would never reign in Scotland.

At her wits' end how to escape a match so desirable for the Queen, so repulsive to the woman, Elizabeth had announced her willingness to espouse the Archduke in order to gain a short breathing-time. Vienna was at least further than Edinburgh, and difficulties were sure to arise when details began to be discussed. At this moment, by the sudden death of his wife, Dudley became marriageable. If Elizabeth had been free to marry or not, as she pleased, it seems to me in the highest degree improbable that she would ever have thought of taking Dudley. But believing that a husband was inevitable, and expecting that she would be forced to take some one who was either unknown to her or positively distasteful, it was most natural that she should ask herself whether it was not the least of evils to put this cruel persecution to an end by choosing a man whom at least she admired and liked, who loved her, as she thought, for her own sake, and would be as obedient "as her lap-dog." When nations are ruled by women, and marriageable women, feelings and motives which belong to the sphere of private life, and should be confined to it, are apt to invade the domain of politics. If Elizabeth's subjects expected their sovereign to suppress all personal feelings in choosing a consort, they ought to have established the Salic law. No woman, queen or not queen, can be expected voluntarily to make such a sacrifice. Her happiness is too deeply involved.

In the autumn, then, of 1560, when Elizabeth had been not quite two years on the throne, she seriously thought of marrying Dudley. It is difficult to say how long she continued to think of it seriously. With him, as with other suitors, she went on coquetting when she had perfectly made up her mind that nothing was to come of it. Perhaps we shall be right in saying that, as long as there was any question of the Archduke Charles, she looked to Dudley as a possible refuge. This would be till about the beginning of 1568. It seems to be always assumed, as a matter of course, that Cecil played the part of Elizabeth's good genius in persistently dissuading her from marrying Dudley. I am not so sure of this. If she had been a wife and a mother many of her difficulties would have at once disappeared, and the weakest points in her character would have no longer been brought out. It ended in her not marrying at all. I am inclined to think that another enemy of Dudley, the Earl of Sussex, showed more good sense and truer patriotism when he wrote in October 1560: —

"I wish not her Majesty to linger this matter of so great importance, but to choose speedily; and therein to follow so much her own affection as [that], by the looking upon him whom she should choose, *omnes ejus sensus titillarentur*; which shall be the readiest way, with the help of God, to bring us a blessed prince which shall redeem us out of thraldom. If I knew that England had other rightful inheritors I would then advise otherwise, and seek to serve the time by a husband's choice [seek for an advantageous political alliance]. But seeing that she is *ultimum refugium*, and that no riches, friendship, foreign alliance, or any other present commodity that might come by a husband, can serve our turn, without issue of her body, if the Queen will love anybody, let her love where and whom she lists, so much thirst I to see her love. And whomsoever she shall love and choose, him will I love, honour, and serve to the uttermost."

Perhaps I may be excused for expressing the opinion that the ideal husband for Elizabeth, if it had been possible, would have been Lord James Stuart, afterwards Earl of Moray. Of sufficient capacity, kindly heart, undaunted resolution, and unswerving rectitude of purpose, he would have supplied just those elements that were wanting to correct her defects. King of Scotland he perhaps could not be. Regent of Scotland he did become. If he could, at the same time, have been Elizabeth's husband, the two crowns might have, in the next generation, been worn by a Stuart of a nobler stock than the son of Mary and Darnley.

When Mary Stuart, on the death of her husband Francis II., returned to her own kingdom (August 1561), she found the Scotch nobles sore at the rejection of Arran's suit. Bent on giving a sovereign to England, in one way or another, they were now ready, Protestants as well as Catholics, to back Mary's demand that she should be recognised as Elizabeth's heir-presumptive. To this the English Queen could not consent, for the very sufficient reason, that not only would the Catholic party be encouraged to hold together and give trouble, but the more bigoted and desperate members of it would certainly attempt her life, lest she should disappoint Mary's hopes by marrying. "She was not so foolish," she said, "as to hang a winding-sheet before her eyes or make a funeral feast whilst she was alive," but she promised that she would neither do anything nor allow anything to be done by Parliament to prejudice Mary's title. To this undertaking she adhered long after Mary's hostile conduct had given ample justification for treating her as an enemy.

Openly Mary was claiming nothing but the succession. In reality she cared little for a prospect so remote and uncertain. What she was scheming for was to hurl Elizabeth from her throne. This was an object for which she never ceased to work till her head was off her shoulders. Her aims were more sharply defined than those of Elizabeth, and she was remarkably free from that indecision which too often marred the action of the English Queen. In ability and information she was not at all inferior to Elizabeth; in promptitude and energy she was her superior. These masculine qualities might have given her the victory in the bitter duel, but that, in the all-important domain of feeling, her sex indomitably asserted itself, and weighted her too heavily to match the superb self-control of Elizabeth. She could love and she could hate; Elizabeth had only likes and dislikes, and therefore played the cooler game. When Mary really loved, which was only once, all selfish calculations were flung to the winds; she was ready to sacrifice everything, and not count the cost – body and soul, crown and life, interest and honour. When she hated, which was often, rancour was apt to get the better of prudence. And so at the fatal turning-point of her career, when mad hate and madder love possessed her soul, she went down before her great rival never to rise again. Here was a woman indeed. And if, for that reason, she lost the battle in life, for that reason too she still disputes it from the tomb. She has always had, and always will have, the ardent sympathy of a host of champions, to whom the "fair vestal throned by the west" is a mere politician, sexless, cold-blooded, and repulsive.

In 1564 Mary, as yet fancy-free, was seeking to match herself on purely political grounds. She was not so fastidious as Elizabeth, for she does not seem to have troubled herself at all about personal qualities, if a match seemed otherwise eligible. The Hamiltons pressed Arran upon her. But he was a Protestant. He was not heir to any throne but that of Scotland; and, though a powerful family in Scotland, the Hamiltons could give her no help elsewhere. Philip, who, now that the Guises had become his *protégés*, was less jealous of her designs, wished her to marry his cousin, the Archduke Charles of Austria. But this prince, whom Elizabeth professed to find too much of a Catholic, was, in the eyes of Mary and her more bigoted co-religionists, too nearly a Lutheran; and she doubted whether Philip cared enough for him to risk a war for establishing him and herself upon the English throne. For this reason the husband on whom she had set her heart was Don Carlos, Philip's own son, a sort of wild beast. But Philip received her overtures doubtfully; the fact being that he could not trust Don Carlos, whom he eventually put to death. Catherine de' Medici loved Mary as little as she did the other Guises, but the prospect of the Spanish match filled her with such terror that she proposed to make the Scottish Queen her daughter-in-law a second time by a marriage with Charles IX., a lad under thirteen, if she would wait two years for him.

On the other hand, Elizabeth impressed upon Mary that, unless she married a member of some Reformed Church, the English Parliament would certainly demand that her title to the succession, whatever it was, should be declared invalid. The House of Commons was strongly Protestant, and had with difficulty been prevented from addressing the Queen in favour of the succession of Lady Catherine Grey. Apart from religion there was deep irritation against the whole Scotch nation. Sir Ralph Sadler, who had been much employed in Scotland, denounced them as "false, beggarly, and

perjured, whom the very stones in the English streets would rise against." When Elizabeth was dangerously ill in October 1562, the Council discussed whom they should proclaim in the event of her death. Some were for the will of Henry VIII. and Catherine Grey. Others, sick of female rulers, were for taking the Earl of Huntingdon, a descendant of the Duke of Clarence. None were for Mary or Darnley. Mary's chief friends – Montagu, Northumberland, Westmoreland, and Derby – were not on the Council.

Parliament and the Council being against her, Mary could not afford to quarrel with the Queen. Elizabeth told her that she would regard a marriage with any Spanish, Austrian, or French prince as a declaration of war. Help from those quarters was far away, and at the mercy of winds and waves: the Border fortresses were near, and their garrisons always ready to march. Besides, whichever of the two she might obtain – Charles IX. or the Archduke – she drove the other into the arms of Elizabeth.

But there was another possible husband who had crossed her mind from time to time; not a prince indeed, yet of royal extraction in the female line, and, what was more, not without pretensions to that very succession which she coveted. Henry Lord Darnley, son of Matthew Stuart, Earl of Lennox, was, by his father's side, of the royal family of Scotland, while his mother was the daughter of Margaret Tudor, sister of Henry VIII., by her second husband, the Earl of Angus. Born and brought up in England, where his father had been long an exile, he was reckoned as an Englishman, which, in the opinion of many lawyers, was essential as a qualification for the crown. He was also a Catholic, and if Elizabeth had died at this time, it was perhaps Darnley, rather than Mary, whom the Catholics would have tried to place on the throne. Elizabeth had promised that, if Mary would marry an English nobleman, she would do her best to get Mary's title recognised by Parliament. To Elizabeth, therefore, Mary now turned, with the request that she would point out such a nobleman, not without a hope that she would name Darnley (March 1564). But, to Mary's mortification, she formally recommended Lord Robert Dudley.

This recommendation has often been treated as if it was a sorry joke perpetrated by Elizabeth, who had never any intention of furthering, or even permitting, such a match. But nothing is more certain than that Elizabeth was most anxious to bring it about; and it affords a decisive proof that her feeling for Dudley, whatever name she herself may have put to it, was not what is usually called love. Cecil and all her most intimate advisers entertained no doubt that she was sincere. She undertook, if Mary would accept Dudley, to make him a duke; and, in the meantime, she created him Earl of Leicester. She regarded him, so she told Mary's envoy Melville, as her brother and her friend; if he was Mary's husband she would have no suspicion or fear of any usurpation before her death, being assured that he was so loving and trusty that he would never permit anything to be attempted during her time. "But," she said, pointing to Darnley, who was present, "you like better yonder long lad." Her suspicion was correct. Melville had secret instructions to procure permission for Darnley to go to Scotland. However, he answered discreetly that "no woman of spirit could choose such an one who more resembled a woman than a man."

How was Elizabeth to be persuaded to let Darnley leave England? There was only one way to disarm suspicion: Mary declared herself ready to marry Leicester (January 1565). Darnley immediately obtained leave of absence for three months ostensibly to recover the forfeited Lennox property. In Scotland the purpose of his coming was not mistaken, and it roused the Protestants to fury. The Queen's chapel, the only place in the Lowlands where mass was said, was beset. Her priests were mobbed and maltreated. Moray, who till lately had supported his sister with such loyalty and energy that Knox had quarrelled with him, prepared, with the other Lords of the Congregation, for resistance. Elizabeth, and Cecil also, had been completely overreached. A prudent player sometimes gets into difficulties by attributing equal prudence to a daring and reckless antagonist. Elizabeth, as a patriotic ruler, desired nothing but peace and security for her own kingdom. If she could have that, she had no wish to meddle with Scotland. Mary, caring nothing for the interests of her subjects, was

facing civil war with a light heart; and, for the chance of obtaining the more brilliant throne, was ready to risk her own.

Undeterred by Elizabeth's threats, Mary married Darnley (July 29, 1565). Moray and Argyll, having obtained a promise of assistance from England, took arms; but most of the Lords of the Congregation showed themselves even more powerless or perfidious than they had been five years before. Morton, Ruthven, and Lindsay, stoutest of Protestants, were related to Darnley, and were gratified by the elevation of their kinsman. Moray failed to elicit a spark of spirit out of the priest-baiting citizens of Edinburgh, and the Queen, riding steel cap on head and pistols at saddle-bow, chased him into England. Lord Bedford, who was in command at Berwick, could have stepped across the Border and scattered her undisciplined array without difficulty. He implored Elizabeth to let him do it; offered to do it on his own responsibility, and be disavowed. But he found, to his mortification, that she had been playing a game of brag. She had hoped that a threatening attitude would stop the marriage. But as it was an accomplished fact she was not going to draw the sword.

This was shabby treatment of Moray and his friends, and to some of her councillors it seemed not only shameful but dangerous to show the white feather. But judging from the course of events, Elizabeth's policy was the safe one. The English Catholics – some of them at all events, as will be explained presently – were becoming more discontented and dangerous. The northern earls were known to be disaffected. Mary believed that in every county in England the Catholics had their organisation and their leaders, and that, if she chose, she could march to London. No doubt she was much deceived. In reluctance to resort to violence and respect for constituted authority, England, even north of the Humber, was at least two centuries ahead of Scotland, and, if she had come attended by a horde of savage Highlanders and Border ruffians, "the very stones in the streets would have risen against them." It was Elizabeth's rule – and a very good rule too – never to engage in a war if she could avoid it. From this rule she could not be drawn to swerve either by passion or ambition, or that most fertile source of fighting, a regard for honour. All the old objections to an invasion of Scotland still subsisted in full strength, and were reinforced by others. It was better to wait for an attack which might never come than go half-way to meet it. An invasion of Scotland might drive the northern earls to declare for Mary, which, unless compelled to choose sides, they might never do. Some people are more perturbed by the expectation and uncertainty of danger than by its declared presence. Not so Elizabeth. Smouldering treason she could take coolly as long as it only smouldered. As for the betrayal of the Scotch refugees, Elizabeth never allowed the private interests of her own subjects, much less those of foreigners, to weigh against the interests of England. Moray one of the most magnanimous and self-sacrificing of statesmen, evidently felt that Elizabeth's course was wise, if not exactly chivalrous. He submitted to her public rebuke without publicly contradicting her, and waited patiently in exile till it should be convenient for her to help him and his cause. Mary, too, though elated by her success, and never abandoning her intention to push it further, found it best to halt for a while. Philip wrote to her that he would help her secretly with money if Elizabeth attacked her, but not otherwise, and warned her against any premature clutch at the English crown. Elizabeth's seeming tameness could hardly have received a more complete justification.

Mary had determined to espouse Darnley, before she had set eyes on him, for purely political reasons. There is no reason to suppose she ever cared for him. It is more likely, as Mr. Froude suggests, that for a great political purpose she was doing an act which in itself she loathed. A woman of twenty-two, already a widow, mature beyond her years, exceptionally able, absorbed in the great game of politics, and accustomed to admiration, was not likely to care for a raw lad of nineteen, foolish, ignorant, ill-conditioned, vicious, and without a single manly quality. One man we know she did love later on – loved passionately and devotedly, no slim girl-faced youngster, but the fierce, stout-limbed, dare-devil Bothwell; and Bothwell gradually made his way to her heart by his readiness to undertake every desperate service she required of him. What Mary admired, nay envied, in the other sex was the stout heart and the strong arm. She loved herself to rough it on the war-path. She surprised Randolph

by her spirit: – "Never thought I that stomach to be in her that I find. She repented nothing but, when the Lords and others came in the morning from the watches, that she was not a man, to know what life it was to lie all night in the fields or to walk upon the causeway with a jack and a knapscap, a Glasgow buckler and a broadsword." "She desires much," says Knollys, "to hear of hardiness and valiancy, commending by name all approved hardy men of her country, although they be her enemies; and she concealeth no cowardice even in her friends." Valuable to Mary as a man of action, Bothwell was not worth much as an adviser. For advice she looked to the Italian Rizzio, in whom she confided because, with the detachment of a foreigner, he regarded Scotch ambitions, animosities, and intrigues only as so much material to be utilised for the purpose of the combined onslaught on Protestantism which the Pope was trying to organise. Bothwell was at this time thirty, and Rizzio, according to Lesley, fifty.

In spite of all the prurient suggestions of writers who have fastened on the story of Mary's life as on a savoury morsel, there is no reason whatever for thinking that she was a woman of a licentious disposition, and there is strong evidence to the contrary. There was never anything to her discredit in France. Her behaviour in the affair of Chastelard was irreproachable. The charge of adultery with Rizzio is dismissed as unworthy of belief even by Mr. Froude, the severest of her judges. Bothwell indeed she loved, and, like many another woman who does not deserve to be called licentious, she sacrificed her reputation to the man she loved. But the most conclusive proof that she was no slave to appetite is afforded by her nineteen years' residence in England, which began when she was only twenty-five. During almost the whole of that time she was mixing freely in the society of the other sex, with the fullest opportunity for misconduct had she been so inclined. It is not to be supposed that she was fettered by any scruples of religion or morality. Yet no charge of unchastity is made against her.

When Darnley found that his wife, though she conferred on him the title of King, did not procure for him the crown matrimonial or allow him the smallest authority, he gave free vent to his anger. No less angry were his kinsmen, Morton, Ruthven, and Lindsay. They had deserted the Congregation in the expectation that when Darnley was King they would be all-powerful. Instead of this they found themselves neglected; while the Queen's confidence was given to Catholics and to Bothwell, who, though nominally a Protestant, always acted with the Catholics. The Protestant seceders had in fact fallen between two stools. It was against Rizzio that their rage burnt fiercest. Bothwell was only a bull-headed, blundering swordsman. Rizzio was doubly detestable to them as the brain of the Queen's clique and as a low-born foreigner. Rizzio, therefore, they determined to remove in the time-honoured Scottish fashion. Notice of the day fixed for the murder was sent to the banished noblemen in England, so that they might appear in Edinburgh immediately it was accomplished Randolph, the English ambassador, and Bedford, who commanded on the Border, were also taken into the secret, and they communicated it to Cecil and Leicester.

It is unnecessary here to repeat the well-known story of the murder of Rizzio. It was part of a large scheme for bringing back the exiled Protestant lords, closing the split in the Protestant party, and securing the ascendancy of the Protestant religion. At first it appeared to have succeeded. Bedford wrote to Cecil that "everything would now go well." But Mary, by simulating a return of wifely fondness, managed to detach her weak husband from his confederates. By his aid she escaped from their hands. Bothwell and her Catholic friends gathered round her in arms. In a few days she re-entered Edinburgh in triumph, and Rizzio's murderers had to take refuge in England.

But if the Protestant stroke had failed, Mary was obliged to recognise that her plan for re-establishing the Catholic ascendancy in Scotland could not be rushed in the high-handed way she had proposed as a mere preliminary to the more important subjugation of England. At the very moment when she seemed to stand victorious over all opposition, the ground had yawned under her feet, and, while she was dreaming of dethroning Elizabeth, she had found herself a helpless captive in the hands of her own subjects. The lesson was a valuable one, and if she could profit by it her prospects had never been so good. The barbarous outrage of which, in the sixth month of pregnancy, she had been the object could not but arouse wide-spread sympathy for her. She had extricated herself from her

difficulties with splendid courage and cleverness. The loss of such an adviser as Rizzio was really a stroke of luck for her. All she had to do was to abandon, or at all events postpone, her design of re-establishing the Catholic religion in Scotland, and to discontinue her intrigues against Elizabeth.

Her prospects in England were still further improved when she gave birth to a son (June 19, 1566). Once more there was an heir-male to the old royal line, and, as Elizabeth continued to evade marriage, most people who were not fierce Protestants began to think it would be more reasonable and safe to abide by the rule of primogeniture than by the will of Henry VIII., sanctioned though it was by Act of Parliament. There can be no doubt that this was the opinion and intention of Elizabeth, though she strongly objected to having anything settled during her own lifetime. But she had herself gone a long way towards settling it by her treatment of Mary's only serious competitor. Catherine Grey had contracted a secret marriage with the Earl of Hertford, son of the Protector Somerset. Her pregnancy necessitated an avowal. The clergyman who had married them was not forthcoming, and Hertford's sister, the only witness, was dead. Elizabeth chose to disbelieve their story, though she would not have been able to prove when, where, or by whom her own father and mother had been married. She had a right to be angry; but when she sent the unhappy couple to the Tower, and caused her tool, Archbishop Parker, to pronounce the union invalid and its offspring illegitimate, she was playing Mary's game. The House of Commons elected in 1563 was still undissolved. It was strongly Protestant, and it favoured Catherine's title even after her disgrace. In its second session, in the autumn of 1566, it made a determined effort to compel Elizabeth to marry, and in the meanwhile to recognise Catherine as the heir-presumptive. The zealous Protestants knew well that the Peers were in favour of the Stuart title, and they feared that a new House of Commons might agree with the Peers. To get rid of their pertinacity Elizabeth dissolved Parliament, not without strong expressions of displeasure (Jan. 2, 1567). Cecil himself earned the thanks of Mary for his attitude on this occasion. It cannot be doubted that he dreaded her succession; but he saw which way the tide was running, and he thought it prudent to swim with it.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.