SWINBURNE'S TRAGEDIES

VOL. IV

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THE TRAGEDIES

OF

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

IN FIVE VOLUMES

VOLUME IV

MARY STUART

A TRAGEDY

LONDON
CHATTO & WINDUS
1905

MARY STUART

A TRAGEDY

ἀντὶ μὲν ἐχθρᾶς γλώσσης ἐχθρὰ
γλῶσσα τελείσθω· τοὐφειλόμενον
πράσσουσα δίκη μέγ' ἀϋτεῖ·
ἀντὶ δὲ πληγῆς φονίας φονίαν
πληγὴν τινέτω· δράσαντι παθεῖν,
τριγέρων μῦθος τάδε φωνεῖ.

ÆSCH. *Cho.* 309-315.

I DEDICATE THIS PLAY,

NO LONGER, AS THE FIRST PART OF THE TRILOGY

WHICH IT COMPLETES WAS DEDICATED,

TO THE GREATEST EXILE, BUT SIMPLY

TO THE GREATEST MAN OF FRANCE:

TO THE CHIEF OF LIVING POETS:

TO THE FIRST DRAMATIST OF HIS AGE:

TO MY BELOVED AND REVERED MASTER

VICTOR HUGO

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

MARY STUART.
MARY BEATON.
QUEEN ELIZABETH.
BARBARA MOWBRAY.
LORD BURGHLEY.
SIR FRANCIS WALSINGHAM.
WILLIAM DAVISON.
ROBERT DUDLEY, *Earl of Leicester.*
GEORGE TALBOT, *Earl of Shrewsbury.*
EARL OF KENT.
HENRY CAREY, *Lord Hunsdon.*
SIR CHRISTOPHER HATTON.
SIR THOMAS BROMLEY, *Lord Chancellor.*
POPHAM, *Attorney-General.*
EGERTON, *Solicitor-General.*
GAWDY, *the Queen's Sergeant.*
SIR AMYAS PAULET.
SIR DREW DRURY.
SIR THOMAS GORGES.
SIR WILLIAM WADE.
SIR ANDREW MELVILLE.
ROBERT BEALE, *Clerk of the Council.*
CURLE *and* NAU, *Secretaries to the Queen of Scots.*
GORION, *her Apothecary.*
FATHER JOHN BALLARD,
ANTHONY BABINGTON,
CHIDIOCK TICHBORNE,
JOHN SAVAGE,
CHARLES TILNEY,
EDWARD ABINGTON,
THOMAS SALISBURY,
ROBERT BARNWELL,
} *Conspirators.*
THOMAS PHILLIPPS, *Secretary to Walsingham.*
M. DE CHÂTEAUNEUF.
M. DE BELLIÈVRE.

Commissioners, Privy Councillors, Sheriffs, Citizens, Officers, and Attendants.

Time—FROM AUGUST 14, 1586, TO FEBRUARY 18, 1587.

ACT I

ANTHONY BABINGTON

SCENE I. *Babington's Lodging: A Veiled Picture on the Wall*

Enter BABINGTON, TICHBORNE, TILNEY, ABINGTON, SALISBURY, *and* BARNWELL

BABINGTON

WELCOME, good friends, and welcome this good day
That casts out hope and brings in certainty
To turn raw spring to summer. Now not long
The flower that crowns the front of all our faiths
Shall bleach to death in prison ; now the trust
That took the night with fire as of a star
Grows red and broad as sunrise in our sight
Who held it dear and desperate once, now sure,
But not more dear, being surer. In my hand
I hold this England and her brood, and all
That time out of the chance of all her fate
Makes hopeful or makes fearful : days and years,
Triumphs and changes bred for praise or shame
From the unborn womb of these unknown, are ours
That stand yet noteless here ; ours even as God's
Who puts them in our hand as his, to wield

And shape to service godlike. None of you
But this day strikes out of the scroll of death
And writes apart immortal; what we would,
That have we; what our fathers, brethren, peers,
Bled and beheld not, died and might not win,
That may we see, touch, handle, hold it fast,
May take to bind our brows with. By my life,
I think none ever had such hap alive
As ours upon whose plighted lives are set
The whole good hap and evil of the state
And of the Church of God and world of men
And fortune of all crowns and creeds that hang
Now on the creed and crown of this our land,
To bring forth fruit to our resolve, and bear
What sons to time it please us; whose mere will
Is father of the future.

TILNEY

Have you said?

BABINGTON

I cannot say too much of so much good.

TILNEY

Say nothing then a little, and hear one while:
Your talk struts high and swaggers loud for joy,
And safely may perchance, or may not, here;
But why to-day we know not.

BABINGTON

No, I swear,
Ye know not yet, no man of us but one,

No man on earth; one woman knows, and I,
I that best know her the best begot of man
And noblest; no king born so kingly-souled,
Nor served of such brave servants.

TICHBORNE

What, as we?

BABINGTON

Is there one vein in one of all our hearts
That is not blown aflame as fire with air
With even the thought to serve her? and, by God,
They that would serve had need be bolder found
Than common kings find servants.

SALISBURY

Well, your cause?
What need or hope has this day's heat brought forth
To blow such fire up in you?

BABINGTON

Hark you, sirs;
The time is come, ere I shall speak of this,
To set again the seal on our past oaths
And bind their trothplight faster than it is
With one more witness; not for shameful doubt,
But love and perfect honour. Gentlemen,
Whose souls are brethren sealed and sworn to mine,
Friends that have taken on your hearts and hands
The selfsame work and weight of deed as I,
Look on this picture; from its face to-day
Thus I pluck off the muffled mask, and bare
Its likeness and our purpose. Ay, look here;

None of these faces but are friends of each,
None of these lips unsworn to all the rest,
None of these hands unplighted. Know ye not
What these have bound their souls to? and myself,
I that stand midmost painted here of all,
Have I not right to wear of all this ring
The topmost flower of danger? Who but I
Should crown and close this goodly circle up
Of friends I call my followers? There ye stand,
Fashioned all five in likeness of mere life,
Just your own shapes, even all the man but speech,
As in a speckless mirror; Tichborne, thou,
My nearest heart and brother next in deed,
Then Abington, there Salisbury, Tilney there,
And Barnwell, with the brave bright Irish eye
That burns with red remembrance of the blood
Seen drenching those green fields turned brown and grey
Where fire can burn not faith out, nor the sword
That hews the boughs off lop the root there set
To spread in spite of axes. Friends, take heed;
These are not met for nothing here in show
Nor for poor pride set forth and boastful heart
To make dumb brag of the undone deed, and wear
The ghost and mockery of a crown unearned
Before their hands have wrought it for their heads
Out of a golden danger, glorious doubt,
An act incomparable, by all time's mouths
To be more blessed and cursed than all deeds done
In this swift fiery world of ours, that drives
On such hot wheels toward evil goals or good,
And desperate each as other; but that each,
Seeing here himself and knowing why here, may set
His whole heart's might on the instant work, and hence

Pass as a man rechristened, bathed anew
And swordlike tempered from the touch that turns
Dull iron to the two-edged fang of steel
Made keen as fire by water ; so, I say,
Let this dead likeness of you wrought with hands
Whereof ye wist not, working for mine end
Even as ye gave them work, unwittingly,
Quicken with life your vows and purposes
To rid the beast that troubles all the world
Out of men's sight and God's. Are ye not sworn
Or stand not ready girt at perilous need
To strike under the cloth of state itself
The very heart we hunt for ?

TICHBORNE

Let not then
Too high a noise of hound and horn give note
How hot the hunt is on it, and ere we shoot
Startle the royal quarry ; lest your cry
Give tongue too loud on such a trail, and we
More piteously be rent of our own hounds
Than he that went forth huntsman too, and came
To play the hart he hunted.

BABINGTON

Ay, but, see,
Your apish poet's-likeness holds not here,
If he that fed his hounds on his changed flesh
Was charmed out of a man and bayed to death
But through pure anger of a perfect maid ;
For she that should of huntsmen turn us harts
Is Dian but in mouths of her own knaves,
And in paid eyes hath only godhead on

And light to dazzle none but them to death.
Yet I durst well abide her, and proclaim
As goddess-like as maiden.

BARNWELL

Why, myself
Was late at court in presence, and her eyes
Fixed somewhile on me full in face ; yet, 'faith,
I felt for that no lightning in my blood
Nor blast in mine as of the sun at noon
To blind their balls with godhead ; no, ye see,
I walk yet well enough.

ABINGTON

She gazed at you ?

BARNWELL

Yes, 'faith ; yea, surely ; take a Puritan oath
To seal my faith for Catholic. What, God help,
Are not mine eyes yet whole then ? am I blind
Or maimed or scorched, and know not ? by my head,
I find it sit yet none the worse for fear
To be so thunder-blasted.

ABINGTON

Hear you, sirs ?

TICHBORNE

I was not fain to hear it.

BARNWELL

Which was he
Spake of one changed into a hart ? by God,
There be some hearts here need no charm, I think,
To turn them hares of hunters ; or if deer,
Not harts but hinds, and rascal.

BABINGTON

Peace, man, peace !
Let not at least this noble cry of hounds
Flash fangs against each other. See what verse
I bade write under on the picture here :
These are my comrades, whom the peril's self
Draws to it ; how say you ? will not all in the end
Prove fellows to me ? how should one fall off
Whom danger lures and scares not ? Tush, take hands ;
It was to keep them fast in all time's sight
I bade my painter set you here, and me
Your loving captain ; gave him sight of each
And order of us all in amity.
And if this yet not shame you, or your hearts
Be set as boys' on wrangling, yet, behold,
I pluck as from my heart this witness forth
[*Taking out a letter.*
To what a work we are bound to, even her hand
Whom we must bring from bondage, and again
Be brought of her to honour. This is she,
Mary the queen, sealed of herself and signed
As mine assured good friend for ever. Now,
Am I more worth or Ballard ?

TILNEY

He it was
Bade get her hand and seal to allow of all
That should be practised ; he is wise.

BABINGTON

Ay, wise !
He was in peril too, he said, God wot,
And must have surety of her, he ; but I,
'Tis I that have it, and her heart and trust,
See all here else, her trust and her good love
Who knows mine own heart of mine own hand writ
And sent her for assurance.

SALISBURY

This we know ;
What we would yet have certified of you
Is her own heart sent back, you say, for yours.

BABINGTON

I say? not I, but proof says here, cries out
Her perfect will and purpose. Look you, first
She writes me what good comfort hath she had
To know by letter mine estate, and thus
Reknit the bond of our intelligence,
As grief was hers to live without the same
This great while past ; then lovingly commends
In me her own desire to avert betimes
Our enemies' counsel to root out our faith
With ruin of us all ; for so she hath shown
All Catholic princes what long since they have wrought
Against the king of Spain ; and all this while

The Catholics naked here to all misuse
Fall off in numbered force, in means and power,
And if we look not to it shall soon lack strength
To rise and take that hope or help by the hand
Which time shall offer them ; and see for this
What heart is hers ! she bids you know of me
Though she were no part of this cause, who holds
Worthless her own weighed with the general weal,
She will be still most willing to this end
To employ therein her life and all she hath
Or in this world may look for.

TICHBORNE

This rings well ;
But by what present mean prepared doth hers
Confirm your counsel ? or what way set forth
So to prevent our enemies with good speed
That at the goal we find them not, and there
Fall as men broken ?

BABINGTON

Nay, what think you, man,
Or what esteem of her, that hope should lack
Herein her counsel ? hath she not been found
Most wary still, clear-spirited, bright of wit,
Keen as a sword's edge, as a bird's eye swift,
Man-hearted ever ? First, for crown and base
Of all this enterprise, she bids me here
Examine with good heed of good event
What power of horse and foot among us all
We may well muster, and in every shire
Choose out what captain for them, if we lack

For the main host a general ;—as indeed
Myself being bound to bring her out of bonds
Or here with you cut off the heretic queen
Could take not this on me ;—what havens, towns,
What ports to north and west and south, may we
Assure ourselves to hold in certain hand
For entrance and receipt of help from France,
From Spain, or the Low Countries ; in what place
Draw our main head together ; for how long
Raise for this threefold force of foreign friends
Wage and munition, or what harbours choose
For these to land ; or what provision crave
Of coin at need or armour ; by what means
The six her friends deliberate to proceed ;
And last the manner how to get her forth
From this last hold wherein she newly lies :
These heads hath she set down, and bids me take
Of all seven points counsel and common care
With as few friends as may be of the chief
Ranged on our part for actors ; and thereon
Of all devised with diligent speed despatch
Word to the ambassador of Spain in France,
Who to the experience past of all the estate
Here on this side aforetime that he hath
Shall join goodwill to serve us.

TILNEY

Ay, no more ?
Of us no more I mean, who being most near
To the English queen our natural mistress born
Take on our hands, her household pensioners',
The stain and chiefest peril of her blood
Shed by close violence under trust ; no word,

No care shown further of our enterprise
That flowers to fruit for her sake?

BABINGTON

Fear not that;
Abide till we draw thither—ay—she bids
Get first assurance of such help to come,
And take thereafter, what before were vain,
Swift order to provide arms, horses, coin,
Wherewith to march at word from every shire
Given by the chief; and save these principals
Let no man's knowledge less in place partake
The privy ground we move on, but set forth
For entertainment of the meaner ear
We do but fortify us against the plot
Laid of the Puritan part in all this realm
That have their general force now drawn to head
In the Low Countries, whence being home returned
They think to spoil us utterly, and usurp
Not from her only and all else lawful heirs
The kingly power, but from their queen that is
(As we may let the bruit fly forth disguised)
Wrest that which now she hath, if she for fear
Take not their yoke upon her, and therefrom
Catch like infection from plague-tainted air
The purulence of their purity; with which plea
We so may stablish our confederacies
As wrought but for defence of lands, lives, goods,
From them that would cut off our faith and these;
No word writ straight or given directly forth
Against the queen, but rather showing our will
Firm to maintain her and her lineal heirs,
Myself (she saith) *not named.* Ha, gallant souls,

Hath our queen's craft no savour of sweet wit,
No brain to help her heart with?

TICHBORNE

But our end—

No word of this yet?

BABINGTON

And a good word, here,
And worth our note, good friend; being thus prepared,
Time then shall be to set our hands on work
And straight thereon take order that she may
Be suddenly transported out of guard,
Not tarrying till our foreign force come in,
Which then must make the hotter haste; and seeing
We can make no day sure for our design
Nor certain hour appointed when she might
Find other friends at hand on spur of the act
To take her forth of prison, ye should have
About you always, or in court at least,
Scouts furnished well with horses of good speed
To bear the tiding to her and them whose charge
Shall be to bring her out of bonds, that these
May be about her ere her keeper have word
What deed is freshly done; in any case,
Ere he can make him strong within the house
Or bear her forth of it: and need it were
By divers ways to send forth two or three
That one may pass if one be stayed; nor this
Should we forget, to assay in the hour of need
To cut the common posts off; by this plot
May we steer safe, and fall not miserably,

As they that laboured heretofore herein,
Through overhaste to stir upon this side
Ere surety make us strong of strangers' aid.
And if at first we bring her forth of bonds,
Be well assured, she bids us—as I think
She doubts not me that I should let this slip,
Forget so main a matter—well assured
To set her in the heart of some strong host,
Or strength of some good hold, where she may stay
Till we be mustered and the ally drawn in;
For should the queen, being scatheless of us yet
As we unready, fall upon her flight,
The bird untimely fled from snare to snare
Should find being caught again a narrower hold
Whence she should fly forth never, if cause indeed
Should seem not given to use her worse; and we
Should be with all extremity pursued,
To her more grief; for this should grieve her more
Than what might heaviest fall upon her.

TILNEY

Ay?
She hath had then work enough to do to weep
For them that bled before; Northumberland,
The choice of all the north spoiled, banished, slain,
Norfolk that should have ringed the fourth sad time
The fairest hand wherewith fate ever led
So many a man to deathward, or sealed up
So many an eye from sunlight.

BABINGTON

By my head,
Which is the main stake of this cast, I swear
There is none worth more than a tear of hers

That man wears living or that man might lose,
Borne upright in the sun, or for her sake
Bowed down by theirs she weeps for: nay, but hear;
She bids me take most vigilant heed, that all
May prosperously find end assured, and you
Conclude with me in judgment; to myself
As chief of trust in my particular
Refers you for assurance, and commends
To counsel seasonable and time's advice
Your common resolution; and again,
If the design take yet not hold, as chance
For all our will may turn it, we should not
Pursue her transport nor the plot laid else
Of our so baffled enterprise; but say
When this were done we might not come at her
Being by mishap close guarded in the Tower
Or some strength else as dangerous, yet, she saith,
For God's sake leave not to proceed herein
To the utmost undertaking; for herself
At any time shall most contentedly
Die, knowing of our deliverance from the bonds
Wherein as slaves we are holden.

BARNWELL

So shall I,
Knowing at the least of her enfranchisement
Whose life were worth the whole blood shed o' the world
And all men's hearts made empty.

BABINGTON

Ay, good friend,
Here speaks she of your fellows, that some stir

Might be in Ireland laboured to begin
Some time ere we take aught on us, that thence
The alarm might spring right on the part opposed
To where should grow the danger : she meantime
Should while the work were even in hand assay
To make the Catholics in her Scotland rise
And put her son into their hands, that so
No help may serve our enemies thence ; again,
That from our plots the stroke may come, she thinks
To have some chief or general head of all
Were now most apt for the instant end ; wherein
I branch not off from her in counsel, yet
Conceive not how to send the appointed word
To the earl of Arundel now fast in bonds
Held in the Tower she spake of late, who now
Would have us give him careful note of this,
Him or his brethren ; and from oversea
Would have us seek, if he be there at large,
To the young son of dead Northumberland,
And Westmoreland, whose hand and name, we know,
May do much northward ; ay, but this we know,
How much his hand was lesser than his name
When proof was put on either ; and the lord
Paget, whose power is in some shires of weight
To incline them usward ; both may now be had,
And some, she saith, of the exiles principal,
If the enterprise be resolute once, with these
May come back darkling ; Paget lies in Spain,
Whom we may treat with by his brother's mean,
Charles, who keeps watch in Paris : then in the end
She bids beware no messenger sent forth
That bears our counsel bear our letters ; these
Must through blind hands precede them or ensue

By ignorant posts and severally despatched;
And of her sweet wise heart, as we were fools,
—But that I think she fears not—bids take heed
Of spies among us and false brethren, chief
Of priests already practised on, she saith,
By the enemy's craft against us; what, forsooth,
We have not eyes to set such knaves apart
And look their wiles through, but should need misdoubt
—Whom shall I say the least on all our side?—
Good Gilbert Gifford with his kind boy's face
That fear's lean self could fear not? but God knows
Woman is wise, but woman; none so bold,
So cunning none, God help the soft sweet wit,
But the fair flesh with weakness taints it; why,
She warns me here of perilous scrolls to keep
That I should never bear about me, seeing
By that fault sank all they that fell before
Who should have walked unwounded else of proof,
Unstayed of justice: but this following word
Hath savour of more judgment; we should let
As little as we may our names be known
Or purpose here to the envoy sent from France,
Whom though she hears for honest, we must fear
His master holds the course of his design
Far contrary to this of ours, which known
Might move him to discovery.

TICHBORNE

Well forewarned:
Forearmed enough were now that cause at need
Which had but half so good an armour on
To fight false faith or France in.

BABINGTON

Peace awhile :
Here she winds up her craft. She hath long time sued
To shift her lodging, and for answer hath
None but the Castle of Dudley named as meet
To serve this turn ; and thither may depart,
She thinks, with parting summer ; whence may we
Devise what means about those lands to lay
For her deliverance ; who from present bonds
May but by one of three ways be discharged :
When she shall ride forth on the moors that part
Her prison-place from Stafford, where few folk
Use to pass over, on the same day set,
With fifty or threescore men well horsed and armed,
To take her from her keeper's charge, who rides
With but some score that bear but pistols ; next,
To come by deep night round the darkling house
And fire the barns and stables, which being nigh
Shall draw the household huddling forth to help,
And they that come to serve her, wearing each
A secret sign for note and cognizance,
May some of them surprise the house, whom she
Shall with her servants meet and second ; last,
When carts come in at morning, these being met
In the main gateway's midst may by device
Fall or be sidelong overthrown, and we
Make in thereon and suddenly possess
The house whence lightly might we bear her forth
Ere help came in of soldiers to relief
Who lie a mile or half a mile away
In several lodgings : but howe'er this end
She holds her bounden to me all her days
Who proffer me to hazard for her love,

And doubtless shall as well esteem of you
Or scarce less honourably, when she shall know
Your names who serve beneath me ; so commends
Her friend to God, and bids me burn the word
That I would wear at heart for ever ; yet,
Lest this sweet scripture haply write us dead,
Where she set hand I set my lips, and thus
Rend mine own heart with her sweet name, and end.
[*Tears the letter.*

SALISBURY

She hath chosen a trusty servant.

BABINGTON

Ay, of me?
What ails you at her choice? was this not I
That laid the ground of all this work, and wrought
Your hearts to shape for service? or perchance
The man was you that took this first on him,
To serve her dying and living, and put on
The bloodred name of traitor and the deed
Found for her sake not murderous?

SALISBURY

Why, they say
First Gifford put this on you, Ballard next,
Whom he brought over to redeem your heart
Half lost for doubt already, and refresh
The flagging flame that fired it first, and now
Fell faltering half in ashes, whence his breath
Hardly with hard pains quickened it and blew
The grey to red rekindling.

BABINGTON

Sir, they lie
Who say for fear I faltered, or lost heart
For doubt to lose life after ; let such know
It shames me not though I were slow of will
To take such work upon my soul and hand
As killing of a queen ; being once assured,
Brought once past question, set beyond men's doubts
By witness of God's will borne sensibly,
Meseems I have swerved not.

SALISBURY

Ay, when once the word
Was washed in holy water, you would wear
Lightly the name so hallowed of priests' lips
That men spell murderer ; but till Ballard spake
The shadow of her slaying whom we shall strike
Was ice to freeze your purpose.

TICHBORNE

Friend, what then ?
Is this so small a thing, being English born,
To strike the living empire here at heart
That is called England ? stab her present state,
Give even her false-faced likeness up to death,
With hands that smite a woman ? I that speak,
Ye know me if now my faith be firm, and will
To do faith's bidding ; yet it wrings not me
To say I was not quick nor light of heart,
Though moved perforce of will unwillingly,
To take in trust this charge upon me.

BARNWELL

I

With all good will would take, and give God thanks,
The charge of all that falter in it: by heaven,
To hear in the end of doubts and doublings heaves
My heart up as with sickness. Why, by this
The heretic harlot that confounds our hope
Should be made carrion, with those following four
That were to wait upon her dead: all five
Live yet to scourge God's servants, and we prate
And threaten here in painting: by my life,
I see no more in us of life or heart
Than in this heartless picture.

BABINGTON

Peace again;
Our purpose shall not long lack life, nor they
Whose life is deadly to the heart of ours
Much longer keep it; Burghley, Walsingham,
Hunsdon and Knowles, all these four names writ out,
With hers at head they worship, are but now
As those five several letters that spell death
In eyes that read them right. Give me but faith
A little longer: trust that heart awhile
Which laid the ground of all our glories; think
I that was chosen of our queen's friends in France,
By Morgan's hand there prisoner for her sake
On charge of such a deed's device as ours
Commended to her for trustiest, and a man
More sure than might be Ballard and more fit
To bear the burden of her counsels—I
Can be not undeserving, whom she trusts,
That ye should likewise trust me; seeing at first

She writes me but a thankful word, and this,
God wot, for little service ; I return
For aptest answer and thankworthiest meed
Word of the usurper's plotted end, and she
With such large heart of trust and liberal faith
As here ye have heard requites me : whom, I think,
For you to trust is no too great thing now
For me to ask and have of all.

TICHBORNE

Dear friend,
Mistrust has no part in our mind of you
More than in hers ; yet she too bids take heed,
As I would bid you take, and let not slip
The least of her good counsels, which to keep
No whit proclaims us colder than herself
Who gives us charge to keep them ; and to slight
No whit proclaims us less unserviceable
Who are found too hot to serve her than the slave
Who for cold heart and fear might fail.

BABINGTON

Too hot !
Why, what man's heart hath heat enough or blood
To give for such good service ? Look you, sirs,
This is no new thing for my faith to keep,
My soul to feed its fires with, and my hope
Fix eyes upon for star to steer by ; she
That six years hence the boy that I was then,
And page, ye know, to Shrewsbury, gave his faith
To serve and worship with his body and soul
For only lady and queen, with power alone
To lift my heart up and bow down mine eyes

At sight and sense of her sweet sovereignty,
Made thence her man for ever ; she whose look
Turned all my blood of life to tears and fire,
That going or coming, sad or glad—for yet
She would be somewhile merry, as though to give
Comfort, and ease at heart her servants, then
Weep smilingly to be so light of mind,
Saying she was like the bird grown blithe in bonds
That if too late set free would die for fear,
Or wild birds hunt it out of life—if sad,
Put madness in me for her suffering's sake,
If joyous, for her very love's sake—still
Made my heart mad alike to serve her, being
I know not when the sweeter, sad or blithe,
Nor what mood heavenliest of her, all whose change
Was as of stars and sun and moon in heaven ;
She is well content,—ye have heard her—she, to die,
If we without her may redeem ourselves
And loose our lives from bondage ; but her friends
Must take forsooth good heed they be not, no,
Too hot of heart to serve her ! And for me,
Am I so vain a thing of wind and smoke
That your deep counsel must have care to keep
My lightness safe in wardship ? I sought none—
Craved no man's counsel to draw plain my plot,
Need no man's warning to dispose my deed.
Have I not laid of mine own hand a snare
To bring no less a lusty bird to lure
Than Walsingham with proffer of myself
For scout and spy on mine own friends in France
To fill his wise wide ears with large report
Of all things wrought there on our side, and plots
Laid for our queen's sake ? and for all his wit
This politic knave misdoubts me not, whom ye

Hold yet too light and lean of wit to pass
Unspied of wise men on our enemies' part,
Who have sealed the subtlest eyes up of them all.

TICHBORNE

That would I know ; for if they be not blind,
But only wink upon your proffer, seeing
More than they let your own eyes find or fear,
Why, there may lurk a fire to burn us all
Masked in them with false blindness.

BABINGTON

Hear you, sirs?
Now by the faith I had in this my friend
And by mine own yet flawless towards him, yea
By all true love and trust that holds men fast,
It shames me that I held him in this cause
Half mine own heart, my better hand and eye,
Mine other soul and worthier. Pray you, go ;
Let us not hold you ; sir, be quit of us ;
Go home, lie safe, and give God thanks ; lie close,
Keep your head warm and covered ; nay, be wise ;
We are fit for no such wise folk's fellowship,
No married man's who being bid forth to fight
Holds his wife's kirtle fitter wear for man
Than theirs who put on iron : I did know it,
Albeit I would not know ; this man that was,
This soul and sinew of a noble seed,
Love and the lips that burn a bridegroom's through
Have charmed to deathward, and in steel's good stead
Left him a silken spirit.

TICHBORNE

By that faith
Which yet I think you have found as fast in me
As ever yours I found, you wrong me more
Than were I that your words can make me not
I had wronged myself and all our cause; I hold
No whit less dear for love's sake even than love
Faith, honour, friendship, all that all my days
Was only dear to my desire, till now
This new thing dear as all these only were
Made all these dearer. If my love be less
Toward you, toward honour or this cause, then think
I love my wife not either, whom you know
How close at heart I cherish, but in all
Play false alike. Lead now which way you will,
And wear what likeness; though to all men else
It look not smooth, smooth shall it seem to me,
And danger be not dangerous; where you go,
For me shall wildest ways be safe, and straight
For me the steepest; with your eyes and heart
Will I take count of life and death, and think
No thought against your counsel: yea, by heaven,
I had rather follow and trust my friend and die
Than halt and hark mistrustfully behind
To live of him mistrusted.

BABINGTON

Why, well said:
Strike hands upon it; I think you shall not find
A trustless pilot of me. Keep we fast,
And hold you fast my counsel, we shall see
The state high-builded here of heretic hope

Shaken to dust and death. Here comes more proof
To warrant me no liar. You are welcome, sirs;

Enter BALLARD, *disguised, and* SAVAGE

Good father captain, come you plumed or cowled,
Or stoled or sworded, here at any hand
The true heart bids you welcome.

BALLARD

Sir, at none
Is folly welcome to mine ears or eyes.
Nay, stare not on me stormily; I say,
I bid at no hand welcome, by no name,
Be it ne'er so wise or valiant on men's lips,
Pledge health to folly, nor forecast good hope
For them that serve her, I, but take of men
Things ill done ill at any hand alike.
Ye shall not say I cheered you to your death,
Nor would, though nought more dangerous than your death
Or deadlier for our cause and God's in ours
Were here to stand the chance of, and your blood
Shed vainly with no seed for faith to sow
Should be not poison for men's hopes to drink.
What is this picture? Have ye sense or souls,
Eyes, ears, or wits to take assurance in
Of how ye stand in strange men's eyes and ears,
How fare upon their talking tongues, how dwell
In shot of their suspicion, and sustain
How great a work how lightly? Think ye not
These men have ears and eyes about your ways,
Walk with your feet, work with your hands, and watch

When ye sleep sound and babble in your sleep?
What knave was he, or whose man sworn and spy,
That drank with you last night? whose hireling lip
Was this that pledged you, Master Babington,
To a foul quean's downfall and a fair queen's rise?
Can ye not seal your tongues from tavern speech,
Nor sup abroad but air may catch it back,
Nor think who set that watch upon your lips
Yourselves can keep not on them?

BABINGTON

What, my friends!
Here is one come to counsel, God be thanked,
That bears commission to rebuke us all.
Why, hark you, sir, you that speak judgment, you
That take our doom upon your double tongue
To sentence and accuse us with one breath,
Our doomsman and our justicer for sin,
Good Captain Ballard, Father Fortescue,
Who made you guardian of us poor men, gave
Your wisdom wardship of our follies, chose
Your faith for keeper of our faiths, that yet
Were never taxed of change or doubted? You,
'Tis you that have an eye to us, and take note
What time we keep, what place, what company,
How far may wisdom trust us to be wise
Or faith esteem us faithful, and yourself
Were once the hireling hand and tongue and eye
That waited on this very Walsingham
To spy men's counsels and betray their blood
Whose trust had sealed you trusty? By God's light,
A goodly guard I have of you, to crave
What man was he I drank with yesternight,
What name, what shape, what habit, as, forsooth,

Were I some statesman's knave and spotted spy,
The man I served, and cared not how, being dead,
His molten gold should glut my throat in hell,
Might question of me whom I snared last night,
Make inquisition of his face, his gait,
His speech, his likeness. Well, be answered then
By God, I know not ; but God knows I think
The spy most dangerous on my secret walks
And witness of my ways most worth my fear
And deadliest listener to devour my speech
Now questions me of danger, and the tongue
Most like to sting my trust and life to death
Now taxes mine of rashness.

BALLARD

Is he mad?
Or are ye brainsick all with heat of wine
That stand and hear him rage like men in storms
Made drunk with danger? have ye sworn with him
To die the fool's death too of furious fear
And passion scared to slaughter of itself?
Is there none here that knows his cause or me,
Nor what should save or spoil us?

TICHBORNE

Friend, give ear ;
For God's sake, yet be counselled.

BABINGTON

Ay, for God's!
What part hath God in this man's counsels? nay,
Take you part with him ; nay, in God's name go ;

What should you do to bide with me? turn back;
There stands your captain.

SAVAGE

Hath not one man here
One spark in spirit or sprinkling left of shame?
I that looked once for no such fellowship,
But soldier's hearts in shapes of gentlemen,
I am sick with shame to hear men's jangling tongues
Outnoise their swords unbloodied. Hear me, sirs;
My hand keeps time before my tongue, and hath
But wit to speak in iron; yet as now
Such wit were sharp enough to serve our turn
That keenest tongues may serve not. One thing sworn
Calls on our hearts; the queen must singly die,
Or we, half dead men now with dallying, must
Die several deaths for her brief one, and stretched
Beyond the scope of sufferance; wherefore here
Choose out the man to put this peril on
And gird him with this glory; let him pass
Straight hence to court, and through all stays of state
Strike death into her heart.

BABINGTON

Why, this rings right;
Well said, and soldierlike; do thus, and take
The vanguard of us all for honour.

SAVAGE

Ay,
Well would I go, but seeing no courtly suit
Like yours, her servants and her pensioners,

The doorkeepers will bid my baseness back
From passage to her presence.

BABINGTON

O, for that,
Take this and buy ; nay, start not from your word ;
You shall not.

SAVAGE

Sir, I shall not.

BABINGTON

Here's more gold ;
Make haste, and God go with you ; if the plot
Be blown on once of men's suspicious breath,
We are dead, and all die bootless deaths—be swift—
And her we have served we shall but surely slay.
I will make trial again of Walsingham
If he misdoubt us. O, my cloak and sword—
[*Knocking within.*
I will go forth myself. What noise is that ?
Get you to Gage's lodging ; stay not here ;
Make speed without for Westminster ; perchance
There may we safely shift our shapes and fly,
If the end be come upon us.

BALLARD

It is here.
Death knocks at door already. Fly ; farewell.

BABINGTON

I would not leave you—but they know you not—
You need not fear, being found here singly.

BALLARD

No.

BABINGTON

Nay, halt not, sirs ; no word but haste ; this way,
Ere they break down the doors. God speed us well!
[*Exeunt all but* BALLARD. *As they go out enter an Officer with Soldiers.*

OFFICER

Here's one fox yet by the foot ; lay hold on him.

BALLARD

What would you, sirs?

OFFICER

Why, make one foul bird fast,
Though the full flight be scattered : for their kind
Must prey not here again, nor here put on
The jay's loose feathers for the raven priest's
To mock the blear-eyed marksman : these plucked off
Shall show the nest that sent this fledgeling forth,
Hatched in the hottest holy nook of hell.

BALLARD

I am a soldier.

OFFICER

Ay, the badge we know
Whose broidery signs the shoulders of the file

That Satan marks for Jesus. Bind him fast:
Blue satin and slashed velvet and gold lace,
Methinks we have you, and the hat's band here
So seemly set with silver buttons, all
As here was down in order; by my faith,
A goodly ghostly friend to shrive a maid
As ever kissed for penance: pity 'tis
The hangman's hands must hallow him again
When this lay slough slips off, and twist one rope
For priest to swing with soldier. Bring him hence.
[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II. *Chartley*

MARY STUART *and* MARY BEATON

MARY STUART

We shall not need keep house for fear to-day;
The skies are fair and hot; the wind sits well
For hound and horn to chime with. I will go.

MARY BEATON

How far from this to Tixall?

MARY STUART

Nine or ten
Or what miles more I care not; we shall find
Fair field and goodly quarry, or he lies,
The gospeller that bade us to the sport,
Protesting yesternight the shire had none
To shame Sir Walter Aston's. God be praised,

I take such pleasure yet to back my steed
And bear my crossbow for a deer's death well,
I am almost half content—and yet I lie—
To ride no harder nor more dangerous heat
And hunt no beast of game less gallant.

MARY BEATON

Nay,
You grew long since more patient.

MARY STUART

Ah, God help!
What should I do but learn the word of him
These years and years, the last word learnt but one,
That ever I loved least of all sad words?
The last is death for any soul to learn,
The last save death is patience.

MARY BEATON

Time enough
We have had ere death of life to learn it in
Since you rode last on wilder ways than theirs
That drive the dun deer to his death.

MARY STUART

Eighteen—
How many more years yet shall God mete out
For thee and me to wait upon their will
And hope or hope not, watch or sleep, and dream
Awake or sleeping? surely fewer, I think,
Than half these years that all have less of life
Than one of those more fleet that flew before.
I am yet some ten years younger than this queen,

Some nine or ten ; but if I die this year
And she some score years longer than I think
Be royal-titled, in one year of mine
I shall have lived the longer life, and die
The fuller-fortuned woman. Dost thou mind
The letter that I writ nigh two years gone
To let her wit what privacies of hers
Our trusty dame of Shrewsbury's tongue made mine
Ere it took fire to sting her lord and me?
How thick soe'er o'erscurfed with poisonous lies,
Of her I am sure it lied not ; and perchance
I did the wiselier, having writ my fill,
Yet to withhold the letter when she sought
Of me to know what villainies had it poured
In ears of mine against her innocent name :
And yet thou knowest what mirthful heart was mine
To write her word of these, that had she read
Had surely, being but woman, made her mad,
Or haply, being not woman, had not. 'Faith,
How say'st thou? did I well?

MARY BEATON

Ay, surely well
To keep that back you did not ill to write.

MARY STUART

I think so, and again I think not ; yet
The best I did was bid thee burn it. She,
That other Bess I mean of Hardwick, hath
Mixed with her gall the fire at heart of hell,
And all the mortal medicines of the world
To drug her speech with poison ; and God wot
Her daughter's child here that I bred and loved,

Bess Pierpoint, my sweet bedfellow that was,
Keeps too much savour of her grandam's stock
For me to match with Nau ; my secretary
Shall with no slip of hers engraft his own,
Begetting shame or peril to us all
From her false blood and fiery tongue ; except
I find a mate as meet to match with him
For truth to me as Gilbert Curle hath found,
I will play Tudor once and break the banns,
Put on the feature of Elizabeth
To frown their hands in sunder.

MARY BEATON

Were it not
Some tyranny to take her likeness on
And bitter-hearted grudge of matrimony
For one and not his brother secretary,
Forbid your Frenchman's banns for jealousy
And grace your English with such liberal love
As Barbara fails not yet to find of you
Since she writ Curle for Mowbray? and herein
There shows no touch of Tudor in your mood
More than its wont is ; which indeed is nought ;
The world, they say, for her should waste, ere man
Should get her virginal goodwill to wed.

MARY STUART

I would not be so tempered of my blood,
So much mismade as she in spirit and flesh,
To be more fair of fortune. She should hate
Not me, albeit she hate me deadly, more
Than thee or any woman. By my faith,
Fain would I know, what knowing not of her now

I muse upon and marvel, if she have
Desire or pulse or passion of true heart
Fed full from natural veins, or be indeed
All bare and barren all as dead men's bones
Of all sweet nature and sharp seed of love,
And those salt springs of life, through fire and tears
That bring forth pain and pleasure in their kind
To make good days and evil, all in her
Lie sere and sapless as the dust of death.
I have found no great good hap in all my days
Nor much good cause to make me glad of God,
Yet have I had and lacked not of my life
My good things and mine evil: being not yet
Barred from life's natural ends of evil and good
Foredoomed for man and woman through the world
Till all their works be nothing: and of mine
I know but this—though I should die to-day,
I would not take for mine her fortune.

MARY BEATON

No?

Myself perchance I would not.

MARY STUART

Dost thou think
That fire-tongued witch of Shrewsbury spake once truth
Who told me all those quaint foul merry tales
Of our dear sister that at her desire
I writ to give her word of, and at thine
Withheld and put the letter in thine hand
To burn as was thy counsel? for my part,
How loud she lied soever in the charge

That for adultery taxed me with her lord
And being disproved before the council here
Brought on their knees to give themselves the lie
Her and her sons by that first lord of four
That took in turn this hell-mouthed hag to wife
And got her kind upon her, yet in this
I do believe she lied not more than I
Reporting her by record, how she said
What infinite times had Leicester and his queen
Plucked all the fruitless fruit of baffled love
That being contracted privily they might,
With what large gust of fierce and foiled desire
This votaress crowned, whose vow could no man break,
Since God whose hand shuts up the unkindly womb
Had sealed it on her body, man by man
Would course her kindless lovers, and in quest
Pursue them hungering as a hound in heat,
Full on the fiery scent and slot of lust,
That men took shame and laughed and marvelled; one,
Her chamberlain, so hotly would she trace
And turn perforce from cover, that himself
Being tracked at sight thus in the general eye
Was even constrained to play the piteous hare
And wind and double till her amorous chase
Were blind with speed and breathless; but the worst
Was this, that for this country's sake and shame's
Our huntress Dian could not be content
With Hatton and another born her man
And subject of this kingdom, but to heap
The heavier scandal on her countrymen
Had cast the wild growth of her lust away
On one base-born, a stranger, whom of nights

Within her woman's chamber would she seek
To kiss and play for shame with secretly ;
And with the duke her bridegroom that should be,
That should and could not, seeing forsooth no man
Might make her wife or woman, had she dealt
As with this knave his follower ; for by night
She met him coming at her chamber door
In her bare smock and night-rail, and thereon
Bade him come in ; who there abode three hours :
But fools were they that thought to bind her will
And stay with one man or allay the mood
That ranging still gave tongue on several heats
To hunt fresh trails of lusty love ; all this,
Thou knowest, on record truly was set down,
With much more villainous else : she prayed me write
That she might know the natural spirit and mind
Toward her of this fell witch whose rancorous mouth
Then bayed my name, as now being great with child
By her fourth husband, in whose charge I lay
As here in Paulet's ; so being moved I wrote,
And yet I would she had read it, though not now
Would I re-write each word again, albeit
I might, or thou, were I so minded, or
Thyself so moved to bear such witness ; but
'Tis well we know not how she had borne to read
All this and more, what counsel gave the dame,
With loud excess of laughter urging me
To enter on those lists of love-making
My son for suitor to her, who thereby
Might greatly serve and stead me in her sight ;
And I replying that such a thing could be
But held a very mockery, she returns,
The queen was so infatuate and distraught
With high conceit of her fair fretted face

As of a heavenly goddess, that herself
Would take it on her head with no great pains
To bring her to believe it easily ;
Being so past reason fain of flattering tongues
She thought they mocked her not nor lied who said
They might not sometimes look her full in face
For the light glittering from it as the sun ;
And so perforce must all her women say
And she herself that spake, who durst not look
For fear to laugh out each in other's face
Even while they fooled and fed her vein with words,
Nor let their eyes cross when they spake to her
And set their feature fast as in a frame
To keep grave countenance with gross mockery lined ;
And how she prayed me chide her daughter, whom
She might by no means move to take this way,
And for her daughter Talbot was assured
She could not ever choose but laugh outright
Even in the good queen's flattered face. God wot,
Had she read all, and in my hand set down,
I could not blame her though she had sought to take
My head for payment ; no less poise on earth
Had served, and hardly, for the writer's fee ;
I could not much have blamed her ; all the less,
That I did take this, though from slanderous lips,
For gospel and not slander, and that now
I yet do well believe it.

MARY BEATON

And herself
Had well believed so much, and surely seen,
For all your protest of discredit made
With God to witness that you could not take

Such tales for truth of her nor would not, yet
You meant not she should take your word for this,
As well I think she would not.

MARY STUART

Haply, no.
We do protest not thus to be believed.
And yet the witch in one thing seven years since
Belied her, saying she then must needs die soon
For timeless fault of nature. Now belike
The soothsaying that speaks short her span to be
May prove more true of presage.

MARY BEATON

Have you hope
The chase to-day may serve our further ends
Than to renew your spirit and bid time speed?

MARY STUART

I see not but I may; the hour is full
Which I was bidden expect of them to bear
More fruit than grows of promise; Babington
Should tarry now not long; from France our friends
Lift up their heads to usward, and await
What comfort may confirm them from our part
Who sent us comfort; Ballard's secret tongue
Has kindled England, striking from men's hearts
As from a flint the fire that slept, and made
Their dark dumb thoughts and dim disfigured hopes
Take form from his and feature, aim and strength,
Speech and desire toward action; all the shires
Wherein the force lies hidden of our faith
Are stirred and set on edge of present deed

And hope more imminent now of help to come
And work to do than ever ; not this time
We hang on trust in succour that comes short
By Philip's fault from Austrian John, whose death
Put widow's weeds on mine unwedded hope,
Late trothplight to his enterprise in vain
That was to set me free, but might not seal
The faith it pledged nor on the hand of hope
Make fast the ring that weds desire with deed
And promise with performance ; Parma stands
More fast now for us in his uncle's stead,
Albeit the lesser warrior, yet in place
More like to avail us, and in happier time
To do like service ; for my cousin of Guise,
His hand and league hold fast our kinsman king,
If not to bend and shape him for our use,
Yet so to govern as he may not thwart
Our forward undertaking till its force
Discharge itself on England : from no side
I see the shade of any fear to fail
As those before so baffled ; heart and hand
Our hope is armed with trust more strong than steel
And spirit to strike more helpful than a sword
In hands that lack the spirit ; and here to-day
It may be I shall look this hope in the eyes
And see her face transfigured. God is good ;
He will not fail his faith for ever. O,
That I were now in saddle ! Yet an hour,
And I shall be as young again as May
Whose life was come to August ; like this year,
I had grown past midway of my life, and sat
Heartsick of summer ; but new-mounted now
I shall ride right through shine and shade of spring
With heart and habit of a bride, and bear

A brow more bright than fortune. Truth it is,
Those words of bride and May should on my tongue
Sound now not merry, ring no joy-bells out
In ears of hope or memory; not for me
Have they been joyous words; but this fair day
All sounds that ring delight in fortunate ears
And words that make men thankful, even to me
Seem thankworthy for joy they have given me not
And hope which now they should not.

MARY BEATON

Nay, who knows?
The less they have given of joy, the more they may;
And they who have had their happiness before
Have hope not in the future; time o'erpast
And time to be have several ends, nor wear
One forward face and backward.

MARY STUART

God, I pray,
Turn thy good words to gospel, and make truth
Of their kind presage! but our Scotswomen
Would say, to be so joyous as I am,
Though I had cause, as surely cause I have,
Were no good warrant of good hope for me.
I never took such comfort of my trust
In Norfolk or Northumberland, nor looked
For such good end as now of all my fears
From all devices past of policy
To join my name with my misnatured son's
In handfast pledge with England's, ere my foes
His counsellors had flawed his craven faith
And moved my natural blood to cast me off
Who bore him in my body, to come forth

Less childlike than a changeling. But not long
Shall they find means by him to work their will,
Nor he bear head against me ; hope was his
To reign forsooth without my fellowship,
And he that with me would not shall not now
Without or with me wield not or divide
Or part or all of empire.

MARY BEATON

Dear my queen,
Vex not your mood with sudden change of thoughts ;
Your mind but now was merrier than the sun
Half rid by this through morning : we by noon
Should blithely mount and meet him.

MARY STUART

So I said.
My spirit is fallen again from that glad strength
Which even but now arrayed it ; yet what cause
Should dull the dancing measure in my blood
For doubt or wrath, I know not. Being once forth,
My heart again will quicken. [*Sings.*

And ye maun braid your yellow hair
And busk ye like a bride ;
Wi' sevenscore men to bring ye hame,
And ae true love beside ;
Between the birk and the green rowan
Fu' blithely shall ye ride.

O ye maun braid my yellow hair,
But braid it like nae bride ;
And I maun gang my ways, mither,
Wi' nae true love beside ;
Between the kirk and the kirkyard
Fu' sadly shall I ride.

How long since,
How long since was it last I heard or sang
Such light lost ends of old faint rhyme worn thin
With use of country songsters? When we twain
Were maidens but some twice a span's length high,
Thou hadst the happier memory to hold rhyme,
But not for songs the merrier.

MARY BEATON

This was one
That I would sing after my nurse, I think,
And weep upon in France at six years old
To think of Scotland.

MARY STUART

Would I weep for that,
Woman or child, I have had now years enough
To weep in; thou wast never French in heart,
Serving the queen of France. Poor queen that was,
Poor boy that played her bridegroom! now they seem
In these mine eyes that were her eyes as far
Beyond the reach and range of oldworld time
As their first fathers' graves.

Enter SIR AMYAS PAULET

PAULET

Madam, if now
It please you to set forth, the hour is full,
And there your horses ready.

MARY STUART

Sir, my thanks.
We are bounden to you and this goodly day

For no small comfort. Is it your will we ride
Accompanied with any for the nonce
Of our own household?

PAULET

If you will, to-day
Your secretaries have leave to ride with you.

MARY STUART

We keep some state then yet. I pray you, sir,
Doth he wait on you that came here last month,
A low-built lank-cheeked Judas-bearded man,
Lean, supple, grave, pock-pitten, yellow-polled,
A smiling fellow with a downcast eye?

PAULET

Madam, I know the man for none of mine.

MARY STUART

I give you joy as you should give God thanks,
Sir, if I err not; but meseemed this man
Found gracious entertainment here, and took
Such counsel with you as I surely thought
Spake him your friend, and honourable; but now
If I misread not an ambiguous word
It seems you know no more of him or less
Than Peter did, being questioned, of his Lord.

PAULET

I know not where the cause were to be sought
That might for likeness or unlikeness found

Make seemly way for such comparison
As turns such names to jest and bitterness;
Howbeit, as I denied not nor disclaimed
To know the man you speak of, yet I may
With very purity of truth profess
The man to be not of my following.

MARY STUART

See
How lightly may the tongue that thinks no ill
Or trip or slip, discoursing that or this
With grave good men in purity and truth,
And come to shame even with a word! God wot,
We had need put bit and bridle in our lips
Ere they take on them of their foolishness
To change wise words with wisdom. Come, sweet friend,
Let us go seek our kind with horse and hound
To keep us witless company; belike,
There shall we find our fellows.

[*Exeunt* MARY STUART *and* MARY BEATON.

PAULET

Would to God
This day had done its office! mine till then
Holds me the verier prisoner.

Enter PHILLIPPS

PHILLIPPS

She will go?

PAULET

Gladly, poor sinful fool ; more gladly, sir,
Than I go with her.

PHILLIPPS

Yet you go not far ;
She is come too near her end of wayfaring
To tire much more men's feet that follow.

PAULET

Ay.
She walks but half blind yet to the end ; even now
She spake of you, and questioned doubtfully
What here you came to do, or held what place
Or commerce with me : when you caught her eye,
It seems your courtesy by some graceless chance
Found but scant grace with her.

PHILLIPPS

'Tis mine own blame,
Or fault of mine own feature ; yet forsooth
I greatly covet not their gracious hap
Who have found or find most grace with her.
I pray,
Doth Wade go with you ?

PAULET

Nay,—what, know you not ?—
But with Sir Thomas Gorges, from the court,
To drive this deer at Tixall.

PHILLIPPS

Two years since,
He went, I think, commissioned from the queen
To treat with her at Sheffield?

PAULET

Ay, and since
She hath not seen him; who being known of here
Had haply given her swift suspicion edge
Or cause at least of wonder.

PHILLIPPS

And I doubt
His last year's entertainment oversea
As our queen's envoy to demand of France
Her traitor Morgan's body, whence he brought
Nought save dry blows back from the duke d'Aumale
And for that prisoner's quarters here to hang
His own not whole but beaten, should not much
Incline him to more good regard of her
For whose love's sake her friends have dealt with him
So honourably, nor she that knows of this
Be the less like to take his presence here
For no good presage to her: you have both done well
To keep his hand as close herein as mine.

PAULET

Sir, by my faith I know not, for myself,
What part is for mine honour, or wherein
Of all this action laid upon mine hand
The name and witness of a gentleman

May gain desert or credit, and increase
In seed and harvest of good men's esteem
For heritage to his heirs, that men unborn
Whose fame is as their name derived from his
May reap in reputation; and indeed
I look for none advancement in the world
Further than this that yet for no man's sake
Would I forego, to keep the name I have
And honour, which no son of mine shall say
I have left him not for any deed of mine
As perfect as my sire bequeathed it me:
I say, for any word or work yet past
No tongue can thus far tax me of decline
From that fair forthright way of gentleman,
Nor shall for any that I think to do
Or aught I think to say alive: howbeit,
I were much bounden to the man would say
But so much for me in our mistress' ear,
The treasurer's, or your master Walsingham's,
Whose office here I have undergone thus long
And had I leave more gladly would put off
Than ever I put on me; being not one
That out of love toward England even or God
At mightiest men's desire would lightly be
For loyalty disloyal, or approved
In trustless works a trusty traitor; this
He that should tell them of me, to procure
The speedier end here of this work imposed,
Should bind me to him more heartily than thanks
Might answer.

PHILLIPPS

Good Sir Amyas, you and I
Hold no such office in this dangerous time

As men make love to for their own name's sake
Or personal lust of honour ; but herein
I pray you yet take note, and pardon me
If I for the instance mix your name with mine,
That no man's private honour lies at gage,
Nor is the stake set here to play for less
Than what is more than all men's names alive,
The great life's gage of England ; in whose name
Lie all our own impledged, as all our lives
For her redemption forfeit, if the cause
Call once upon us ; not this gift or this,
Or what best likes us or were gladliest given
Or might most honourably be parted with
For our more credit on her best behalf,
Doth she we serve, this land that made us men,
Require of all her children ; but demands
Of our great duty toward her full deserts
Even all we have of honour or of life,
Of breath or fame to give her. What were I
Or what were you, being mean or nobly born,
Yet moulded both of one land's natural womb
And fashioned out of England, to deny
What gift she crave soever, choose and grudge
What grace we list to give or what withhold,
Refuse and reckon with her when she bids
Yield up forsooth not life but fame to come,
A good man's praise or gentleman's repute,
Or lineal pride of children, and the light
Of loyalty remembered ? which of these
Were worth our mother's death, or shame that might
Fall for one hour on England ? She must live
And keep in all men's sight her honour fast
Though all we die dishonoured ; and myself
Know not nor seek of men's report to know

If what I do to serve her till I die
Be honourable or shameful, and its end
Good in men's eyes or evil; but for God,
I find not why the name or fear of him
Herein should make me swerve or start aside
Through faint heart's falsehood as a broken bow
Snapped in his hand that bent it, ere the shaft
Find out his enemies' heart, and I that end
Whereto I am sped for service even of him
Who put this office on us.

PAULET

Truly, sir,
I lack the wordy wit to match with yours,
Who speak no more than soldier; this I know,
I am sick in spirit and heart to have in hand
Such work or such device of yours as yet
For fear and conscience of what worst may come
I dare not well bear through.

PHILLIPPS

Why, so last month
You writ my master word and me to boot
I had set you down a course for many things
You durst not put in execution, nor
Consign the packet to this lady's hand
That was returned from mine, seeing all was well,
And you should hold yourself most wretched man
If by your mean or order there should spring
Suspicion 'twixt the several messengers
Whose hands unwitting each of other ply
The same close trade for the same golden end,
While either holds his mate a faithful fool

And all their souls, baseborn or gently bred,
Are coined and stamped and minted for our use
And current in our service ; I thereon
To assuage your doubt and fortify your fear
Was posted hither, where by craft and pains
The web is wound up of our enterprise
And in our hands we hold her very heart
As fast as all this while we held impawned
The faith of Barnes that stood for Gifford here
To take what letters for his mistress came
From southward through the ambassador of France
And bear them to the brewer, your honest man,
Who wist no further of his fellowship
Than he of Gifford's, being as simple knaves
As knavish each in his simplicity,
And either serviceable alike, to shift
Between my master's hands and yours and mine
Her letters writ and answered to and fro ;
And all these faiths as weathertight and safe
As was the box that held those letters close
At bottom of the barrel, to give up
The charge there sealed and ciphered, and receive
A charge as great in peril and in price
To yield again, when they drew off the beer
That weekly served this lady's household whom
We have drained as dry of secrets drugged with death
As ever they this vessel, and return
To her own lips the dregs she brewed or we
For her to drink have tempered. What of this
Should seem so strange now to you, or distaste
So much the daintier palate of your thoughts,
That I should need reiterate you by word
The work of us o'erpast, or fill your ear
With long foregone recital, that at last

Your soul may start not or your sense recoil
To know what end we are come to, or what hope
We took in hand to cut this peril off
By what close mean soe'er and what foul hands
Unwashed of treason, which it yet mislikes
Your knightly palm to touch or close with, seeing
The grime of gold is baser than of blood
That barks their filthy fingers? yet with these
Must you cross hands and grapple, or let fall
The trust you took to treasure.

PAULET

Sir, I will,
Even till the queen take back that gave it; yet
Will not join hands with these, nor take on mine
The taint of their contagion; knowing no cause
That should confound or couple my good name
With theirs more hateful than the reek of hell.
You had these knaveries and these knaves in charge,
Not I that knew not how to handle them
Nor whom to choose for chief of treasons, him
That in mine ignorant eye, unused to read
The shameful scripture of such faces, bare
Graved on his smooth and simple cheek and brow
No token of a traitor; yet this boy,
This milk-mouthed weanling with his maiden chin,
This soft-lipped knave, late suckled as on blood
And nursed of poisonous nipples, have you not
Found false or feared by this, whom first you found
A trustier thief and worthier of his wage
Than I, poor man, had wit to find him? I,
That trust no changelings of the church of hell,
No babes reared priestlike at the paps of Rome,
Who have left the old harlot's deadly dugs drawn dry,

I lacked the craft to rate this knave of price,
Your smock-faced Gifford, at his worth aright,
Which now comes short of promise.

PHILLIPPS

O, not he;
Let not your knighthood for a slippery word
So much misdoubt his knaveship; here from France,
On hint of our suspicion in his ear
Half jestingly recorded, that his hand
Were set against us in one politic track
With his old yoke-fellows in craft and creed,
Betraying not them to us but ourselves to them,
My Gilbert writes me with such heat of hand
Such piteous protestation of his faith
So stuffed and swoln with burly-bellied oaths
And God and Christ confound him if he lie
And Jesus save him as he speaks mere truth,
My gracious godly priestling, that yourself
Must sure be moved to take his truth on trust
Or stand for him approved an atheist.

PAULET

Well,
That you find stuff of laughter in such gear
And mirth to make out of the godless mouth
Of such a twice-turned villain, for my part
I take in token of your certain trust,
And make therewith mine own assurance sure,
To see betimes an end of all such craft
As takes the faith forsworn of loud-tongued liars
And blasphemies of brothel-breathing knaves
To build its hope or break its jest upon;

And so commend you to your charge, and take
Mine own on me less gladly ; for by this
She should be girt to ride, as the old saw saith,
Out of God's blessing into the warm sun
And out of the warm sun into the pit
That men have dug before her, as herself
Had dug for England else a deeper grave
To hide our hope for ever : yet I would
This day and all that hang on it were done. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE III. *Before Tixall Park*

MARY STUART, MARY BEATON, PAULET, CURLE, NAU, *and Attendants*

MARY STUART

If I should never more back steed alive
But now had ridden hither this fair day
The last road ever I must ride on earth,
Yet would I praise it, saying of all days gone
And all roads ridden in sight of stars and sun
Since first I sprang to saddle, here at last
I had found no joyless end. These ways are smooth,
And all this land's face merry ; yet I find
The ways even therefore not so good to ride,
And all the land's face therefore less worth love,
Being smoother for a palfrey's maiden pace
And merrier than our moors for outlook ; nay,
I lie to say so ; there the wind and sun
Make madder mirth by midsummer, and fill
With broader breath and lustier length of light

The heartier hours that clothe for even and dawn
Our bosom-belted billowy-blossoming hills
Whose hearts break out in laughter like the sea
For miles of heaving heather. Ye should mock
My banished praise of Scotland ; and in faith
I praised it but to prick you on to praise
Of your own goodly land ; though field and wood
Be parked and parcelled to the sky's edge out,
And this green Stafford moorland smooth and strait
That we but now rode over, and by ours
Look pale for lack of large live mountain bloom
Wind-buffeted with morning, it should be
Worth praise of men whose lineal honour lives
In keeping here of history : but meseems
I have heard, Sir Amyas, of your liberal west
As of a land more affluent-souled than this
And fruitful-hearted as the south-wind ; here
I find a fair-faced change of temperate clime
From that bald hill-brow in a broad bare plain
Where winter laid us both his prisoners late
Fast by the feet at Tutbury ; but men say
Your birthright in this land is fallen more fair
In goodlier ground of heritage : perchance,
Grief to be now barred thence by mean of me,
Who less than you can help it or myself,
Makes you ride sad and sullen.

PAULET

Madam, no ;
I pray you lay not to my wilful charge
The blame or burden of discourtesy
That but the time should bear which lays on me
This weight of thoughts untimely.

MARY STUART

Nay, fair sir,
If I, that have no cause in life to seem
Glad of my sad life more than prisoners may,
Take comfort yet of sunshine, he methinks
That holds in ward my days and nights might well
Take no less pleasure of this broad blithe air
Than his poor charge that too much troubles him.
What, are we nigh the chase?

PAULET

Even hard at hand.

MARY STUART

Can I not see between the glittering leaves
Gleam the dun hides and flash the startled horns
That we must charge and scatter? Were I queen
And had a crown to wager on my hand,
Sir, I would set it on the chance to-day
To shoot a flight beyond you.

PAULET

Verily,
The hazard were too heavy for my skill:
I would not hold your wager.

MARY STUART

No! and why?

PAULET

For fear to come a bowshot short of you
On the left hand, unluckily.

MARY STUART

My friend,
Our keeper's wit-shaft is too keen for ours
To match its edge with pointless iron.—Sir,
Your tongue shoots further than my hand or eye
With sense or aim can follow.—Gilbert Curle,
Your heart yet halts behind this cry of hounds,
Hunting your own deer's trail at home, who lies
Now close in covert till her bearing-time
Be full to bring forth kindly fruit of kind
To love that yet lacks issue ; and in sooth
I blame you not to bid all sport go by
For one white doe's sake travailing, who myself
Think long till I may take within mine arm
The soft fawn suckling that is yeaned not yet
But is to make her mother. We must hold
A goodly christening feast with prisoner's cheer
And mirth enow for such a tender thing
As will not weep more to be born in bonds
Than babes born out of gaoler's ward, nor grudge
To find no friend more fortunate than I
Nor happier hand to welcome it, nor name
More prosperous than poor mine to wear, if God
Shall send the new-made mother's breast, for love
Of us that love his mother's maidenhood,
A maid to be my namechild, and in all
Save love to them that love her, by God's grace,
Most unlike me ; for whose unborn sweet sake
Pray you meantime be merry.—'Faith, methinks
Here be more huntsmen out afield to-day
And merrier than my guardian. Sir, look up ;
What think you of these riders?—All my friends,
Make on to meet them.

PAULET

There shall need no haste ;
They ride not slack or lamely.

MARY STUART

Now, fair sir,
What say you to my chance on wager? here
I think to outshoot your archery.—By my life,
That too must fail if hope now fail me ; these
That ride so far off yet, being come, shall bring
Death or deliverance. Prithee, speak but once ;
[*Aside to* MARY BEATON.
Say, these are they we looked for ; say, thou too
Hadst hope to meet them ; say, they should be here,
And I did well to look for them ; O God !
Say but I was not mad to hope ; see there ;
Speak, or I die.

MARY BEATON

Nay, not before they come.

MARY STUART

Dost thou not hear my heart? it speaks so loud
I can hear nothing of them. Yet I will not
Fail in mine enemy's sight. This is mine hour
That was to be for triumph ; God, I pray,
Stretch not its length out longer !

MARY BEATON

It is past.

Enter SIR THOMAS GORGES, SIR WILLIAM WADE, *and Soldiers*

MARY STUART

What man is this that stands across our way?

GORGES

One that hath warrant, madam, from the queen
To arrest your French and English secretary
And for more surety see yourself removed
To present ward at Tixall here hard by,
As in this paper stands of her subscribed.
Lay hands on them.

MARY STUART

Was this your riddle's word?
[*To* PAULET.
You have shot beyond me indeed, and shot to death
Your honour with my life.—Draw, sirs, and stand;
Ye have swords yet left to strike with once, and die
By these our foes are girt with. Some good friend—
I should have one yet left of you—take heart
And slay me here. For God's love, draw; they have not
So large a vantage of us we must needs
Bear back one foot from peril. Give not way;
Ye shall but die more shamefully than here
Who can but here die fighting. What, no man?
Must I find never at my need alive
A man with heart to help me? O, my God,
Let me die now and foil them! Paulet, you,
Most knightly liar and traitor, was not this
Part of your charge, to play my hangman too,

Who have played so well my doomsman, and betrayed
So honourably my trust, so bravely set
A snare so loyal to make sure for death
So poor a foolish woman? Sir, or you
That have this gallant office, great as his,
To do the deadliest errand and most vile
That even your mistress ever laid on man
And sent her basest knave to bear and slay,
You are likewise of her chivalry, and should not
Shrink to fulfil your title; being a knight,
For her dear sake that made you, lose not heart
To strike for her one worthy stroke, that may
Rid me defenceless of the loathed long life
She gapes for like a bloodhound. Nay, I find
A face beside you that should bear for me
Not life inscribed upon it; two years since
I read therein at Sheffield what good will
She bare toward me that sent to treat withal
So mean a man and shameless, by his tongue
To smite mine honour on the face, and turn
My name of queen to servant; by his hand
So let her turn my life's name now to death,
Which I would take more thankfully than shame
To plead and thus prevail not.

PAULET

Madam, no,
With us you may not in such suit prevail
Nor we by words or wrath of yours be moved
To turn their edge back on you, nor remit
The least part of our office, which deserves
Nor scorn of you nor wonder, whose own act
Has laid it on us; wherefore with less rage
Please you take thought now to submit yourself,

Even for your own more honour, to the effect
Whose cause was of your own device, that here
Bears fruit unlooked for; which being ripe in time
You cannot choose but taste of, nor may we
But do the season's bidding, and the queen's
Who weeps at heart to know it.—Disarm these men;
Take you the prisoners to your present ward
And hence again to London; here meanwhile
Some week or twain their lady must lie close
And with a patient or impatient heart
Expect an end and word of judgment: I
Must with Sir William back to Chartley straight
And there make inquisition ere day close
What secret serpents of what treasons hatched
May in this lady's papers lurk, whence we
Must pluck the fangs forth of them yet unfleshed,
And lay these plots like dead and strangled snakes
Naked before the council.

MARY STUART

I must go?

GORGES

Madam, no help; I pray your pardon.

MARY STUART

Ay?
Had I your pardon in this hand to give,
And here in this my vengeance—Words, and words!
God, for thy pity! what vile thing is this
That thou didst make of woman? even in death
As in the extremest evil of all our lives,
We can but curse or pray, but prate and weep,

And all our wrath is wind that works no wreck,
And all our fire as water. Noble sirs,
We are servants of your servants, and obey
The beck of your least groom; obsequiously,
We pray you but report of us so much,
Submit us to you. Yet would I take farewell,
May it not displease you, for old service' sake,
Of one my servant here that was, and now
Hath no word for me; yet I blame him not,
Who am past all help of man; God witness me,
I would not chide now, Gilbert, though my tongue
Had strength yet left for chiding, and its edge
Were yet a sword to smite with, or my wrath
A thing that babes might shrink at; only this
Take with you for your poor queen's true last word,
That if they let me live so long to see
The fair wife's face again from whose soft side,
Now labouring with your child, by violent hands
You are reft perforce for my sake, while I live
I will have charge of her more carefully
Than of mine own life's keeping, which indeed
I think not long to keep, nor care, God knows,
How soon or how men take it. Nay, good friend,
Weep not; my weeping time is wellnigh past,
And theirs whose eyes have too much wept for me
Should last no longer. Sirs, I give you thanks
For thus much grace and patience shown of you,
My gentle gaolers, towards a queen unqueened
Who shall nor get nor crave again of man
What grace may rest in him to give her. Come,
Bring me to bonds again, and her with me
That hath not stood so nigh me all these years
To fall ere life doth from my side, or take
Her way to death without me till I die.

ACT II

WALSINGHAM

Scene I. *Windsor Castle*

Queen Elizabeth *and* Sir Francis Walsingham

ELIZABETH

What will ye make me? Let the council know
I am yet their loving mistress, but they lay
Too strange a burden on my love who send
As to their servant word what ways to take,
What sentence of my subjects given subscribe
And in mine own name utter. Bid them wait;
Have I not patience? and was never quick
To teach my tongue the deadly word of death,
Lest one day strange tongues blot my fame with
blood;
The red addition of my sister's name
Shall brand not mine.

WALSINGHAM

God grant your mercy shown
Mark not your memory like a martyr's red
With pure imperial heart's-blood of your own

Shed through your own sweet-spirited height of heart
That held your hand from justice.

ELIZABETH

I would rather
Stand in God's sight so signed with mine own blood
Than with a sister's—innocent ; or indeed
Though guilty—being a sister's—might I choose,
As being a queen I may not surely—no—
I may not choose, you tell me.

WALSINGHAM

Nay, no man
Hath license of so large election given
As once to choose, being servant called of God,
If he will serve or no, or save the name
And slack the service.

ELIZABETH

Yea, but in his Word
I find no word that whets for king-killing
The sword kings bear for justice ; yet I doubt,
Being drawn, it may not choose but strike at root—
Being drawn to cut off treason. Walsingham,
You are more a statesman than a gospeller ;
Take for your tongue's text now no text of God's,
But what the devil has put into their lips
Who should have slain me ; nay, what by God's grace,
Who bared their purpose to us, through pain or fear
Hath been wrung thence of secrets writ in fire
At bottom of their hearts. Have they confessed?

WALSINGHAM

The twain trapped first in London.

ELIZABETH

What, the priest?
Their twice-turned Ballard, ha?

WALSINGHAM

Madam, not he.

ELIZABETH

God's blood! ye have spared not him the torment, knaves?
Of all I would not spare him.

WALSINGHAM

Verily, no;
The rack hath spun his life's thread out so fine
There is but left for death to slit in twain
The thickness of a spider's.

ELIZABETH

Ay, still dumb?

WALSINGHAM

Dumb for all good the pains can get of him;
Had he drunk dry the chalice of his craft
Brewed in design abhorred of even his friends
With poisonous purpose toward your majesty,
He had kept scarce harder silence.

ELIZABETH

Poison? ay—
That should be still the churchman's household sword
Or saintly staff to bruise crowned heads from far
And break them with his precious balms that smell
Rank as the jaws of death, or festal fume
When Rome yet reeked with Borgia; but the rest
Had grace enow to grant me for goodwill
Some death more gracious than a rat's? God wot,
I am bounden to them, and will charge for this
The hangman thank them heartily; they shall not
Lack daylight means to die by. God, meseems,
Will have me not die darkling like a dog,
Who hath kept my lips from poison and my heart
From shot of English knave or Spanish, both
Dubbed of the devil or damned his doctors, whom
My riddance from all ills that plague man's life
Should have made great in record; and for wage
Your Ballard hath not better hap to fee
Than Lopez had or Parry. Well, he lies
As dumb in bonds as those dead dogs in earth,
You say, but of his fellows newly ta'en
There are that keep not silence: what say these?
Pour in mine ears the poison of their plot
Whose fangs have stung the silly snakes to death.

WALSINGHAM

The first a soldier, Savage, in these wars
That sometime serving sought a traitor's luck
Under the prince Farnese, then of late
At Rheims was tempted of our traitors there,
Of one in chief, Gifford the seminarist,

My smock-faced spy's good uncle, to take off
Or the earl of Leicester or your gracious self;
And since his passage hither, to confirm
His hollow-hearted hardihood, hath had
Word from this doctor more solicitous yet
Sent by my knave his nephew, who of late
Was in the seminary of so deadly seed
Their reader in philosophy, that their head,
Even Cardinal Allen, holds for just and good
The purpose laid upon his hand; this man
Makes yet more large confession than of this,
Saying from our Gilbert's trusty mouth he had
Assurance that in Italy the Pope
Hath levies raised against us, to set forth
For seeming succour toward the Parmesan,
But in their actual aim bent hither, where
With French and Spaniards in one front of war
They might make in upon us; but from France
No foot shall pass for inroad on our peace
Till—so they phrase it—by these Catholics here
Your majesty be taken, or——

ELIZABETH

No more—
But only taken? springed but bird-like? Ha!
They are something tender of our poor personal chance—
Temperately tender: yet I doubt the springe
Had haply maimed me no less deep than life
Sits next the heart most mortal. Or—so be it
I slip the springe—what yet may shackle France,
Hang weights upon their purpose who should else
Be great of heart against us? They take time

Till I be taken—or till what signal else
As favourable?

WALSINGHAM

Till she they serve be brought
Safe out of Paulet's keeping.

ELIZABETH

Ay? they know him
So much my servant, and his guard so good,
That sound of strange feet marching on our soil
Against us in his prisoner's name perchance
Might from the walls wherein she sits his guest
Raise a funereal echo? Yet I think
He would not dare—what think'st thou might he dare
Without my word for warrant? If I knew
This——

WALSINGHAM

It should profit not your grace to know
What may not be conceivable for truth
Without some stain on honour.

ELIZABETH

Nay, I say not
That I would have him take upon his hand
More than his trust may warrant: yet have men,
Good men, for very truth of their good hearts
Put loyal hand to work as perilous—well,
God wot I would not have him so transgress–
If such be called transgressors.

WALSINGHAM

Let the queen
Rest well assured he shall not. So far forth
Our swordsman Savage witnesses of these
That moved him toward your murder but in trust
Thereby to bring invasion over sea:
Which one more gently natured of his birth,
Tichborne, protests with very show of truth
That he would give no ear to, knowing, he saith,
The miseries of such conquest: nor, it seems,
Heard this man aught of murderous purpose bent
Against your highness.

ELIZABETH

Naught? why then, again,
To him I am yet more bounden, who may think,
Being found but half my traitor, at my hands
To find but half a hangman.

WALSINGHAM

Nay, the man
Herein seems all but half his own man, being
Made merely out of stranger hearts and brains
Their engine of conspiracy; for thus
Forsooth he pleads, that Babington his friend
First showed him how himself was wrought upon
By one man's counsel and persuasion, one
Held of great judgment, Ballard, on whose head
All these lay all their forfeit.

ELIZABETH

Yet shall each
Pay for himself red coin of ransom down

In costlier drops than gold is. But of these
Why take we thought? their natural-subject blood
Can wash not out their sanguine-sealed attempt,
Nor leave us marked as tyrant: only she
That is the head and heart of all your fears
Whose hope or fear is England's, quick or dead,
Leaves or imperilled or impeached of blood
Me that with all but hazard of mine own,
God knows, would yet redeem her. I will write
With mine own hand to her privily,—what else?—
Saying, if by word as privy from her hand
She will confess her treasonous practices,
They shall be wrapped in silence up, and she
By judgment live unscathed.

WALSINGHAM

Being that she is,
So surely will she deem of your great grace,
And see it but as a snare set wide, or net
Spread in the bird's sight vainly.

ELIZABETH

Why, then, well:
She, casting off my grace, from all men's grace
Cuts off herself, and even aloud avows
By silence and suspect of jealous heart
Her manifest foul conscience: on which proof
I will proclaim her to the parliament
So self-convicted. Yet I would not have
Her name and life by mortal evidence
Touched at the trial of them that now shall die
Or by their charge attainted: lest myself
Fall in more peril of her friends than she
Stands yet in shot of judgment.

WALSINGHAM

Be assured,
Madam, the process of their treasons judged
Shall tax not her before her trial-time
With public note of clear complicity
Even for that danger's sake which moves you.

ELIZABETH

Me
So much it moves not for my mere life's sake
Which I would never buy with fear of death
As for the general danger's and the shame's
Thence cast on queenship and on womanhood
By mean of such a murderess. But, for them,
I would the merited manner of their death
Might for more note of terror be referred
To me and to my council: these at least
Shall hang for warning in the world's wide eye
More high than common traitors, with more pains
Being ravished forth of their more villainous lives
Than feed the general throat of justice. Her
Shall this too touch, whom none that serves hence-
forth
But shall be sure of hire more terrible
Than all past wage of treason.

WALSINGHAM

Why, so far
As law gives leave——

ELIZABETH

What prat'st thou me of law?
God's blood! is law for man's sake made, or man

For law's sake only, to be held in bonds,
Led lovingly like hound in huntsman's leash
Or child by finger, not for help or stay,
But hurt and hindrance? Is not all this land
And all its hope and surety given to time
Of sovereignty and freedom, all the fame
And all the fruit of manhood hence to be,
More than one rag or relic of its law
Wherewith all these lie shackled? as too sure
Have states no less than ours been done to death
With gentle counsel and soft-handed rule
For fear to snap one thread of ordinance
Though thence the state were strangled.

WALSINGHAM

Madam, yet
There need no need be here of law's least breach,
That of all else is worst necessity—
Being such a mortal medicine to the state
As poison drunk to expel a feverish taint
Which air or sleep might purge as easily.

ELIZABETH

Ay, but if air be poison-struck with plague
Or sleep to death lie palsied, fools were they,
Faint hearts and faithless, who for health's fair sake
Should fear to cleanse air, pierce and probe the trance,
With purging fire or iron. Have your way.
God send good end of all this, and procure
Some mean whereby mine enemies' craft and his
May take no feet but theirs in their own toils,
And no blood shed be innocent as mine.

SCENE II. *Chartley*

MARY BEATON *and* SIR AMYAS PAULET

PAULET

You should do well to bid her less be moved
Who needs fear less of evil. Since we came
Again from Tixall this wild mood of hers
Hath vexed her more than all men's enmities
Should move a heart more constant. Verily,
I thought she had held more rule upon herself
Than to call out on beggars at the gate
When she rode forth, crying she had nought to give,
Being all as much a beggar too as they,
With all things taken from her.

MARY BEATON

Being so served,
In sooth she should not show nor shame nor spleen :
It was but seventeen days ye held her there
Away from all attendance, as in bonds
Kept without change of raiment, and to find,
Being thence haled hither again, no nobler use,
But all her papers plundered—then her keys
By force of violent threat wrung from the hand
She scarce could stir to help herself abed :
These were no matters that should move her.

PAULET

None,
If she be clean of conscience, whole of heart,
Nor else than pure in purpose, but maligned

Of men's suspicions : how should one thus wronged
But hold all hard chance good to approve her case
Blameless, give praise for all, turn all to thanks
That might unload her of so sore a charge,
Despoiled not, but disburdened ? Her great wrath
Pleads hard against her, and itself spake loud
Alone, ere other witness might unseal
Wrath's fierce interpretation : which ere long
Was of her secretaries expounded.

MARY BEATON

Sir,
As you are honourable, and of equal heart
Have shown such grace as man being manful may
To such a piteous prisoner as desires
Nought now but what may hurt not loyalty
Though you comply therewith to comfort her,
Let her not think your spirit so far incensed
By wild words of her mistress cast on you
In heat of heart and bitter fire of spleen
That you should now close ears against a prayer
Which else might fairly find them open.

PAULET

Speak
More short and plainly : what I well may grant
Shall so seem easiest granted.

MARY BEATON

There should be
No cause I think to seal your lips up, though
I crave of them but so much breath as may
Give mine ear knowledge of the witness borne

(If aught of witness were against her borne)
By those her secretaries you spake of.

PAULET

This
With hard expostulation was drawn forth
At last of one and other, that they twain
Had writ by record from their lady's mouth
To Babington some letter which implies
Close conscience of his treason, and goodwill
To meet his service with complicity:
But one thing found therein of deadliest note
The Frenchman swore they set not down, nor she
Bade write one word of favour nor assent
Answering this murderous motion toward our queen:
Only, saith he, she held herself not bound
For love's sake to reveal it, and thereby
For love of enemies do to death such friends
As only for her own love's sake were found
Fit men for murderous treason: and so much
Her own hand's transcript of the word she sent
Should once produced bear witness of her.

MARY BEATON

Ay?
How then came this withholden?

PAULET

If she speak
But truth, why, truth should sure be manifest,
And shall, with God's good will, to good men's joy
That wish not evil: as at Fotheringay
When she shall come to trial must be tried
If it be truth or no: for which assay

You shall do toward her well and faithfully
To bid her presently prepare her soul
That it may there make answer.

MARY BEATON

Presently?

PAULET

Upon the arraignment of her friends who stand
As 'twere at point of execution now
Ere sentence pass upon them of their sin.
Would you no more with me?

MARY BEATON

I am bounden to you
For thus much tidings granted.

PAULET

So farewell. [*Exit.*

MARY BEATON

So fare I well or ill as one who knows
He shall not fare much further toward his end.
Here looms on me the landmark of my life
That I have looked for now some score of years
Even with long-suffering eagerness of heart
And a most hungry patience. I did know,
Yea, God, thou knowest I knew this all that while,
From that day forth when even these eyes beheld
Fall the most faithful head in all the world,
Toward her most loving and of me most loved,
By doom of hers that was so loved of him
He could not love me nor his life at all

Nor his own soul nor aught that all men love,
Nor could fear death nor very God, or care
If there were aught more merciful in heaven
Than love on earth had been to him. Chastelard!
I have not had the name upon my lips
That stands for sign of love the truest in man
Since first love made him sacrifice of men,
This long sad score of years retributive
Since it was cast out of her heart and mind
Who made it mean a dead thing; nor, I think,
Will she remember it before she die
More than in France the memories of old friends
Are like to have yet forgotten; but for me,
Haply thou knowest, so death not all be death,
If all these years I have had not in my mind
Through all these chances this one thought in all,
That I shall never leave her till she die.
Nor surely now shall I much longer serve
Who fain would lie down at her foot and sleep,
Fain, fain have done with waking. Yet my soul
Knows, and yet God knows, I would set not hand
To such a work as might put on the time
And make death's foot more forward for her sake:
Yea, were it to deliver mine own soul
From bondage and long-suffering of my life,
I would not set mine hand to work her wrong.
Tempted I was—but hath God need of me
To work his judgment, bring his time about,
Approve his justice if the word be just
That whoso doeth shall suffer his own deed,
Bear his own blow, to weep tears back for tears,
And bleed for bloodshed? God should spare me this
That once I held the one good hope on earth,
To be the mean and engine of her end

Or some least part at least therein : I prayed,
God, give me so much grace—who now should pray,
Tempt me not, God. My heart swelled once to know
I bore her death about me ; as I think
Indeed I bear it : but what need hath God
That I should clench his doom with craft of mine?
What needs the wrath of hot Elizabeth
Be blown aflame with mere past writing read,
Which hath to enkindle it higher already proof
Of present practice on her state and life?
Shall fear of death or love of England fail
Or memory faint or foresight fall stark blind,
That there should need the whet and spur of shame
To turn her spirit into some chafing snake's
And make its fang more feared for mortal? Yet
I am glad, and I repent me not, to know
I have the writing in my bosom sealed
That bears such matter with her own hand signed
As she that yet repents her not to have writ
Repents her not that she refrained to send
And fears not but long since it felt the fire—
Being fire itself to burn her, yet unquenched,
But in my hand here covered harmless up
Which had in charge to burn it. What perchance
Might then the reading of it have wrought for us,
If all this fiery poison of her scoffs
Making the foul froth of a serpent's tongue
More venomous, and more deadly toward her queen
Even Bess of Hardwick's bitterest babbling tales,
Had touched at heart the Tudor vein indeed?
Enough it yet were surely, though that vein
Were now the gentlest that such hearts may hold
And all doubt's trembling balance that way bent,
To turn as with one mortal grain cast in

The scale of grace against her life that writ
And weigh down pity deathward.

Enter MARY STUART

MARY STUART

Have we found
Such kindness of our keeper as may give
Some ease from expectation? or must hope
Still fret for ignorance how long here we stay
As men abiding judgment?

MARY BEATON

Now not long,
He tells me, need we think to tarry; since
The time and place of trial are set, next month
To hold it in the castle of Fotheringay.

MARY STUART

Why, he knows well I were full easily moved
To set forth hence; there must I find more scope
To commune with the ambassador of France
By letter thence to London: but, God help,
Think these folk truly, doth she verily think,
What never man durst yet nor woman dreamed,
May one that is nor man nor woman think,
To bring a queen born subject of no laws
Here in subjection of an alien law
By foreign force of judgment? Were she wise,
Might she not have me privily made away?
And being nor wise nor valiant but of tongue,
Could she find yet foolhardiness of heart

Enough to attaint the rule of royal rights
With murderous madness? I will think not this
Till it be proven indeed.

MARY BEATON

A month come round,
This man protests, will prove it.

MARY STUART

Ay! protests?
What protestation of what Protestant
Can unmake law that was of God's mouth made,
Unwrite the writing of the world, unsay
The general saying of ages? If I go,
Compelled of God's hand or constrained of man's,
Yet God shall bid me not nor man enforce
My tongue to plead before them for my life.
I had rather end as kings before me, die
Rather by shot or stroke of murderous hands,
Than so make answer once in face of man
As one brought forth to judgment. Are they mad,
And she most mad for envious heart of all,
To make so mean account of me? Methought,
When late we came back hither soiled and spent
And sick with travel, I had seen their worst of wrong
Full-faced, with its most outrage: when I found
My servant Curle's young new-delivered wife
Without priest's comfort and her babe unblessed
A nameless piteous thing born ere its time,
And took it from the mother's arms abed
And bade her have good comfort, since myself
Would take all charge against her husband laid

On mine own head to answer ; deeming not
Man ever durst bid answer for myself
On charge as mortal ; and mine almoner gone,
Did I not crave of Paulet for a grace
His chaplain might baptize me this poor babe,
And was denied it, and with mine own hands
For shame and charity moved to christen her
There with scant ritual in his heretic sight
By mine own woful name, whence God, I pray,
For her take off its presage? I misdeemed,
Who deemed all these and yet far more than these
For one born queen indignities enough,
On one crowned head enough of buffets : more
Hath time's hand laid upon me : yet I keep
Faith in one word I spake to Paulet, saying
Two things were mine though I stood spoiled of all
As of my letters and my privy coin
By pickpurse hands of office : these things yet
Might none take thievish hold upon to strip
His prisoner naked of her natural dower,
The blood yet royal running here unspilled
And that religion which I think to keep
Fast as this royal blood until I die.
So where at last and howsoe'er I fare
I need not much take thought, nor thou for love
Take of thy mistress pity ; yet meseems
They dare not work their open will on me :
But God's it is that shall be done, and I
Find end of all in quiet. I would sleep
On this strange news of thine, that being awake
I may the freshlier front my sense thereof
And thought of life or death. Come in with me.

SCENE III. *Tyburn*

A Crowd of Citizens

FIRST CITIZEN

Is not their hour yet on? Men say the queen
Bade spare no jot of torment in their end
That law might lay upon them.

SECOND CITIZEN

Truth it is,
To spare what scourge soe'er man's justice may
Twist for such caitiff traitors were to grieve
God's with mere inobservance. Hear you not
How yet the loud lewd braggarts of their side
Keep heart to threaten that for all this foil
They are not foiled indeed, but yet the work
Shall prosper with deliverance of their queen
And death for her of ours, though they should give
Of their own lives for one an hundredfold?

THIRD CITIZEN

These are bold mouths; one that shall die to-day,
Being this last week arraigned at Westminster,
Had no such heart, they say, to his defence,
Who was the main head of their treasons.

FIRST CITIZEN

Ay,
And yesterday, if truth belie not him,
Durst with his doomed hand write some word of prayer
To the queen's self, her very grace, to crave

Grace of her for his gracelessness, that she
Might work on one too tainted to deserve
A miracle of compassion, whence her fame
For pity of sins too great for pity of man
Might shine more glorious than his crime showed foul
In the eye of such a mercy.

SECOND CITIZEN

Yet men said
He spake at his arraignment soberly
With clear mild looks and gracious gesture, showing
The purport of his treasons in such wise
That it seemed pity of him to hear them, how
All their beginnings and proceedings had
First head and fountain only for their spring
From ill persuasions of that poisonous priest
Who stood the guiltiest near, by this man's side
Approved a valiant villain. Barnwell next,
Who came but late from Ireland here to court,
Made simply protestation of design
To work no personal ill against the queen
Nor paint rebellion's face as murder's red
With blood imperial: Tichborne then avowed
He knew the secret of their aim, and kept,
And held forsooth himself no traitor; yet
In the end would even plead guilty, Donne with him,
And Salisbury, who not less professed he still
Stood out against the killing of the queen,
And would not hurt her for a kingdom: so,
When thus all these had pleaded, one by one
Was each man bid say fairly, for his part,
Why sentence should not pass: and Ballard first,
Who had been so sorely racked he might not stand,

Spake, but as seems to none effect: of whom
Said Babington again, he set them on,
He first, and most of all him, who believed
This priest had power to assoil his soul alive
Of all else mortal treason: Ballard then,
As in sad scorn—*Yea, Master Babington,*
Quoth he, *lay all upon me, but I wish*
For you the shedding of my blood might be
The saving of your life: howbeit, for that,
Say what you will; and I will say no more.
Nor spake the swordsman Savage aught again,
Who, first arraigned, had first avowed his cause
Guilty: nor yet spake Tichborne aught: but Donne
Spake, and the same said Barnwell, each had sinned
For very conscience only: Salisbury last
Besought the queen remission of his guilt.
Then spake Sir Christopher Hatton for the rest
That sat with him commissioners, and showed
How by dark doctrine of the seminaries
And instance most of Ballard had been brought
To extreme destruction here of body and soul
A sort of brave youths otherwise endowed
With goodly gifts of birthright: and in fine
There was the sentence given that here even now
Shows seven for dead men in our present sight
And shall bring six to-morrow forth to die.

Enter BABINGTON, BALLARD (*carried in a chair*), TICHBORNE, SAVAGE, BARNWELL, TILNEY, *and* ABINGTON, *guarded: Sheriff, Executioner, Chaplain, &c.*

FIRST CITIZEN

What, will they speak?

SECOND CITIZEN

Ay; each hath leave in turn
To show what mood he dies in toward his cause.

BALLARD

Sirs, ye that stand to see us take our doom,
I being here given this grace to speak to you
Have but my word to witness for my soul,
That all I have done and all designed to do
Was only for advancement of true faith
To furtherance of religion: for myself
Aught would I never, but for Christ's dear church
Was mine intent all wholly, to redeem
Her sore affliction in this age and land,
As now may not be yet: which knowing for truth,
I am readier even at heart to die than live.
And dying I crave of all men pardon whom
My doings at all have touched, or who thereat
Take scandal; and forgiveness of the queen
If on this cause I have offended her.

SAVAGE

The like say I, that have no skill in speech,
But heart enough with faith at heart to die,
Seeing but for conscience and the common good,
And no preferment but this general weal,
I did attempt this business.

BARNWELL

I confess
That I, whose seed was of that hallowed earth

Whereof each pore hath sweated blood for Christ,
Had note of these men's drifts, which I deny
That ever I consented with or could
In conscience hold for lawful. That I came
To spy for them occasions in the court
And there being noted of her majesty
She seeing mine eyes peer sharply like a man's
That had such purpose as she wist before
Prayed God that all were well—if this were urged,
I might make answer, it was not unknown
To divers of the council that I there
Had matters to solicit of mine own
Which thither drew me then : yet I confess
That Babington, espying me thence returned,
Asked me what news : to whom again I told,
Her majesty had been abroad that day,
With all the circumstance I saw there. Now
If I have done her majesty offence
I crave her pardon : and assuredly
If this my body's sacrifice might yet
Establish her in true religion, here
Most willingly should this be offered up.

TILNEY

I came not here to reason of my faith,
But to die simply like a Catholic, praying
Christ give our queen Elizabeth long life,
And warning all youth born take heed by me.

ABINGTON

I likewise, and if aught I have erred in aught
I crave but pardon as for ignorant sin,

Holding at all points firm the Catholic faith ;
And all things charged against me I confess,
Save that I ever sought her highness' death :
In whose poor kingdom yet ere long I fear
Will be great bloodshed.

SHERIFF

Seest thou, Abington,
Here all these people present of thy kind
Whose blood shall be demanded at thy hands
If dying thou hide what might endanger them ?
Speak therefore, why or by what mortal mean
Should there be shed such blood ?

ABINGTON

All that I know
You have on record : take but this for sure,
This country lives for its iniquity
Loathed of all countries, and God loves it not.
Whereon I pray you trouble me no more
With questions of this world, but let me pray
And in mine own wise make my peace with God.

BABINGTON

For me, first head of all this enterprise,
I needs must make this record of myself,
I have not conspired for profit, but in trust
Of men's persuasions whence I stood assured
This work was lawful which I should have done
And meritorious as toward God ; for which
No less I crave forgiveness of my queen
And that my brother may possess my lands
In heritage else forfeit with my head.

TICHBORNE

Good countrymen and my dear friends, you look
For something to be said of me, that am
But an ill orator; and my text is worse.
Vain were it to make full discourse of all
This cause that brings me hither, which before
Was all made bare, and is well known to most
That have their eyes upon me: let me stand
For all young men, and most for those born high,
Their present warning here: a friend I had,
Ay, and a dear friend, one of whom I made
No small account, whose friendship for pure love
To this hath brought me: I may not deny
He told me all the matter, how set down,
And ready to be wrought; which always I
Held impious, and denied to deal therein:
But only for my friend's regard was I
Silent, and verified a saying in me,
Who so consented to him. Ere this thing chanced,
How brotherly we twain lived heart in heart
Together, in what flourishing estate,
This town well knows: of whom went all report
Through her loud length of Fleetstreet and the Strand
And all parts else that sound men's fortunate names,
But Babington and Tichborne? that therein
There was no haughtiest threshold found of force
To brave our entry; thus we lived our life,
And wanted nothing we might wish for: then,
For me, what less was in my head, God knows,
Than high state matters? Give me now but leave
Scarce to declare the miseries I sustained
Since I took knowledge of this action, whence

To his estate I well may liken mine,
Who could forbear not one forbidden thing
To enjoy all else afforded of the world :
The terror of my conscience hung on me ;
Who, taking heed what perils girt me, went
To Sir John Peters hence in Essex, there
Appointing that my horses by his mean
Should meet me here in London, whence I thought
To flee into the country : but being here
I heard how all was now bewrayed abroad :
Whence Adam-like we fled into the woods
And there were taken. My dear countrymen,
Albeit my sorrows well may be your joy,
Yet mix your smiles with tears : pity my case,
Who, born out of an house whose name descends
Even from two hundred years ere English earth
Felt Norman heel upon her, were it yet
Till this mishap of mine unspotted. Sirs,
I have a wife, and one sweet child : my wife,
My dear wife Agnes : and my grief is there ;
And for six sisters too left on my hand :
All my poor servants were dispersed, I know,
Upon their master's capture : all which things
Most heartily I sorrow for : and though
Nought might I less have merited at her hands,
Yet had I looked for pardon of my fault
From the queen's absolute grace and clemency ;
That the unexpired remainder of my years
Might in some sort have haply recompensed
This former guilt of mine whereof I die :
But seeing such fault may find not such release
Even of her utter mercies, heartily
I crave at least of her and all the world
Forgiveness, and to God commend my soul,

And to men's memory this my penitence
Till our death's record die from out the land.

FIRST CITIZEN

God pardon him! Stand back: what ail these knaves
To drive and thrust upon us? Help me, sir;
I thank you: hence we take them full in view:
Hath yet the hangman there his knife in hand?

ACT III

BURGHLEY

SCENE I. *The presence-chamber in Fotheringay Castle. At the upper end, a chair of state as for* QUEEN ELIZABETH ; *opposite, in the centre of the hall, a chair for* MARY STUART. *The Commissioners seated on either side along the wall: to the right, the Earls, with* LORD CHANCELLOR BROMLEY *and* LORD TREASURER BURGHLEY ; *to the left, the Barons, with the Knights of the Privy Council, among them* WALSINGHAM *and* PAULET ; POPHAM, EGERTON, *and* GAWDY, *as Counsel for the Crown. Enter* MARY STUART, *supported by* SIR ANDREW MELVILLE, *and takes her place.*

MARY STUART

HERE are full many men of counsel met ;
Not one for me. [*The Chancellor rises.*

BROMLEY

Madam, this court is held
To make strait inquisition as by law
Of what with grief of heart our queen has heard,
A plot upon her life, against the faith
Here in her kingdom stablished : on which cause

Our charge it is to exact your answer here
And put to proof your guilt or innocence.

MARY STUART (*rising*)

Sirs, whom by strange constraint I stand before,
My lords, and not my judges, since no law
Can hold to mortal judgment answerable
A princess free-born of all courts on earth,
I rise not here to make response as one
Responsible toward any for my life
Or of mine acts accountable to man,
Who see none higher save only God in heaven:
I am no natural subject of your land
That I should here plead as a criminal charged,
Nor in such wise appear I now: I came
On your queen's faith to seek in England help
By trothplight pledged me: where by promise-breach
I am even since then her prisoner held in ward:
Yet, understanding by report of you
Some certain things I know not of to be
Against me brought on record, by my will
I stand content to hear and answer these.

BROMLEY

Madam, there lives none born on earth so high
Who for this land's laws' breach within this land
Shall not stand answerable before those laws.

BURGHLEY

Let there be record of the prisoner's plea
And answer given such protest here set down,
And so proceed we to this present charge.

GAWDY

My lords, to unfold by length of circumstance
The model of this whole conspiracy
Should lay the pattern of all treasons bare
That ever brought high state in danger: this
No man there lives among us but hath heard,
How certain men of our queen's household folk
Being wrought on by persuasion of their priests
Drew late a bond between them, binding these
With others of their faith accomplices
Directed first of Anthony Babington
By mean of six for execution chosen
To slay the queen their mistress, and thereon
Make all her trustiest men of trust away;
As my lord treasurer Burghley present here,
Lord Hunsdon, and Sir Francis Walsingham,
And one that held in charge awhile agone
This lady now on trial, Sir Francis Knowles.
That she was hereto privy, to her power
Approving and abetting their device,
It shall not stand us in much need to show
Whose proofs are manifoldly manifest
On record written of their hands and hers.

MARY STUART

Of all this I know nothing: Babington
I have used for mine intelligencer, sent
With letters charged at need, but never yet
Spake with him, never writ him word of mine
As privy to these close conspiracies
Nor word of his had from him. Never came
One harmful thought upon me toward your queen,

Nor knowledge ever that of other hearts
Was harm designed against her. Proofs, ye say,
Forsooth ye hold to impeach me : I desire
But only to behold and handle them
If they in sooth of sense be tangible
More than mere air and shadow.

BURGHLEY

Let the clerk
Produce those letters writ from Babington.

MARY STUART

What then? it may be such were writ of him :
Be it proved that they came ever in my hands.
If Babington affirm so much, I say
He, or who else will say it, lies openly.

GAWDY

Here is the man's confession writ, and here
Ballard's the Jesuit, and the soldier's here,
Savage, that served with Parma.

MARY STUART

What of these?
Traitors they were, and traitor-like they lied.

GAWDY

And here the last her letter of response
Confirming and approving in each point
Their purpose, writ direct to Babington.

MARY STUART

My letter? none of mine it is: perchance
It may be in my cipher charactered,
But never came from or my tongue or hand:
I have sought mine own deliverance, and thereto
Solicited of my friends their natural help:
Yet certain whom I list not name there were,
Whose offers made of help to set me free
Receiving, yet I answered not a word.
Howbeit, desiring to divert the storm
Of persecution from the church, for this
To your queen's grace I have made most earnest suit:
But for mine own part I would purchase not
This kingdom with the meanest one man's death
In all its commonalty, much less the queen's.
Many there be have dangerously designed
Things that I knew not: yea, but very late
There came a letter to my hand which craved
My pardon if by enterprise of some
Were undertaken aught unknown of me:
A cipher lightly may one counterfeit,
As he that vaunted him of late in France
To be my son's base brother: and I fear
Lest this, for aught mine ignorance of it knows,
May be that secretary's fair handiwork
Who sits to judge me, and hath practised late,
I hear, against my son's life and mine own.
But I protest I have not so much as thought
Nor dreamed upon destruction of the queen:
I had rather spend most gladly mine own life
Than for my sake the Catholics should be thus
Afflicted only in very hate of me

And drawn to death so cruel as these tears
Gush newly forth to think of.

BURGHLEY

Here no man
Who hath showed himself true subject to the state
Was ever for religion done to death:
But some for treason, that against the queen
Upheld the pope's bull and authority.

MARY STUART

Yet have I heard it otherwise affirmed
And read in books set forth in print as much.

BURGHLEY

They that so write say too the queen hath here
Made forfeit of her royal dignity.

WALSINGHAM

Here I call God to record on my part
That personally or as a private man
I have done nought misbeseeming honesty,
Nor as I bear a public person's place
Done aught thereof unworthy. I confess
That, being right careful of the queen's estate
And safety of this realm, I have curiously
Searched out the practices against it: nay,
Herein had Ballard offered me his help,
I durst not have denied him; yea, I would
Have recompensed the pains he had taken. Say
I have practised aught with him, why did he not,
To save his life, reveal it?

MARY STUART

Pray you, sir,
Take no displeasure at me : truth it is
Report has found me of your dealings, blown
From lip to ear abroad, wherein myself
I put no credit : and could but desire
Yourself would all as little make account
Of slanders flung on me. Spies, sure, are men
Of doubtful credit, which dissemble things
Far other than they speak. Do not believe
That I gave ever or could give consent
Once to the queen's destruction : I would never,
These tears are bitter witness, never would
Make shipwreck of my soul by compassing
Destruction of my dearest sister.

GAWDY

This
Shall soon by witness be disproved : as here
Even by this letter from Charles Paget's hand
Transcribed, which Curle your secretary hath borne
Plain witness you received, touching a league
Betwixt Mendoza and Ballard, who conferred
Of this land's foreordained invasion, thence
To give you freedom.

MARY STUART

What of this ? ye shoot
Wide of the purpose : this approves not me
Consenting to the queen's destruction.

GAWDY

That
Stands proven enough by word of Babington
Who dying avowed it, and by letters passed
From him to you, whom he therein acclaims
As his most dread and sovereign lady and queen,
And by the way makes mention passingly
Of a plot laid by transference to convey
This kingdom to the Spaniard.

MARY STUART

I confess
There came a priest unto me, saying if I
Would not herein bear part I with my son
Alike should be debarred the inheritance :
His name ye shall not have of me : but this
Ye know, that openly the Spaniard lays
Claim to your kingdom, and to none will give
Place ever save to me.

BURGHLEY

Still stands the charge
On written witness of your secretaries
Great on all points against you.

MARY STUART

Wherefore then
Are not these writers with these writings brought
To outface me front to front? For Gilbert Curle,
He is in the Frenchman's hands a waxen toy,
Whom the other, once mine uncle's secretary,
The cardinal's of Lorraine, at his mere will

Moulds, turns, and tempers : being himself a knave
That may be hired or scared with peril or coin
To swear what thing men bid him. Truth again
Is this that I deny not, seeing myself
Against all right held fast in English ward,
I have sought all help where I might hope to find :
Which thing that I dispute not, let this be
The sign that I disclaim no jot of truth
In all objected to me. For the rest,
All majesty that moves in all the world
And all safe station of all princes born
Fall, as things unrespected, to the ground,
If on the testimony of secretaries
And on their writings merely these depend,
Being to their likeness thence debased : for me,
Nought I delivered to them but what first
Nature to me delivered, that I might
Recover yet at length my liberty.
I am not to be convicted save alone
By mine own word or writing. If these men
Have written toward the queen my sister's hurt
Aught, I wist nought of all such writ at all :
Let them be put to punishment : I am sure,
Were these here present, they by testimony
Would bring me clear of blame.

CAWDY

Yet by their mean
They could not in excuse of you deny
That letters of communion to and fro
Have passed between you and the Spaniard, whence
What should have come on England and the queen
These both well know, and with what messages

Were English exiles entertained of you
By mean of these men, of your secretaries,
Confirmed and cherished in conspiracy
For this her kingdom's overthrow: in France
Paget and Morgan, traitors in design
Of one close mind with you, and in your name
Cheered hence for constant service.

MARY STUART

That I sought
Comfort and furtherance of all Catholic states
By what mean found soever just and good,
Your mistress from myself had note long since
And open warning: uncompelled I made
Avowal of such my righteous purpose, nor
In aught may disavow it. Of these late plots
No proof is here to attaint mine innocence,
Who dare all proof against me: Babington
I know not of, nor Ballard, nor their works,
But kings my kinsmen, powers that serve the church,
These I confess my comforters, in hope
Held fast of their alliance. Yet again
I challenge in the witness of my words
The notes writ of these letters here alleged
In mine own hand: if these ye bring not forth,
Judge all good men if I be not condemned
In all your hearts already, who perchance
For all this pageant held of lawless law
Have bound yourselves by pledge to speak me dead:
But I would have you look into your souls,
Remembering how the theatre of the world
Is wider, in whose eye ye are judged that judge,
Than this one realm of England.

BURGHLEY

Toward that realm
Suffice it here that, madam, you stand charged
With deadly purpose : being of proven intent
To have your son conveyed to Spain, and give
The title you pretend upon our crown
Up with his wardship to King Philip.

MARY STUART

Nay,
I have no kingdom left to assign, nor crown
Whereof to make conveyance : yet is this
But lawful, that of all things which are mine
I may dispose at pleasure, and to none
Stand on such count accountable.

BURGHLEY

So be it
So far as may be : but your ciphers sent
By Curle's plain testimony to Babington,
To the lord Lodovic, and to Fernihurst,
Once provost on your part in Edinburgh
By mean of Grange your friend his father-in-law,
Speak not but as with tongue imperial, nor
Of import less than kingdoms.

MARY STUART

Surely, sir,
Such have I writ, and many ; nor therein
Beyond my birth have trespassed, to commend
That lord you speak of, and another, both
My friends in faith, to a cardinal's dignity,
And that, I trust, without offence : except

It be not held as lawful on my part
To commune with the chiefest of my creed
By written word on matters of mine own
As for your queen with churchfolk of her kind.

BURGHLEY

Well were it, madam, that with some of yours
You had held less close communion : since by proof
Reiterated from those your secretaries
It seems you know right well that Morgan, who
Sent Parry privily to despatch the queen,
And have assigned him annual pension.

MARY STUART

This
I know not, whether or no your charge be truth,
But I do know this Morgan hath lost all
For my sake, and in honour sure I am
That rather to relieve him I stand bound
Than to revenge an injury done your queen
By one that lives my friend, and hath deserved
Well at mine hands : yet, being not bound to this,
I did affright the man from such attempts
Of crimes against her, who contrariwise
Hath out of England openly assigned
Pensions to Gray my traitor, and the Scots
Mine adversaries, as also to my son,
To hire him to forsake me.

BURGHLEY

Nay, but seeing
By negligence of them that steered the state
The revenues of Scotland sore impaired

Somewhat in bounty did her grace bestow
Upon your son the king, her kinsman: whom
She would not, being to her so near of blood,
Forget from charity. No such help it was
Nor no such honest service that your friends
Designed you, who by letters hither writ
To Paget and Mendoza sent as here
Large proffers of strange aid from oversea
To right you by her ruin.

MARY STUART

Here was nought
Aimed for your queen's destruction: nor is this
Against me to be charged, that foreign friends
Should labour for my liberty. Thus much
At sundry times I have signified aloud
By open message to her, that I would still
Seek mine own freedom. Who shall bar me this?
Who tax me with unreason, that I sent
Unjust conditions on my part to be
To her propounded, which now many times
Have alway found rejection? yea, when even
For hostages I proffered in my stead
To be delivered up with mine own son
The duke of Guise's, both to stand in pledge
That nor your queen nor kingdom should through me
Take aught of damage; so that hence by proof
I see myself utterly from all hope
Already barred of freedom. But I now
Am dealt with most unworthily, whose fame
And honourable repute are called in doubt
Before such foreign men of law as may

By miserable conclusions of their craft
Draw every thin and shallow circumstance
Out into compass of a consequence :
Whereas the anointed heads and consecrate
Of princes are not subject to such laws
As private men are. Next, whereas ye are given
Authority but to look such matters through
As tend to the hurt of your queen's person, yet
Here is the cause so handled, and so far
Here are my letters wrested, that the faith
Which I profess, the immunity and state
Of foreign princes, and their private right
Of mutual speech by word reciprocate
From royal hand to royal, all in one
Are called in question, and myself by force
Brought down beneath my kingly dignity
And made to appear before a judgment-seat
As one held guilty ; to none end but this,
All to none other purpose but that I
Might from all natural favour of the queen
Be quite excluded, and my right cut off
From claim hereditary : whereas I stand
Here of mine own goodwill to clear myself
Of all objected to me, lest I seem
To have aught neglected in the full defence
Of mine own innocency and honour. This
Would I bring likewise in your minds, how once
This queen herself of yours, Elizabeth,
Was drawn in question of conspiracy
That Wyatt raised against her sister, yet
Ye know she was most innocent. For me,
With very heart's religion I affirm,
Though I desire the Catholics here might stand
Assured of safety, this I would not yet

Buy with the blood and death of any one.
And on mine own part rather would I play
Esther than Judith ; for the people's sake
To God make intercession, than deprive
The meanest of the people born of life.
Mine enemies have made broad report aloud
That I was irreligious : yet the time
Has been I would have learnt the faith ye hold,
But none would suffer me, for all I sought,
To find such teaching at your teachers' hands ;
As though they cared not what my soul became.
And now at last, when all ye can ye have done
Against me, and have barred me from my right,
Ye may chance fail yet of your cause and hope.
To God and to the princes of my kin
I make again appeal, from you again
Record my protestation, and reject
All judgment of your court : I had rather die
Thus undishonoured, even a thousand deaths,
Than so bring down the height of majesty ;
Yea, and thereby confess myself as bound
By all the laws of England, even in faith
Of things religious, who could never learn
What manner of laws these were : I am destitute
Of counsellors, and who shall be my peers
To judge my cause through and give doom thereon
I am ignorant wholly, being an absolute queen,
And will do nought which may impair that state
In me nor other princes, nor my son ;
Since yet my mind is not dejected, nor
Will I sink under my calamity.
My notes are taken from me, and no man
Dares but step forth to be my advocate.
I am clear from all crime done against the queen,

I have stirred not up one man against her: yet,
Albeit of many dangers overpast
I have thoroughly forewarned her, still I found
No credit, but have always been contemned,
Though nearest to her in blood allied. When late
Ye made association, and thereon
An act against their lives on whose behalf,
Though innocent even as ignorance of it, aught
Might be contrived to endangering of the queen
From foreign force abroad, or privy plots
At home of close rebellion, I foresaw
That, whatsoever of peril so might rise
Or more than all this for religion's sake,
My many mortal enemies in her court
Should lay upon me all the charge, and I
Bear the whole blame of all men. Certainly,
I well might take it hardly, nor without
High cause, that such confederacy was made
With mine own son, and I not knowing: but this
I speak not of, being not so grieved thereat
As that mine own dear sister, that the queen,
Is misinformed of me, and I, now kept
These many years in so strait prison, and grown
Lame of my limbs, have lien neglected, nor
For all most reasonable conditions made
Or proffered to redeem my liberty
Found audience or acceptance: and at last
Here am I set with none to plead for me.
But this I pray, that on this matter of mine
Another meeting there be kept, and I
Be granted on my part an advocate
To hold my cause up; or that seeing ye know
I am a princess, I may be believed
By mine own word, being princely: for should I

Stand to your judgment, who most plainly I see
Are armed against me strong in prejudice,
It were mine extreme folly : more than this,
That ever I came to England in such trust
As of the plighted friendship of your queen
And comfort of her promise. Look, my lords,
Here on this ring : her pledge of love was this
And surety sent me when I lay in bonds
Of mine own rebels once : regard it well :
In trust of this I came amongst you : none
But sees what faith I have found to keep this trust.

BURGHLEY

Whereas I bear a double person, being
Commissioner first, then counsellor in this cause,
From me as from the queen's commissioner here
Receive a few words first. Your protest made
Is now on record, and a transcript of it
Shall be delivered you. To us is given
Under the queen's hand our authority, whence
Is no appeal, this grant being ratified
With the great seal of England ; nor are we
With prejudice come hither, but to judge
By the straight rule of justice. On their part,
These the queen's learned counsel here in place
Do level at nothing else but that the truth
May come to light, how far you have made offence
Against the person of the queen. To us
Full power is given to hear and diligently
Examine all the matter, though yourself
Were absent : yet for this did we desire
To have your presence here, lest we might seem
To have derogated from your honour : nor

Designed to object against you anything
But what you knew of, or took part therein,
Against the queen's life bent. For this were these
Your letters brought in question, but to unfold
Your aim against her person, and therewith
All matters to it belonging ; which perforce
Are so with other matters interlaced
As none may sever them. Hence was there need
Set all these forth, not parcels here and there,
Whose circumstances do the assurance give
Upon what points you dealt with Babington.

MARY STUART

The circumstances haply may find proof,
But the fact never. Mine integrity
Nor on the memory nor the credit hangs
Of these my secretaries, albeit I know
They are men of honest hearts : yet if they have
Confessed in fear of torture anything
Or hope of guerdon and impunity,
It may not be admitted, for just cause,
Which I will otherwhere allege. Men's minds
Are with affections diversly distraught
And borne about of passion : nor would these
Have ever avowed such things against me, save
For their own hope and profit. Letters may
Toward other hands be outwardly addressed
Than they were writ for : yea, and many times
Have many things been privily slipped in mine
Which from my tongue came never. Were I not
Reft of my papers, and my secretary
Kept from me, better might I then confute
These things cast up against me.

BURGHLEY

But there shall
Be nothing brought against you save what last
Stands charged, even since the nineteenth day of June:
Nor would your papers here avail you, seeing
Your secretaries, and Babington himself,
Being of the rack unquestioned, have affirmed
You sent those letters to him; which though yourself
Deny, yet whether more belief should here
On affirmation or negation hang
Let the commissioners judge. But, to come back,
This next I tell you as a counsellor,
Time after time you have put forth many things
Propounded for your freedom; that all these
Have fallen all profitless, 'tis long of you,
And of the Scots; in no wise of the queen.
For first the lords of Scotland, being required,
Flatly refused, to render up the king
In hostage: and when treaty last was held
Upon your freedom, then was Parry sent
By your dependant Morgan privily
To make the queen away by murder.

MARY STUART

Ah!
You are my adversary.

BURGHLEY

Yea, surely I am
To the queen's adversaries an adversary.
But now hereof enough: let us proceed
Henceforth to proofs.

MARY STUART

I will not hear them.

BURGHLEY

Yet
Hear them will we.

MARY STUART

And in another place
I too will hear them, and defend myself.

GAWDY

First let your letters to Charles Paget speak,
Wherein you show him there is none other way
For Spain to bring the Netherlands again
To the old obedience, but by setting up
A prince in England that might help his cause:
Then to Lord Paget, to bring hastilier
His forces up for help to invade this land:
And Cardinal Allen's letter, hailing you
His most dread sovereign lady, and signifying
The matter to the prince of Parma's care
To be commended.

MARY STUART

I am so sore beset
I know not how by point and circumstance
To meet your manifold impeachments: this
I see through all this charge for evil truth,
That Babington and my two secretaries
Have even to excuse themselves accused me: yet,

As touching their conspiracy, this I say,
Of those six men for execution chosen
I never heard : and all the rest is nought
To this pretended purpose of your charge.
For Cardinal Allen, whatsoe'er he have writ,
I hold him for a reverend prelate, so
To be esteemed, no more : none save the Pope
Will I acknowledge for the church's head
And sovereign thence on thought or spirit of mine :
But in what rank and place I stand esteemed
Of him and foreign princes through the world
I know not : neither can I hinder them
By letters writ of their own hearts and hands
To hail me queen of England. As for those
Whose duty and plain allegiance sworn to me
Stands flawed in all men's sight, my secretaries,
These merit no belief. They which have once
Forsworn themselves, albeit they swear again
With oaths and protestations ne'er so great,
Are not to be believed. Nor may these men
By what sworn oath soever hold them bound
In court of conscience, seeing they have sworn to me
Their secrecy and fidelity before,
And are no subjects of this country. Nau
Hath many times writ other than I bade,
And Curle sets down whate'er Nau bids him write ;
But for my part I am ready in all to bear
The burden of their fault, save what may lay
A blot upon mine honour. Haply too
These things did they confess to save themselves ;
Supposing their avowal could hurt not me,
Who, being a queen, they thought, good ignorant men,
More favourably must needs be dealt withal.

For Ballard, I ne'er heard of any such,
But of one Hallard once that proffered me
Such help as I would none of, knowing this man
Had vowed his service too to Walsingham.

GAWDY

Next, from your letters to Mendoza, writ
By Curle, as freely his confession shows,
In privy cipher, take these few brief notes
For perfect witness of your full design.
You find yourself, the Spaniard hears thereby,
Sore troubled what best course to take anew
For your affairs this side the sea, whereon
Charles Paget hath a charge to impart from you
Some certain overtures to Spain and him
In your behalf, whom you desire with prayer
Show freely what he thinks may be obtained
Thus from the king his master. One point more
Have you reserved thereon depending, which
On your behalf you charge him send the king
Some secret word concerning, no man else,
If this be possible, being privy to it:
Even this, that seeing your son's great obstinacy
In heresy, and foreseeing too sure thereon
Most imminent danger and harm thence like to ensue
To the Catholic church, he coming to bear rule
Within this kingdom, you are resolved at heart
In case your son be not reduced again
To the Catholic faith before your death, whereof
Plainly you say small hope is yours so long
As he shall bide in Scotland, to give up
To that said king, and grant in absolute right,
Your claim upon succession to this crown,

By your last will made ; praying him on this cause
From that time forth wholly to take yourself
Into his keeping, and therewith the state
And charge of all this country : which, you say,
You cannot for discharge of conscience think
That you could put into a prince's hands
More zealous for your faith, and abler found
To build it strong upon this side again,
Even as through all parts else of Christendom.
But this let silence keep in secret, lest
Being known it be your dowry's loss in France,
And open breach in Scotland with your son,
And in this realm of England utterly
Your ruin and destruction. On your part
Next is he bidden thank his lord the king
For liberal grace and sovereign favour shown
Lord Paget and his brother, which you pray him
Most earnestly to increase, and gratify
Poor Morgan with some pension for your sake
Who hath not for your sake only endured so much
But for the common cause. Likewise, and last,
Is one he knows commended to his charge
With some more full supply to be sustained
Than the entertainment that yourself allot
According to the little means you have.

BURGHLEY

Hereon stands proof apparent of that charge
Which you but now put by, that you design
To give your right supposed upon this realm
Into the Spaniard's hold ; and on that cause
Lie now at Rome Allen and Parsons, men
Your servants and our traitors.

MARY STUART

No such proof
Lives but by witness of revolted men,
My traitors and your helpers ; who to me
Have broken their allegiance bound by oath.
When being a prisoner clothed about with cares
I languished out of hope of liberty,
Nor yet saw hope to effect of those things aught
Which many and many looked for at my hands,
Declining now through age and sickness, this
To some seemed good, even for religion's sake,
That the succession here of the English crown
Should or be stablished in the Spanish king
Or in some English Catholic. And a book
Was sent to me to avow the Spaniard's claim ;
Which being of me allowed not, some there were
In whose displeasure thence I fell ; but now
Seeing all my hope in England desperate grown,
I am fully minded to reject no aid
Abroad, but resolute to receive it.

WALSINGHAM

Sirs,
Bethink you, were the kingdom so conveyed,
What should become of you and all of yours,
Estates and honours and posterities,
Being to such hands delivered.

BURGHLEY

Nay, but these
In no such wise can be conveyed away
By personal will, but by successive right
Still must descend in heritage of law.

Whereto your own words witness, saying if this
Were blown abroad your cause were utterly
Lost in all hearts of English friends. Therein
Your thoughts hit right: for here in all men's minds
That are not mad with envying at the truth
Death were no loathlier than a stranger king.
If you would any more, speak: if not aught,
This cause is ended.

MARY STUART

I require again
Before a full and open parliament
Hearing, or speech in person with the queen,
Who shall, I hope, have of a queen regard,
And with the council. So, in trust hereof,
I crave a word with some of you apart,
And of this main assembly take farewell.

ACT IV

ELIZABETH

Scene I. *Richmond*

Walsingham *and* Davison

WALSINGHAM

It is God's wrath, too sure, that holds her hand;
His plague upon this people, to preserve
By her sole mean her deadliest enemy, known
By proof more potent than approof of law
In all points guilty, but on more than all
Toward all this country dangerous. To take off
From the court held last month at Fotheringay
Authority with so full commission given
To pass upon her judgment—suddenly
Cut short by message of some three lines writ
With hurrying hand at midnight, and despatched
To maim its work upon the second day,
What else may this be in so wise a queen
But madness, as a brand to sear the brain
Of one by God infatuate? yea, and now
That she receives the French ambassador
With one more special envoy from his king,
Except their message touch her spleen with fire

And so undo itself, we cannot tell
What doubt may work upon her. Had we but
Some sign more evident of some private seal
Confirming toward her by more personal proof
The Scottish queen's inveteracy, for this
As for our country plucked from imminent death
We might thank God : but with such gracious words
Of piteous challenge and imperial plea
She hath wrought by letter on our mistress' mind,
We may not think her judgment so could slip,
Borne down with passion or forgetfulness,
As to leave bare her bitter root of heart
And core of evil will there labouring.

DAVISON

Yet
I see no shade of other surety cast
From any sign of likelihood. It were
Not shameful more than dangerous, though she bade,
To have her prisoner privily made away ;
Yet stands the queen's heart wellnigh fixed hereon
When aught may seem to fix it ; then as fast
Wavers, but veers to that bad point again
Whence blowing the wind blows down her honour,
nor
Brings surety of life with fame's destruction.

WALSINGHAM

Ay,
We are no Catholic keepers, and his charge
Need fear no poison in our watch-dog's fang,
Though he show honest teeth at her, to threat
Thieves' hands with loyal danger.

Enter QUEEN ELIZABETH, *attended by* BURGHLEY, LEICESTER, HUNSDON, HATTON, *and others of the Council*

ELIZABETH

No, my lords,
We are not so weak of wit as men that need
Be counselled of their enemies. Blame us not
That we accuse your friendship on this cause
Of too much fearfulness: France we will hear,
Nor doubt but France shall hear us all as loud
As friend or foe may threaten or protest,
Of our own heart advised, and resolute more
Than hearts that need men's counsel. Bid them in.

Enter CHÂTEAUNEUF *and* BELLIÈVRE, *attended*

From our fair cousin of France what message, sirs?

BELLIÈVRE

I, madam, have in special charge to lay
The king's mind open to your majesty,
Which gives my tongue first leave of speech more free
Than from a common envoy. Sure it is,
No man more grieves at what his heart abhors,
The counsels of your highness' enemies,
Than doth the king of France: wherein how far
The queen your prisoner have borne part, or may
Seem of their works partaker, he can judge
Nought: but much less the king may understand
What men may stand accusers, who rise up
Judge in so great a matter. Men of law

May lay their charges on a subject : but
The queen of Scotland, dowager queen of France,
And sister made by wedlock to the king,
To none being subject, can be judged of none
Without such violence done on rule as breaks
Prerogative of princes. Nor may man
That looks upon your present majesty
In such clear wise apparent, and retains
Remembrance of your name through all the world
For virtuous wisdom, bring his mind to think
That England's royal-souled Elizabeth,
Being set so high in fame, can so forget
Wise Plato's word, that common souls are wrought
Out of dull iron and slow lead, but kings
Of gold untempered with so vile alloy
As makes all metal up of meaner men.
But say this were not thus, and all men's awe
Were from all time toward kingship merely vain,
And state no more worth reverence, yet the plea
Were nought which here your ministers pretend,
That while the queen of Scots lives you may live
No day that knows not danger. Were she dead,
Rather might then your peril wax indeed
To shape and sense of heavier portent, whom
The Catholic states now threat not, nor your land,
For this queen's love, but rather for their faith's,
Whose cause, were she by violent hand removed,
Could be but furthered, and its enterprise
Put on more strong and prosperous pretext ; yea,
You shall but draw the invasion on this land
Whose threat you so may think to stay, and bring
Imminence down of inroad. Thus far forth
The queen of Scots hath for your person been
Even as a targe or buckler which has caught

All intercepted shafts against your state
Shot, or a stone held fast within your hand,
Which, if you cast it thence in fear or wrath
To smite your adversary, is cast away,
And no mean left therein for menace. If
You lay but hand upon her life, albeit
There were that counselled this, her death will make
Your enemies weapons of their own despair
And give their whetted wrath excuse and edge
More plausibly to strike more perilously.
Your grace is known for strong in foresight: we
These nineteen years of your wise reign have kept
Fast watch in France upon you: of those claims
Which lineally this queen here prisoner may
Put forth on your succession have you made
The stoutest rampire of your rule: and this
Is grown a byword with us, that their cause
Who shift the base whereon their policies lean
Bows down toward ruin: and of loyal heart
This will I tell you, madam, which hath been
Given me for truth assured of one whose place
Affirms him honourable, how openly
A certain prince's minister that well
May stand in your suspicion says abroad
That for his master's greatness it were good
The queen of Scots were lost already, seeing
He is well assured the Catholics here should then
All wholly range them on his master's part.
Thus long hath reigned your highness happily,
Who have loved fair temperance more than violence:
now,
While honour bids have mercy, wisdom holds
Equal at least the scales of interest. Think
What name shall yours be found in time far hence,

Even as you deal with her that in your hand
Lies not more subject than your fame to come
In men's repute that shall be. Bid her live,
And ever shall my lord stand bound to you
And you for ever firm in praise of men.

ELIZABETH

I am sorry, sir, you are hither come from France
Upon no better errand. I appeal
To God for judge between my cause and hers
Whom here you stand for. In this realm of mine
The queen of Scots sought shelter, and therein
Hath never found but kindness ; for which grace
In recompense she hath three times sought my life.
No grief that on this head yet ever fell
Shook ever from mine eyes so many a tear
As this last plot upon it. I have read
As deep I doubt me in as many books
As any queen or prince in Christendom,
Yet never chanced on aught so strange and sad
As this my state's calamity. Mine own life
Is by mere nature precious to myself,
And in mine own realm I can live not safe.
I am a poor lone woman, girt about
With secret enemies that perpetually
Lay wait for me to kill me. From your king
Why have not I my traitor to my hands
Delivered up, who now this second time
Hath sought to slay me, Morgan? On my part,
Had mine own cousin Hunsdon here conspired
Against the French king's life, he had found not so
Refuge of me, nor even for kindred's sake

From the edge of law protection : and this cause
Needs present evidence of this man's mouth.

BELLIÈVRE

Madam, there stand against the queen of Scots
Already here in England on this charge
So many and they so dangerous witnesses
No need can be to bring one over more :
Nor can the king show such unnatural heart
As to send hither a knife for enemies' hands
To cut his sister's throat. Most earnestly
My lord expects your resolution : which
If we receive as given against his plea,
I must crave leave to part for Paris hence.
Yet give me pardon first if yet once more
I pray your highness be assured, and so
Take heed in season, you shall find this queen
More dangerous dead than living. Spare her life,
And not my lord alone but all that reign
Shall be your sureties in all Christian lands
Against all scathe of all conspiracies
Made on her party : while such remedies' ends
As physic states with bloodshedding, to cure
Danger by death, bring fresh calamities
Far oftener forth than the old are healed of them
Which so men thought to medicine. To refrain
From that red-handed way of rule, and set
Justice no higher than mercy sits beside,
Is the first mean of kings' prosperity
That would reign long : nor will my lord believe
Your highness could put off yourself so much
As to reverse and tread upon the law
That you thus long have kept and honourably :

But should this perilous purpose hold right on,
I am bounden by my charge to say, the king
Will not regard as liable to your laws
A queen's imperial person, nor will hold
Her death as but the general wrong of kings
And no more his than as his brethren's all,
But as his own and special injury done,
More than to these injurious.

ELIZABETH

Doth your lord
Bid you speak thus?

BELLIÈVRE

Ay, madam: from his mouth
Had I command what speech to use.

ELIZABETH

You have done
Better to speak than he to send it. Sir,
You shall not presently depart this land
As one denied of mere discourtesy.
I will return an envoy of mine own
To speak for me at Paris with the king.
You shall bear back a letter from my hand,
And give your lord assurance, having seen,
I cannot be so frighted with men's threats
That they shall not much rather move my mind
To quicken than to slack the righteous doom
Which none must think by menace to put back,
Or daunt it with defiance. Sirs, good day.

[*Exeunt Ambassadors.*

I were as one belated with false lights
If I should think to steer my darkling way
By twilight furtherance of their wiles and words.
Think you, my lords, France yet would have her live?

BURGHLEY

If there be other than the apparent end
Hid in this mission to your majesty,
Mine envoys can by no means fathom it,
Who deal for me at Paris: fear of Spain
Lays double hand as 'twere upon the king,
Lest by removal of the queen of Scots
A way be made for peril in the claim
More potent then of Philip; and if there come
From his Farnese note of enterprise
Or danger this way tending, France will yet
Cleave to your friendship though his sister die.

ELIZABETH

So, in your mind, this half-souled brother would
Steer any way that might keep safe his sail
Against a southern wind, which here, he thinks,
Her death might strengthen from the north again
To blow against him off our subject straits,
Made servile then and Spanish? Yet perchance
There swells behind our seas a heart too high
To bow more easily down, and bring this land
More humbly to such handling, than their waves
Bow down to ships of strangers, or their storms
To breath of any lord on earth but God.
What thinks our cousin?

HUNSDON

That if Spain or France
Or both be stronger than the heart in us
Which beats to battle ere they menace, why,
In God's name, let them rise and make their prey
Of what was England: but if neither be,
The smooth-cheeked French man-harlot, nor that hand
Which holp to light Rome's fires with English limbs,
Let us not keep to make their weakness strong
A pestilence here alive in England, which
Gives force to their faint enmities, and burns
Half the heart out of loyal trust and hope
With heat that kindles treason.

ELIZABETH

By this light,
I have heard worse counsel from a wise man's tongue
Than this clear note of forthright soldiership.
How say you, Dudley, to it?

LEICESTER

Madam, ere this
You have had my mind upon the matter, writ
But late from Holland, that no public stroke
Should fall upon this princess, who may be
By privy death more happily removed
Without impeach of majesty, nor leave
A sign against your judgment, to call down
Blame of strange kings for wrong to kinship wrought
Though right were done to justice.

ELIZABETH

Of your love
We know it is that comes this counsel ; nor,
Had we such friends of all our servants, need
Our mind be now distraught with dangerous doubts
That find no screen from dangers. Yet meseems
One doubt stands now removed, if doubt there were
Of aught from Scotland ever : Walsingham,
You should have there intelligence whereof
To make these lords with us partakers.

WALSINGHAM

Nay,
Madam, no more than from a trustless hand
Protest and promise : of those twain that come
Hot on these Frenchmen's heels in embassy,
He that in counsel on this cause was late
One with my lord of Leicester now, to rid
By draught of secret death this queen away,
Bears charge to say as these gone hence have said
In open audience, but by personal note
Hath given me this to know, that howsoe'er
His king indeed desire her life be spared
Much may be wrought upon him, would your grace
More richly line his ragged wants with gold
And by full utterance of your parliament
Approve him heir in England.

ELIZABETH

Ay ! no more ?
God's blood ! what grace is proffered us at need,
And on what mild conditions ! Say I will not
Redeem such perils at so dear a price,

Shall not our pensioner too join hands with France
And pay my gold with iron barter back
At edge of sword he dares not look upon,
They tell us, for the scathe and scare he took
Even in this woman's womb when shot and steel
Undid the manhood in his veins unborn
And left his tongue's threats handless?

WALSINGHAM

Men there be,
Your majesty must think, who bear but ill,
For pride of country and high-heartedness,
To see the king they serve your servant so
That not his mother's life and once their queen's
Being at such point of peril can enforce
One warlike word of his for chance of war
Conditional against you. Word came late
From Edinburgh that there the citizens
With hoot and hiss had bayed him through the streets
As he went heartless by; of whom they had heard
This published saying, that in his personal mind
The blood of kindred or affinity
So much not binds us as the friendship pledged
To them that are not of our blood: and this
Stands clear for certain, that no breath of war
Shall breathe from him against us though she die,
Except his titular claim be reft from him
On our succession: and that all his mind
Is but to reign unpartnered with a power
Which should weigh down that half his kingdom's weight
Left to his hand's share nominally in hold:
And for his mother, this would he desire,
That she were kept from this day to her death

Close prisoner in one chamber, never more
To speak with man or woman : and hereon
That proclamation should be made of her
As of one subject formally declared
To the English law whereby, if she offend
Again with iterance of conspiracy,
She shall not as a queen again be tried,
But as your vassal and a private head
Live liable to the doom and stroke of death.

ELIZABETH

She is bounden to him as he long since to her,
Who would have given his kingdom up at least
To his dead father's slayer, in whose red hand
How safe had lain his life too doubt may guess,
Which yet kept dark her purpose then on him,
Dark now no more to usward. Think you then
That they belie him, whose suspicion saith
His ear and heart are yet inclined to Spain,
If from that brother-in-law that was of yours
And would have been our bridegroom he may win
Help of strange gold and foreign soldiership,
With Scottish furtherance of those Catholic lords
Who are stronger-spirited in their faith than ours,
Being harried more of heretics, as they say,
Than these within our borders, to root out
The creed there stablished now, and do to death
Its ministers, with all the lords their friends,
Lay hands on all strong places there, and rule
As prince upon their party ? since he fain
From ours would be divided, and cast in
His lot with Rome against us too, from these
Might he but earn assurance of their faith,

Revolting from his own. May these things be
More than mere muttering breath of trustless lies,
And half his heart yet hover toward our side
For all such hope or purpose?

WALSINGHAM

Of his heart
We know not, madam, surely; nor doth he
Who follows fast on their first envoy sent,
And writes to excuse him of his message here
On her behalf apparent, but in sooth
Aimed otherwise; the Master I mean of Gray,
Who swears me here by letter, if he be not
True to the queen of England, he is content
To have his head fall on a scaffold: saying,
To put from him this charge of embassy
Had been his ruin, but the meaning of it
Is modest and not menacing: whereto
If you will yield not yet to spare the life
So near its forfeit now, he thinks it well
You should be pleased by some commission given
To stay by the way his comrade and himself,
Or bid them back.

ELIZABETH

What man is this then, sent
With such a knave to fellow?

WALSINGHAM

No such knave,
But still your prisoner's friend of old time found:
Sir Robert Melville.

ELIZABETH

And an honest man
As faith might wish her servants : but what pledge
Will these produce me for security
That I may spare this dangerous life and live
Unscathed of after practice ?

WALSINGHAM

As I think,
The king's self and his whole nobility
Will be her personal pledges ; and her son,
If England yield her to his hand in charge,
On no less strait a bond will undertake
For her safe keeping.

ELIZABETH

That were even to arm
With double power mine adversary, and make him
The stronger by my hand to do me hurt—
Were he mine adversary indeed : which yet
I will not hold him. Let them find a mean
For me to live unhurt and save her life,
It shall well please me. Say this king of Scots
Himself would give his own inheritance up
Pretended in succession, if but once
Her hand were found or any friend's of hers
Again put forth upon me for her sake,
Why, haply so might hearts be satisfied
Of lords and commons then to let her live.
But this I doubt he had rather take her life
Himself than yield up to us for pledge : and less,
These men shall know of me, I will not take
In price of her redemption : which were else,

And haply may in no wise not be held,
To this my loyal land and mine own trust
A deadlier stroke and blast of sound more dire
Than noise of fleets invasive.

WALSINGHAM

Surely so
Would all hearts hold it, madam, in that land
That are not enemies of the land and yours;
For ere the doom had been proclaimed an hour
Which gave to death your main foe's head and theirs
Yourself have heard what fire of joy brake forth
From all your people: how their church-towers all
Rang in with jubilant acclaim of bells
The day that bore such tidings, and the night
That laughed aloud with lightning of their joy
And thundered round its triumph: twice twelve hours
This tempest of thanksgiving roared and shone
Sheer from the Solway's to the Channel's foam
With light as from one festal-flaming hearth
And sound as of one trumpet: not a tongue
But praised God for it, or heart that leapt not up,
Save of your traitors and their country's: these
Withered at heart and shrank their heads in close,
As though the bright sun's were a basilisk's eye,
And light, that gave all others comfort, flame
And smoke to theirs of hell's own darkness, whence
Such eyes were blinded or put out with fire.

ELIZABETH

Yea, I myself, I mind me, might not sleep
Those twice twelve hours thou speak'st of. By God's
light,

Be it most in love of me or fear of her
I know not, but my people seems in sooth
Hot and anhungered on this trail of hers :
Nor is it a people bloody-minded, used
To lap the life up of an enemy's vein
Who bleeds to death unweaponed : our good hounds
Will course a quarry soldierlike in war,
But rage not hangmanlike upon the prey,
To flesh their fangs on limbs that strive not : yet
Their hearts are hotter on this course than mine,
Which most was deadliest aimed at.

WALSINGHAM

Even for that
How should not theirs be hot as fire from hell
To burn your danger up and slay that soul
Alive that seeks it? Thinks your majesty
There beats a heart where treason hath not turned
All English blood to poison, which would feel
No deadlier pang of dread more deathful to it
To hear of yours endangered than to feel
A sword against its own life bent, or know
Death imminent as darkness overhead
That takes the noon from one man's darkening eye
As must your death from all this people's? You
Are very England : in your light of life
This living land of yours walks only safe,
And all this breathing people with your breath
Breathes unenslaved, and draws at each pulse in
Freedom : your eye is light of theirs, your word
As God's to comfort England, whose whole soul
Is made with yours one, and her witness you
That Rome or hell shall take not hold on her

Again till God be wroth with us so much
As to reclaim for heaven the star that yet
Lights all your land that looks on it, and gives
Assurance higher than danger dares assail
Save in this lady's name and service, who
Must now from you take judgment.

ELIZABETH

Must! by God,
I know not *must* but as a word of mine,
My tongue's and not mine ear's familiar. Sirs,
Content yourselves to know this much of us,
Or having known remember, that we sent
The Lord of Buckhurst and our servant Beale
To acquaint this queen our prisoner with the doom
Confirmed on second trial against her, saying
Her word can weigh not down the weightier guilt
Approved upon her, and by parliament
Since fortified with sentence. Yea, my lords,
Ye should forget not how by message then
I bade her know of me with what strong force
Of strenuous and invincible argument
I am urged to hold no more in such delay
The process of her execution, being
The seed-plot of these late conspiracies,
Their author and chief motive: and am told
That if I yield not mine the guilt must be
In God's and in the whole world's suffering sight
Of all the miseries and calamities
To ensue on my refusal: whence, albeit
I know not yet how God shall please to incline
My heart on that behalf, I have thought it meet
In conscience yet that she should be forewarned,

That so she might bethink her of her sins
Done both toward God offensive and to me
And pray for grace to be true penitent
For all these faults: which, had the main fault reached
No further than mine own poor person, God
Stands witness with what truth my heart protests
I freely would have pardoned. She to this
Makes bitter answer as of desperate heart
All we may wreak our worst upon her; whom
Having to death condemned, we may fulfil
Our wicked work, and God in Paradise
With just atonement shall requite her. This
Ye see is all the pardon she will ask,
Being only, and even as 'twere with prayer, desired
To crave of us forgiveness: and thereon
Being by Lord Buckhurst charged on this point home
That by her mean the Catholics here had learnt
To hold her for their sovereign, on which cause
Nor my religion nor myself might live
Uncharged with danger while her life should last,
She answering gives God thanks aloud to be
Held of so great account upon his side,
And in God's cause and in the church of God's
Rejoicingly makes offering of her life;
Which I, God knows how unrejoicingly,
Can scarce, ye tell me, choose but take, or yield
At least for you to take it. Yet, being told
It is not for religion she must die,
But for a plot by compass of her own
Laid to dethrone me and destroy, she casts
Again this answer barbed with mockery back,
She was not so presumptuous born, to aspire
To two such ends yet ever: yea, so far

She dwelt from such desire removed in heart,
She would not have me suffer by her will
The fillip of a finger: though herself
Be persecuted even as David once
And her mishap be that she cannot so
Fly by the window forth as David: whence
It seems she likens us to Saul, and looks
Haply to see us as on Mount Gilboa fallen,
Where yet, for all the shooters on her side,
Our shield shall be not vilely cast away,
As of one unanointed. Yet, my lords,
If England might but by my death attain
A state more flourishing with a better prince,
Gladly would I lay down my life; who have
No care save only for my people's sake
To keep it: for myself, in all the world
I see no great cause why for all this coil
I should be fond to live or fear to die.
If I should say unto you that I mean
To grant not your petition, by my faith,
More should I so say haply than I mean:
Or should I say I mean to grant it, this
Were, as I think, to tell you of my mind
More than is fit for you to know: and thus
I must for all petitionary prayer
Deliver you an answer answerless.
Yet will I pray God lighten my dark mind
That being illumined it may thence foresee
What for his church and all this commonwealth
May most be profitable: and this once known,
My hand shall halt not long behind his will.

SCENE II. *Fotheringay*

SIR AMYAS PAULET *and* SIR DREW DRURY

PAULET

I never gave God heartier thanks than these
I give to have you partner of my charge
Now most of all, these letters being to you
No less designed than me, and you in heart
One with mine own upon them. Certainly,
When I put hand to pen this morning past
That Master Davison by mine evidence
Might note what sore disquietudes I had
To increase my griefs before of body and mind,
I looked for no such word to cut off mine
As these to us both of Walsingham's and his.
Would rather yet I had cause to still complain
Of those unanswered letters two months past
Than thus be certified of such intents
As God best knoweth I never sought to know,
Or search out secret causes : though to hear
Nothing at all did breed, as I confessed,
In me some hard conceits against myself,
I had rather yet rest ignorant than ashamed
Of such ungracious knowledge. This shall be
Fruit as I think of dread wrought on the queen
By those seditious rumours whose report
Blows fear among the people lest our charge
Escape our trust, or as they term it now
Be taken away,—such apprehensive tongues
So phrase it—and her freedom strike men's hearts
More deep than all these flying fears that say

London is fired of Papists, or the Scots
Have crossed in arms the Border, or the north
Is risen again rebellious, or the Guise
Is disembarked in Sussex, or that now
In Milford Haven rides a Spanish fleet—
All which, albeit but footless floating lies,
May all too easily smite and work too far
Even on the heart most royal in the world
That ever was a woman's.

DRURY

Good my friend,
These noises come without a thunderbolt
In such dense air of dusk expectancy
As all this land lies under; nor will some
Doubt or think much to say of those reports
They are broached and vented of men's credulous mouths
Whose ears have caught them from such lips as meant
Merely to strike more terror in the queen
And wring that warrant from her hovering hand
Which falters yet and flutters on her lip
While the hand hangs and trembles half advanced
Upon that sentence which, the treasurer said,
Should well ere this have spoken, seeing it was
More than a full month old and four days more
When he so looked to hear the word of it
Which yet lies sealed of silence.

PAULET

Will you say,
Or any as wise and loyal, say or think

It was but for a show, to scare men's wits,
They have raised this hue and cry upon her flight
Supposed from hence, to waken Exeter
With noise from Honiton and Sampfield spread
Of proclamation to detain all ships
And lay all highways for her day and night,
And send like precepts out four manner of ways
From town to town, to make in readiness
Their armour and artillery, with all speed,
On pain of death, for London by report
Was set on fire? though, God be therefore praised,
We know this is not, yet the noise hereof
Were surely not to be neglected, seeing
There is, meseems, indeed no readier way
To levy forces for the achieving that
Which so these lewd reporters feign to fear.

DRURY

Why, in such mighty matters and such mists
Wise men may think what hardly fools would say,
And eyes get glimpse of more than sight hath leave
To give commission for the babbling tongue
Aloud to cry they have seen. This noise that was
Upon one Arden's flight, a traitor, whence
Fear flew last week all round us, gave but note
How lightly may men's minds take fire, and words
Take wing that have no feet to fare upon
More solid than a shadow.

PAULET

Nay, he was
Escaped indeed : and every day thus brings

Forth its new mischief: as this last month did
Those treasons of the French ambassador
Designed against our mistress, which God's grace
Laid by the knave's mean bare to whom they sought
For one to slay her, and of the Pope's hand earn
Ten thousand blood-encrusted crowns a year
To his most hellish hire. You will not say
This too was merely fraud or vision wrought
By fear or cloudy falsehood?

DRURY

I will say
No more or surelier than I know: and this
I know not thoroughly to the core of truth
Or heart of falsehood in it. A man may lie
Merely, or trim some bald lean truth with lies,
Or patch bare falsehood with some tatter of truth,
And each of these pass current: but of these
Which likeliest may this man's tale be who gave
Word of his own temptation by these French
To hire them such a murderer, and avowed
He held it godly cunning to comply
And bring this envoy's secretary to sight
Of one clapped up for debts in Newgate, who
Being thence released might readily, as he said,
Even by such means as once this lady's lord
Was made away with, make the queen away
With powder fired beneath her bed—why, this,
Good sooth, I guess not; but I doubt the man
To be more liar than fool, and yet, God wot,
More fool than traitor; most of all intent
To conjure coin forth of the Frenchman's purse
With tricks of mere effrontery: thus at least
We know did Walsingham esteem of him:

And if by Davison held of more account,
Or merely found more serviceable, and made
A mean to tether up those quick French tongues
From threat or pleading for this prisoner's life,
I cannot tell, and care not. Though the queen
Hath stayed this envoy's secretary from flight
Forth of the kingdom, and committed him
To ward within the Tower while Châteauneuf
Himself should come before a council held
At my lord treasurer's, where being thus accused
At first he cared not to confront the man,
But stood upon his office, and the charge
Of his king's honour and prerogative—
Then bade bring forth the knave, who being brought forth
Outfaced him with insistence front to front
And took the record of this whole tale's truth
Upon his soul's damnation, challenging
The Frenchman's answer in denial hereof,
That of his own mouth had this witness been
Traitorously tempted, and by personal plea
Directly drawn to treason: which awhile
Struck dumb the ambassador as amazed with wrath,
Till presently, the accuser being removed,
He made avowal this fellow some while since
Had given his secretary to wit there lay
One bound in Newgate who being thence released
Would take the queen's death on his hand: whereto
Answering, he bade the knave avoid his house
On pain, if once their ways should cross, to be
Sent bound before the council: who replied
He had done foul wrong to take no further note,
But being made privy to this damned device
Keep close its perilous knowledge; whence the queen

Might well complain against him ; and hereon
They fell to wrangling on this cause, that he
Professed himself to no man answerable
For declaration or for secret held
Save his own master : so that now is gone
Sir William Wade to Paris, not with charge
To let the king there know this queen shall live,
But to require the ambassador's recall
And swift delivery of our traitors there
To present justice : yet may no man say,
For all these half-faced scares and policies,
Here was more sooth than seeming.

PAULET

Why, these crafts
Were shameful then as fear's most shameful self,
If thus your wit read them aright ; and we
Should for our souls and lives alike do ill
To jeopard them on such men's surety given
As make no more account of simple faith
Than true men make of liars : and these are they,
Our friends and masters, that rebuke us both
By speech late uttered of her majesty
For lack of zeal in service and of care
She looked for at our hands, in that we have not
In all this time, unprompted, of ourselves
Found out some way to cut this queen's life off,
Seeing how great peril, while her enemy lives,
She is hourly subject unto : saying, she notes,
Besides a kind of lack of love to her,
Herein we have not that particular care
Forsooth of our own safeties, or indeed
Of the faith rather and the general good,
That politic reason bids ; especially,

Having so strong a warrant and such ground
For satisfaction of our consciences
To Godward, and discharge of credit kept
And reputation toward the world, as is
That oath whereby we stand associated
To prosecute inexorably to death
Both with our joint and our particular force
All by whose hand and all on whose behalf
Our sovereign's life is struck at : as by proof
Stands charged upon our prisoner. So they write,
As though the queen's own will had warranted
The words that by her will's authority
Were blotted from the bond, whereby that head
Was doomed on whose behoof her life should be
By treason threatened : for she would not have
Aught pass which grieved her subjects' consciences,
She said, or might abide not openly
The whole world's view : nor would she any one
Were punished for another's fault : and so
Cut off the plea whereon she now desires
That we should dip our secret hands in blood
With no direction given of her own mouth
So to pursue that dangerous head to death
By whose assent her life were sought : for this
Stands fixed for only warrant of such deed,
And this we have not, but her word instead
She takes it most unkindly toward herself
That men professing toward her loyally
That love that we do should in any sort,
For lack of our own duty's full discharge,
Cast upon her the burden, knowing as we
Her slowness to shed blood, much more of one
So near herself in blood as is this queen,
And one with her in sex and quality.

And these respects, they find, or so profess,
Do greatly trouble her: who hath sundry times
Protested, they assure us, earnestly,
That if regard of her good subjects' risk
Did not more move her than the personal fear
Of proper peril to her, she never would
Be drawn to assent unto this bloodshedding:
And so to our good judgments they refer
These speeches they thought meet to acquaint us with
As passed but lately from her majesty,
And to God's guard commend us: which God knows
We should much more need than deserve of him
Should we give ear to this, and as they bid
Make heretics of these papers; which three times
You see how Davison hath enforced on us:
But they shall taste no fire for me, nor pass
Back to his hands till copies writ of them
Lie safe in mine for sons of mine to keep
In witness how their father dealt herein.

DRURY

You have done the wiselier: and what word soe'er
Shall bid them know your mind, I am well assured
It well may speak for me too.

PAULET

Thus it shall:
That having here his letters in my hands,
I would not fail, according to his charge,
To send back answer with all possible speed
Which shall deliver unto him my great grief
And bitterness of mind, in that I am
So much unhappy as I hold myself

To have lived to look on this unhappy day,
When I by plain direction am required
From my most gracious sovereign's mouth to do
An act which God forbiddeth, and the law.
Hers are my goods and livings, and my life,
Held at her disposition, and myself
Am ready so to lose them this next day
If it shall please her so, acknowledging
I hold them of her mere goodwill, and do not
Desire them to enjoy them but so long
As her great grace gives leave : but God forbid
That I should make for any grace of hers
So foul a shipwreck of my conscience, or
Leave ever to my poor posterity
So great a blot, as privily to shed blood
With neither law nor warrant. So, in trust
That she, of her accustomed clemency,
Will take my dutiful answer in good part,
By his good mediation, as returned
From one who never will be less in love,
Honour, obedience, duty to his queen,
Than any Christian subject living, thus
To God's grace I commit him.

DRURY

Though I doubt
She haply shall be much more wroth hereat
Than lately she was gracious, when she bade
God treblefold reward you for your charge
So well discharged, saluting you by name
Most faithful and most careful, you shall do
Most like a wise man loyally to write
But such good words as these, whereto myself

Subscribe in heart : though being not named herein
(Albeit to both seem these late letters meant)
Nor this directed to me, I forbear
To make particular answer. And indeed,
Were danger less apparent in her life
To the heart's life of all this living land,
I would this woman might not die at all
By secret stroke nor open sentence.

PAULET

I

Will praise God's mercy most for this of all,
When I shall see the murderous cause removed
Of its most mortal peril : nor desire
A guerdon ampler from the queen we serve,
Besides her commendations of my faith
For spotless actions and for safe regards,
Than to see judgment on her enemy done ;
Which were for me that recompense indeed
Whereof she writes as one not given to all,
But for such merit reserved to crown its claim
Above all common service : nor save this
Could any treasure's promise in the world
So ease those travails and rejoice this heart
That hers too much takes thought of, as to read
Her charge to carry for her sake in it
This most just thought, that she can balance not
The value that her grace doth prize me at
In any weight of judgment : yet it were
A word to me more comfortable at heart
Than these, though these most gracious, that should
speak
Death to her death's contriver.

DRURY

Nay, myself
Were fain to see this coil wound up, and her
Removed that makes it: yet such things will pluck
Hard at men's hearts that think on them, and move
Compassion that such long strange years should find
So strange an end: nor shall men ever say
But she was born right royal; full of sins,
It may be, and by circumstance or choice
Dyed and defaced with bloody stains and black,
Unmerciful, unfaithful, but of heart
So fiery high, so swift of spirit and clear,
In extreme danger and pain so lifted up,
So of all violent things inviolable,
So large of courage, so superb of soul,
So sheathed with iron mind invincible
And arms unbreached of fireproof constancy—
By shame not shaken, fear or force or death,
Change, or all confluence of calamities—
And so at her worst need beloved, and still,
Naked of help and honour when she seemed,
As other women would be, and of hope
Stripped, still so of herself adorable
By minds not always all ignobly mad
Nor all made poisonous with false grain of faith,
She shall be a world's wonder to all time,
A deadly glory watched of marvelling men
Not without praise, not without noble tears,
And if without what she would never have
Who had it never, pity—yet from none
Quite without reverence and some kind of love
For that which was so royal. Yea, and now
That at her prayer we here attend on her,

If, as I think, she have in mind to send
Aught written to the queen, what we may do
To further her desire shall on my part
Gladly be done, so be it the grace she craves
Be nought akin to danger.

PAULET

It shall be
The first of all then craved by her of man,
Or by man's service done her, that was found
So harmless ever.

Enter MARY STUART *and* MARY BEATON

MARY STUART

Sirs, in time past by
I was desirous many times, ye know,
To have written to your queen : but since I have had
Advertisement of my conviction, seeing
I may not look for life, my soul is set
On preparation for another world :
Yet none the less, not for desire of life,
But for my conscience's discharge and rest,
And for my last farewell, I have at heart
By you to send her a memorial writ
Of somewhat that concerns myself, when I
Shall presently be gone out of this world.
And to remove from her, if such be there,
Suspicion of all danger in receipt
Of this poor paper that should come from me,
Myself will take the assay of it, and so
With mine own hands to yours deliver it.

PAULET

Will you not also, madam, be content
To seal and close it in my presence up?

MARY STUART

Sir, willingly: but I beseech your word
Pledged for its safe delivery to the queen.

PAULET

I plight my faith it shall be sent to her.

MARY STUART

This further promise I desire, you will
Procure me from above certificate
It hath been there delivered.

DRURY

This is more
Than we may stand so pledged for: in our power
It is to send, but far beyond our power,
As being above our place, to promise you
Certificate or warrant.

MARY STUART

Yet I trust
Consideration may be had of me
After my death, as one derived in blood
From your queen's grandsire, with all mortal rites
According with that faith I have professed
All my life-days as I was born therein.

This is the sum of all mine askings: whence
Well might I take it in ill part of you
To wish me seal my letter in your sight,
Bewraying your hard opinion of me.

PAULET

This
Your own words well might put into my mind,
That so beside my expectation made
Proffer to take my first assay for me
Of the outer part of it: for you must think
I was not ignorant that by sleight of craft
There might be as great danger so conveyed
Within the letter as without, and thus
I could not for ill thoughts of you be blamed,
Concurring with you in this jealousy:
For had yourself not moved it of yourself
Sir Drew nor I had ever thought on it.

MARY STUART

The occasion why I moved it was but this,
That having made my custom in time past
To send sometimes some tokens to your queen,
At one such time that I sent certain clothes
One standing by advised her cause my gifts
To be tried thoroughly ere she touched them; which
I have since observed, and taken order thus
With Nau, when last he tarried at the court,
To do the like to a fur-fringed counterpane
Which at that time I sent: and as for this,
Look what great danger lies between these leaves
That I dare take and handle in my hands,
And press against my face each part of them

Held open thus, and either deadly side,
Wherein your fear smells death sown privily.

PAULET

Madam, when so you charged your secretary
Her majesty was far from doubt, I think,
Or dream of such foul dealing : and I would
Suspicion since had found no just cause given,
And then things had not been as now they are.

MARY STUART

But things are as they are, and here I stand
Convicted, and not knowing how many hours
I have to live yet.

PAULET

Madam, you shall live
As many hours as God shall please : but this
May be said truly, that you here have been
Convicted in most honourable sort
And favourable.

MARY STUART

What favour have I found?

PAULET

Your cause hath been examined scrupulously
By many our eldest nobles of this realm,
Whereas by law you should but have been tried
By twelve men as a common person.

MARY STUART

Nay,
Your noblemen must by their peers be tried.

PAULET

All strangers of what quality soe'er
In matter of crime are only to be tried
In other princes' territories by law
That in that realm bears rule.

MARY STUART

You have your laws :
But other princes all will think of it
As they see cause ; and mine own son is now
No more a child, but come to man's estate,
And he will think of these things bitterly.

DRURY

Ingratitude, whate'er he think of them,
Is odious in all persons, but of all
In mightiest personages most specially
Most hateful : and it will not be denied
But that the queen's grace greatly hath deserved
Both of yourself and of your son.

MARY STUART

What boon
Shall I acknowledge ? Being in bonds, I am set
Free from the world, and therefore am I not
Afraid to speak ; I have had the favour here
To have been kept prisoner now these many years
Against my will and justice.

PAULET

Madam, this
Was a great favour, and without this grace
You had not lived to see these days.

MARY STUART

How so?

PAULET

Seeing your own subjects did pursue you, and had
The best in your own country.

MARY STUART

That is true,
Because your Mildmay's ill persuasions first
Made me discharge my forces, and then caused
Mine enemies to burn my friends' main holds,
Castles and houses.

PAULET

Howsoe'er, it was
By great men of that country that the queen
Had earnest suit made to her to have yourself
Delivered to them, which her grace denied,
And to their great misliking.

DRURY

Seventeen years
She hath kept your life to save it: and whereas
She calls your highness sister, she hath dealt
In truth and deed most graciously with you
And sisterlike, in seeking to preserve
Your life at once and honour.

MARY STUART

Ay! wherein?

DRURY

In that commission of your causes held
At York, which was at instance of your friends
Dissolved to save your honour.

MARY STUART

No: the cause
Why that commission was dissolved indeed
Was that my friends could not be heard to inform
Against my loud accusers.

PAULET

But your friend
The bishop's self of Ross, your very friend,
Hath written that this meeting was dismissed
All only in your favour: and his book
Is extant: and this favour is but one
Of many graces which her majesty
Hath for mere love extended to you.

MARY STUART

This
Is one great favour, even to have kept me here
So many years against my will.

PAULET

It was
For your own safety, seeing your countrymen
Sought your destruction, and to that swift end

Required to have you yielded up to them,
As was before said.

MARY STUART

Nay, then, I will speak.
I am not afraid. It was determined here
That I should not depart: and when I was
Demanded by my subjects, this I know,
That my lord treasurer with his own close hand
Writ in a packet which by trustier hands
Was intercepted, and to me conveyed,
To the earl of Murray, that the devil was tied
Fast in a chain, and they could keep her not,
But here she should be safely kept.

DRURY

That earl
Was even as honourable a gentleman
As I knew ever in that country bred.

MARY STUART

One of the worst men of the world he was:
A foul adulterer, one of general lust,
A spoiler and a murderer.

DRURY

Six weeks long,
As I remember, here I saw him; where
He bore him very gravely, and maintained
The reputation even on all men's tongues
In all things of a noble gentleman:
Nor have I heard him evil spoken of
Till this time ever.

MARY STUART

Yea, my rebels here
Are honest men, and by the queen have been
Maintained.

PAULET

You greatly do forget yourself
To charge her highness with so foul a fault,
Which you can never find ability
To prove on her.

MARY STUART

What did she with the French,
I pray you, at Newhaven?

PAULET

It appears
You have conceived so hardly of the queen
My mistress, that you still inveterately
Interpret all her actions to the worst,
Not knowing the truth of all the cause: but yet
I dare assure you that her majesty
Had most just cause and righteous, in respect
As well of Calais as for other ends,
To do the thing she did, and more to have done,
Had it so pleased her to put forth her power:
And this is in you great unthankfulness
After so many favours and so great,
Whereof you will acknowledge in no wise
The least of any: though her majesty
Hath of her own grace merely saved your life,
To the utter discontentment of the best
Your subjects once in open parliament

Who craved against you justice on the charge
Of civil law-breach and rebellion.

MARY STUART

I
Know no such matter, but full well I know
Sir Francis Walsingham hath openly,
Since his abiding last in Scotland, said
That I should rue his entertainment there.

PAULET

Madam, you have not rued it, but have been
More honourably entertained than ever yet
Was any other crown's competitor
In any realm save only this: whereof
Some have been kept close prisoners, other some
Maimed and unnaturally disfigured, some
Murdered.

MARY STUART

But I was no competitor:
All I required was in successive right
To be reputed but as next the crown.

PAULET

Nay, madam, you went further, when you gave
The English arms and style, as though our queen
Had been but an usurper on your right.

MARY STUART

My husband and my kinsmen did therein
What they thought good: I had nought to do with it.

PAULET

Why would you not then loyally renounce
Your claim herein pretended, but with such
Condition, that you might be authorized
Next heir apparent to the crown?

MARY STUART

I have made
At sundry times thereon good proffers, which
Could never be accepted.

PAULET

Heretofore
It hath been proved unto you presently
That in the very instant even of all
Your treaties and most friendlike offers were
Some dangerous crafts discovered.

MARY STUART

You must think
I have some friends on earth, and if they have done
Anything privily, what is that to me?

PAULET

Madam, it was somewhat to you, and I would
For your own sake you had forborne it, that
After advertisement and conscience given
Of Morgan's devilish practice, to have killed
A sacred queen, you yet would entertain
The murderer as your servant.

MARY STUART

I might do it
With as good right as ever did your queen
So entertain my rebels.

DRURY

Be advised:
This speech is very hard, and all the case
Here differs greatly.

MARY STUART

Yea, let this then be;
Ye cannot yet of my conviction say
But I by partial judgment was condemned,
And the commissioners knew my son could have
No right, were I convicted, and your queen
Could have no children of her womb; whereby
They might set up what man for king they would.

PAULET

This is in you too great forgetfulness
Of honour and yourself, to charge these lords
With two so foul and horrible faults, as first
To take your life by partial doom from you,
And then bestow the kingdom where they liked.

MARY STUART

Well, all is one to me: and for my part
I thank God I shall die without regret
Of anything that I have done alive.

PAULET

I would entreat you yet be sorry at least
For the great wrong, and well deserving grief,
You have done the queen my mistress.

MARY STUART

Nay, thereon
Let others answer for themselves: I have
Nothing to do with it. Have you borne in mind
Those matters of my monies that we last
Conferred upon together?

PAULET

Madam, these
Are not forgotten.

MARY STUART

Well it is if aught
Be yet at all remembered for my good.
Have here my letter sealed and superscribed,
And so farewell—or even as here men may.
[*Exeunt* PAULET *and* DRURY.
Had I that old strength in my weary limbs
That in my heart yet fails not, fain would I
Fare forth if not fare better. Tired I am,
But not so lame in spirit I might not take
Some comfort of the winter-wasted sun
This bitter Christmas to me, though my feet
Were now no firmer nor more helpful found
Than when I went but in my chair abroad
Last weary June at Chartley. I can stand
And go now without help of either side,

And bend my hand again, thou seest, to write :
I did not well perchance in sight of these
To have made so much of this lame hand, which yet
God knows was grievous to me, and to-day
To make my letter up and superscribe
And seal it with no outward show of pain
Before their face and inquisition ; yet
I care not much in player's wise piteously
To blind such eyes with feigning : though this Drew
Be gentler and more gracious than his mate
And liker to be wrought on ; but at last
What need have I of men ?

MARY BEATON

What then you may
I know not, seeing for all that was and is
We are yet not at the last ; but when you had,
You have hardly failed to find more help of them
And heartier service than more prosperous queens
Exact of expectation : when your need
Was greater than your name or natural state,
And wage was none to look for but of death,
As though the expectancy thereof and hope
Were more than man's prosperities, men have given
Heart's thanks to have this gift of God and you
For dear life's guerdon, even the trust assured
To drink for you the bitterness of death.

MARY STUART

Ay, one said once it must be—some one said
I must be perilous ever, and my love
More deadly than my will was evil or good
Toward any of all these that through me should die—

I know not who, nor when one said it: but
I know too sure he lied not.

MARY BEATON

No; I think
This was a seer indeed. I have heard of men
That under imminence of death grew strong
With mortal foresight, yet in life-days past
Could see no foot before them, nor provide
For their own fate or fortune anything
Against one angry chance of accident
Or passionate fault of their own loves or hates
That might to death betray them: such an one
Thus haply might have prophesied, and had
No strength to save himself.

MARY STUART

I know not: yet
Time was when I remembered.

MARY BEATON

It should be
No enemy's saying whom you remember not;
You are wont not to forget your enemies; yet
The word rang sadder than a friend's should fall
Save in some strange pass of the spirit or flesh
For love's sake haply hurt to death.

MARY STUART

It seems
Thy mind is bent to know the name of me
That of myself I know not.

MARY BEATON

Nay, my mind
Has other thoughts to beat upon: for me
It may suffice to know the saying for true
And never care who said it.

MARY STUART

True? too sure,
God to mine heart's grief hath approved it. See,
Nor Scot nor Englishman that takes on him
The service of my sorrow but partakes
The sorrow of my service: man by man,
As that one said, they perish of me: yea,
Were I a sword sent upon earth, or plague
Bred of aerial poison, I could be
No deadlier where unwillingly I strike,
Who where I would can hurt not: Percy died
By his own hand in prison, Howard by law,
These young men with strange torments done to death,
Who should have rid me and the world of her
That is our scourge, and to the church of God
A pestilence that wastes it: all the north
Wears yet the scars engraven of civil steel
Since its last rising: nay, she saith but right,
Mine enemy, saying by these her servile tongues
I have brought upon her land mine own land's curse,
And a sword follows at my heel, and fire
Is kindled of mine eyeshot: and before,
Whom did I love that died not of it? whom
That I would save might I deliver, when
I had once but looked on him with love, or pledged

Friendship? I should have died I think long since,
That many might have died not, and this word
Had not been written of me nor fulfilled,
But perished in the saying, a prophecy
That took the prophet by the throat and slew—
As sure I think it slew him. Such a song
Might my poor servant slain before my face
Have sung before the stroke of violent death
Had fallen upon him there for my sake.

MARY BEATON

Ah!
You think so? this remembrance was it not
That hung and hovered in your mind but now,
Moved your heart backward all unwittingly
To some blind memory of the man long dead?

MARY STUART

In sooth, I think my prophet should have been
David.

MARY BEATON

You thought of him?

MARY STUART

An old sad thought:
The moan of it was made long since, and he
Not unremembered.

MARY BEATON

Nay, of him indeed
Record was made—a royal record: whence
No marvel is it that you forgot not him.

MARY STUART

I would forget no friends nor enemies: these
More needs me now remember. Think'st thou not
This woman hates me deadlier—or this queen
That is not woman—than myself could hate
Except I were as she in all things? then
I should love no such woman as am I
Much more than she may love me: yet I am sure,
Or so near surety as all belief may be,
She dare not slay me for her soul's sake: nay,
Though that were made as light of as a leaf
Storm-shaken, in such stormy winds of state
As blow between us like a blast of death,
For her throne's sake she durst not, which must be
Broken to build my scaffold. Yet, God wot,
Perchance a straw's weight now cast in by chance
Might weigh my life down in the scale her hand
Holds hardly straight for trembling: if she be
Woman at all, so tempered naturally
And with such spirit and sense as thou and I,
Should I for wrath so far forget myself
As these men sometime charge me that I do,
My tongue might strike my head off. By this head
That yet I wear to swear by, if life be
Thankworthy, God might well be thanked for this
Of me or whoso loves me in the world,
That I spake never half my heart out yet,
For any sore temptation of them all,
To her or hers; nor ever put but once
My heart upon my paper, writing plain
The things I thought, heard, knew for truth of her,
Believed or feigned—nay, feigned not to believe
Of her fierce follies fed with wry-mouthed praise,

And that vain ravin of her sexless lust
Which could not feed nor hide its hunger, curb
With patience nor allay with love the thirst
That mocked itself as all mouths mocked it. Ha,
What might the reading of these truths have wrought
Within her maiden mind, what seed have sown,
Trow'st thou, in her sweet spirit, of revenge
Toward me that showed her queenship in the glass
A subject's hand of hers had put in mine
The likeness of it loathed and laughable
As they that worshipped it with words and signs
Beheid her and bemocked her?

MARY BEATON

Certainly,
I think that soul drew never breath alive
To whom this letter might seem pardonable
Which timely you forbore to send her.

MARY STUART

Nay,
I doubt not I did well to keep it back—
And did not ill to write it: for God knows
It was no small ease to my heart.

MARY BEATON

But say
I had not burnt it as you bade me burn,
But kept it privily safe against a need
That I might haply sometime have of it?

MARY STUART

What, to destroy me?

MARY BEATON

Hardly, sure, to save.

MARY STUART

Why shouldst thou think to bring me to my death?

MARY BEATON

Indeed, no man am I that love you; nor
Need I go therefore in such fear of you
As of my mortal danger.

MARY STUART

On my life,
(Long life or short, with gentle or violent end,
I know not, and would choose not, though I might
So take God's office on me) one that heard
Would swear thy speech had in it, and subtly mixed,
A savour as of menace, or a sound
As of an imminent ill or perilous sense
Which was not in thy meaning.

MARY BEATON

No: in mine
There lurked no treason ever; nor have you
Cause to think worse of me than loyally,
If proof may be believed on witness.

MARY STUART

Sure,
I think I have not nor I should not have:

Thy life has been the shadow cast of mine,
A present faith to serve my present need,
A foot behind my footsteps ; as long since
In those French dances that we trod, and laughed
The blithe way through together. Thou couldst sing
Then, and a great while gone it is by this
Since I heard song or music : I could now
Find in my heart to bid thee, as the Jews
Were once bid sing in their captivity
One of their songs of Sion, sing me now,
If one thou knowest, for love of that far time,
One of our songs of Paris.

MARY BEATON

Give me leave
A little to cast up some wandering words
And gather back such memories as may beat
About my mind of such a song, and yet
I think I might renew some note long dumb
That once your ear allowed of.—I did pray, [*Aside.*
Tempt me not, God : and by her mouth again
He tempts me—nay, but prompts me, being most just,
To know by trial if all remembrance be
Dead as remorse or pity that in birth
Died, and were childless in her : if she quite
Forget that very swan-song of thy love,
My love that wast, my love that wouldst not be,
Let God forget her now at last as I
Remember : if she think but one soft thought,
Cast one poor word upon thee, God thereby
Shall surely bid me let her live : if none,
I shoot that letter home and sting her dead.

God strengthen me to sing but these words through
Though I fall dumb at end for ever. Now—

[*She sings.*

Après tant de jours, après tant de pleurs,
Soyez secourable à mon âme en peine.
Voyez comme Avril fait l'amour aux fleurs ;
Dame d'amour, dame aux belles couleurs,
Dieu vous a fait belle, Amour vous fait reine.

Rions, je t'en prie ; aimons, je le veux.
Le temps fuit et rit et ne revient guère
Pour baiser le bout de tes blonds cheveux,
Pour baiser tes cils, ta bouche et tes yeux ;
L'amour n'a qu'un jour auprès de sa mère.

MARY STUART

Nay, I should once have known that song, thou say'st,
And him that sang it and should now be dead :
Was it—but his rang sweeter—was it not
Remy Belleau ?

MARY BEATON

(My letter—here at heart !) [*Aside.*
I think it might be—were it better writ
And courtlier phrased, with Latin spice cast in,
And a more tunable descant.

MARY STUART

Ay ; how sweet
Sang all the world about those stars that sang
With Ronsard for the strong mid star of all,
His bay-bound head all glorious with grey hairs,
Who sang my birth and bridal ! When I think

Of those French years, I only seem to see
A light of swords and singing, only hear
Laughter of love and lovely stress of lutes,
And in between the passion of them borne
Sounds of swords crossing ever, as of feet
Dancing, and life and death still equally
Blithe and bright-eyed from battle. Haply now
My sometime sister, mad Queen Madge, is grown
As grave as I should be, and wears at waist
No hearts of last year's lovers any more
Enchased for jewels round her girdlestead,
But rather beads for penitence ; yet I doubt
Time should not more abash her heart than mine,
Who live not heartless yet. These days like those
Have power but for a season given to do
No more upon our spirits than they may,
And what they may we know not till it be
Done, and we need no more take thought of it,
As I no more of death or life to-day.

MARY BEATON

That shall you surely need not.

MARY STUART

So I think,
Our keepers being departed : and by these,
Even by the uncourtlier as the gentler man,
I read as in a glass their queen's plain heart,
And that by her at last I shall not die.

SCENE III. *Greenwich Palace*

QUEEN ELIZABETH *and* DAVISON

ELIZABETH

Thou hast seen Lord Howard? I bade him send thee.

DAVISON

Madam,
But now he came upon me hard at hand
And by your gracious message bade me in.

ELIZABETH

The day is fair as April: hast thou been
Abroad this morning? 'Tis no winter's sun
That makes these trees forget their nakedness
And all the glittering ground, as 'twere in hope,
Breathe laughingly.

DAVISON

Indeed, the gracious air
Had drawn me forth into the park, and thence
Comes my best speed to attend upon your grace.

ELIZABETH

My grace is not so gracious as the sun
That graces thus the late distempered air:
And you should oftener use to walk abroad,
Sir, than your custom is: I would not have
Good servants heedless of their natural health

To do me sickly service. It were strange
That one twice bound as woman and as queen
To care for good men's lives and loyalties
Should prove herself toward either dangerous.

DAVISON

That
Can be no part of any servant's fear
Who lives for service of your majesty.

ELIZABETH

I would not have it be—God else forbid—
Who have so loyal servants as I hold
All now that bide about me : for I will not
Think, though such villainy once were in men's minds,
That twice among mine English gentlemen
Shall hearts be found so foul as theirs who thought,
When I was horsed for hunting, to waylay
And shoot me through the back at unawares
With poisoned bullets : nor, thou knowest, would I,
When this was opened to me, take such care,
Ride so fenced round about with iron guard,
Or walk so warily as men counselled me
For loyal fear of what thereafter might
More prosperously be plotted : nay, God knows,
I would not hold on such poor terms my life,
With such a charge upon it, as to breathe
In dread of death or treason till the day
That they should stop my trembling breath, and ease
The piteous heart that panted like a slave's
Of all vile fear for ever. So to live
Were so much hatefuller than thus to die,
I do not think that man or woman draws

Base breath of life the loathsomest on earth
Who by such purchase of perpetual fear
And deathless doubt of all in trust of none
Would shudderingly prolong it.

DAVISON

Even too well
Your servants know that greatness of your heart
Which gives you yet unguarded to men's eyes,
And were unworthier found to serve or live
Than is the unworthiest of them, did not this
Make all their own hearts hotter with desire
To be the bulwark or the price of yours
Paid to redeem it from the arrest of death.

ELIZABETH

So haply should they be whose hearts beat true
With loyal blood: but whoso says they are
Is but a loving liar.

DAVISON

I trust your grace
Hath in your own heart no such doubt of them
As speaks in mockery through your lips.

ELIZABETH

By God,
I say much less than righteous truth might speak
Of their loud loves that ring with emptiness,
And hollow-throated loyalties whose heart
Is wind and clamorous promise. Ye desire,
With all your souls ye swear that ye desire
The queen of Scots were happily removed,

And not a knave that loves me will put hand
To the enterprise ye look for only of me
Who only would forbear it.

DAVISON

If your grace
Be minded yet it shall be done at all,
The way that were most honourable and just
Were safest, sure, and best.

ELIZABETH

I dreamt last night
Our murderess there in hold had tasted death
By execution of the sentence done
That was pronounced upon her; and the news
So stung my heart with wrath to hear of it
That had I had a sword—look to 't, and 'ware!—
I had thrust it through thy body.

DAVISON

God defend!
'Twas well I came not in your highness' way
While the hot mood was on you. But indeed
I would know soothly if your mind be changed
From its late root of purpose.

ELIZABETH

No, by God:
But I were fain it could be somewise done
And leave the blame not on me. And so much,
If there were love and honesty in one
Whom I held faithful and exact of care,
Should easily be performed; but here I find

This dainty fellow so precise a knave
As will take all things dangerous on his tongue
And nothing on his hand : hot-mouthed and large
In zeal to stuff mine ears with promises,
But perjurous in performance : did he not
Set hand among you to the bond whereby
He is bound at utmost hazard of his life
To do me such a service? Yet I could
Have wrought as well without him, had I wist
Of this faint falsehood in his heart : there is
That Wingfield whom thou wot'st of, would have done
With glad goodwill what I required of him,
And made no Puritan mouths on 't.

DAVISON

Madam, yet
Far better were it all should but be done
By line of law and judgment.

ELIZABETH

There be men
Wiser than thou that see this otherwise.

DAVISON

All is not wisdom that of wise men comes,
Nor are all eyes that search the ways of state
Clear as a just man's conscience.

ELIZABETH

Proverbs! ha?
Who made thee master of these sentences,
Prime tongue of ethics and philosophy?

DAVISON

An honest heart to serve your majesty
Nought else nor subtler in its reach of wit
Than very simpleness of meaning.

ELIZABETH

Nay,
I do believe thee ; heartily I do.
Did my lord admiral not desire thee bring
The warrant for her execution ?

DAVISON

Ay,
Madam ; here is it.

ELIZABETH

I would it might not be,
Or being so just were yet not necessary.
Art thou not heartily sorry—wouldst thou not,
I say, be sad—to see me sign it ?

DAVISON

Madam,
I grieve at any soul's mishap that lives,
And specially for shipwreck of a life
To you so near allied : but seeing this doom
Wrung forth from justice by necessity,
I had rather guilt should bleed than innocence.

ELIZABETH

When I shall sign, take thou this instantly
To the lord chancellor ; see it straight be sealed

As quietly as he may, not saying a word,
That no man come to know it untimely : then
Send it to the earls of Kent and Shrewsbury
Who are here set down to see this justice done :
I would no more be troubled with this coil
Till all be through. But, for the place of doom,
The hall there of the castle, in my mind,
Were fitter than the court or open green.
And as thou goest betake thee on thy way
To Walsingham, where he lies sick at home,
And let him know what hath of us been done :
Whereof the grief, I fear me, shall go near
To kill his heart outright.

DAVISON

Your majesty
Hath yet not signed the warrant.

ELIZABETH

Ha ! God's blood !
Art thou from tutor of philosophy late
Grown counsellor too and more than counsellor, thou
To appoint me where and what this hand of mine
Shall at thy beck obsequiously subscribe
And follow on thy finger ? By God's death,
What if it please me now not sign at all ?
This letter of my kinswoman's last writ
Hath more compulsion in it, and more power
To enforce my pity, than a thousand tongues
Dictating death against her in mine ear
Of mine own vassal subjects. Here but now
She writes me she thanks God with all her heart
That it hath pleased him by the mean of me

To make an end of her life's pilgrimage,
Which hath been weary to her: and doth not ask
To see its length drawn longer, having had
Too much experience of its bitterness:
But only doth entreat me, since she may
Look for no favour at their zealous hands
Who are first in councils of my ministry,
That only I myself will grant her prayers;
Whereof the first is, since she cannot hope
For English burial with such Catholic rites
As here were used in time of the ancient kings,
Mine ancestors and hers, and since the tombs
Lie violated in Scotland of her sires,
That so soon ever as her enemies
Shall with her innocent blood be satiated,
Her body by her servants may be borne
To some ground consecrated, there to be
Interred: and rather, she desires, in France,
Where sleep her honoured mother's ashes; so
At length may her poor body find the rest
Which living it has never known: thereto,
She prays me, from the fears she hath of those
To whose harsh hand I have abandoned her,
She may not secretly be done to death,
But in her servants' sight and others', who
May witness her obedience kept and faith
To the true church, and guard her memory safe
From slanders haply to be blown abroad
Concerning her by mouths of enemies: last,
She asks that her attendants, who so well
And faithfully through all her miseries past
Have served her, may go freely where they please,
And lose not those small legacies of hers
Which poverty can yet bequeath to them.

This she conjures me by the blood of Christ,
Our kinship, and my grandsire's memory,
Who was her father's grandsire and a king,
And by the name of queen she bears with her
Even to the death, that I will not refuse,
And that a word in mine own hand may thus
Assure her, who will then as she hath lived
Die mine affectionate sister and prisoner. See,
Howe'er she have sinned, what heart were mine, if this
Drew no tears from me : not the meanest soul
That lives most miserable but with such words
Must needs draw down men's pity.

DAVISON

Sure it is,
This queen hath skill of writing : and her hand
Hath manifold eloquence with various voice
To express discourse of sirens or of snakes,
A mermaid's or a monster's, uttering best
All music or all malice. Here is come
A letter writ long since of hers to you
From Sheffield Castle, which for shame or fear
She durst not or she would not thence despatch,
Sent secretly to me from Fotheringay,
Not from her hand, but with her own hand writ,
So foul of import and malignity
I durst not for your majesty's respect
With its fierce infamies afire from hell
Offend your gracious eyesight : but because
Your justice by your mercy's ignorant hand
Hath her fair eyes put out, and walks now blind
Even by the pit's edge deathward, pardon me

If what you never should have seen be shown
By hands that rather would take fire in hand
Than lay in yours this writing. [*Gives her a letter.*

ELIZABETH

By this light,
Whate'er be here, thou hadst done presumptuously,
And Walsingham thy principal, to keep
Aught from mine eyes that being to me designed
Might even with most offence enlighten them.
Here is her hand indeed; and she takes up [*Reading.*
In gracious wise enough the charge imposed
By promise on her and desire of ours,
How loth soe'er she be, regretfully
To bring such things in question of discourse,
Yet with no passion but sincerity,
As God shall witness her, declares to us
What our good lady of Shrewsbury said to her
Touching ourself in terms ensuing; whereto
Answering she chid this dame for such belief,
And reprehended for licentious tongue,
To speak so lewdly of us: which herself
Believes not, knowing the woman's natural heart
And evil will as then to usward. Here
She writes no more than I would well believe
Of her as of the countess. Ha!

DAVISON

Your grace
Shall but defile and vex your eyes and heart
To read these villainies through.

ELIZABETH

God's death, man! peace:
Thou wert not best incense me toward thine own,
Whose eyes have been before me in them. What!
Was she not mad to write this? *One that had*
Your promise—lay with you times numberless—
All license and all privateness that may
Be used of wife and husband! yea, of her
And more dead men than shame remembers. *God*
Shall stand her witness—with the devil of hell
For sponsor to her vows, whose spirit in her
Begot himself this issue. Ha, the duke!
—Nay, God shall give me patience—and his knave,
And Hatton—God have mercy! nay, but hate,
Hate and constraint and rage have wrecked her wits,
And continence of life cut off from lust,
—This common stale of Scotland, that has tried
The sins of three rank nations, and consumed
Their veins whose life she took not—Italy,
France that put half this poison in her blood,
And her own kingdom that being sick therewith
Vomited out on ours the venomous thing
Whose head we set not foot on—but may God
Make my fame fouler through the world than hers
And ranker in men's record, if I spare
The she-wolf that I saved, the woman-beast,
Wolf-woman—how the Latin rings we know,
And what lewd lair first reared her, and whose hand
Writ broad across the Louvre and Holyrood
Lupanar—but no brothel ever bred
Or breathed so rank a soul's infection, spawned
Or spat such foulness in God's face and man's
Or festered in such falsehood as her breath

Strikes honour sick with, and the spirit of shame
Dead as her fang shall strike herself, and send
The serpent that corruption calls her soul
To vie strange venoms with the worm of hell
And make the face of darkness and the grave
Blush hotter with the fires wherein that soul
Sinks deeper than damnation.

DAVISON

Let your grace
Think only that but now the thing is known
And self-discovered which too long your love
Too dangerously hath cherished ; and forget
All but that end which yet remains for her,
That right by pity be not overcome.

ELIZABETH

God pity so my soul as I do right,
And show me no more grace alive or dead
Than I do justice here. Give me again
That warrant I put by, being foolish : yea,
Thy word spake sooth—my soul's eyes were put out—
I could not see for pity. Thou didst well—
I am bounden to thee heartily—to cure
My sight of this distemper, and my soul.
Here in God's sight I set mine hand, who thought
Never to take this thing upon it, nor
Do God so bitter service. Take this hence :
And let me see no word nor hear of her
Till the sun see not such a soul alive.

ACT V

MARY STUART

SCENE I. *Mary's Chamber in Fotheringay Castle*

MARY STUART *and* MARY BEATON.

MARY STUART [*Sings.*

O Lord my God,
I have trusted in thee;
O Jesu my dearest one,
Now set me free.
In prison's oppression,
In sorrow's obsession,
I weary for thee.
With sighing and crying
Bowed down as dying,
I adore thee, I implore thee, set me free!

FREE are the dead: yet fain I would have had
Once, before all captivity find end,
Some breath of freedom living. These that come,
I think, with no such message, must not find,
For all this lameness of my limbs, a heart
As maimed in me with sickness. Three years gone,

When last I parted from the earl marshal's charge,
I did not think to see his face again
Turned on me as his prisoner. Now his wife
Will take no jealousy more to hear of it,
I trust, albeit we meet not as unfriends,
If it be mortal news he brings me. Go,
If I seem ready, as meseems I should,
And well arrayed to bear myself indeed
None otherwise than queenlike in their sight,
Bid them come in. [*Exit* MARY BEATON.
I cannot tell at last
If it be fear or hope that should expect
Death: I have had enough of hope, and fear
Was none of my familiars while I lived
Such life as had more pleasant things to lose
Than death or life may now divide me from.
'Tis not so much to look upon the sun
With eyes that may not lead us where we will,
And halt behind the footless flight of hope
With feet that may not follow: nor were aught
So much, of all things life may think to have,
That one not cowardly born should find it worth
The purchase of so base a price as this,
To stand self-shamed as coward. I do not think
This is mine end that comes upon me: but
I had liefer far it were than, were it not,
That ever I should fear it.

Enter KENT, SHREWSBURY, BEALE, *and Sheriff*

Sirs, good day:
With such good heart as prisoners have, I bid
You and your message welcome.

KENT

Madam, this
The secretary of the council here hath charge
To read as their commission.

MARY STUART

Let me hear
In as brief wise as may beseem the time
The purport of it.

BEALE

Our commission here
Given by the council under the great seal
Pronounces on your head for present doom
Death, by this written sentence.

MARY STUART

Ay, my lords?
May I believe this, and not hold myself
Mocked as a child with shadows? In God's name,
Speak you, my lord of Shrewsbury: let me know
If this be dream or waking.

KENT

Verily,
No dream it is, nor dreamers we that pray,
Madam, you meetly would prepare yourself
To stand before God's judgment presently.

MARY STUART

I had rather so than ever stand again
Before the face of man's. Why speak not you,

To whom I speak, my lord earl marshal? Nay,
Look not so heavily: by my life, he stands
As one at point to weep. Why, good my lord,
To know that none may swear by Mary's life
And hope again to find belief of man
Upon so slight a warrant, should not bring
This trouble on your eyes; look up, and say
The word you have for her that never was
Less than your friend, and prisoner.

SHREWSBURY

None save this,
Which willingly I would not speak, I may;
That presently your time is come to die.

MARY STUART

Why, then, I am well content to leave a world
Wherein I am no more serviceable at all
To God or man, and have therein so long
Endured so much affliction. All my life
I have ever earnestly desired the love
And friendship of your queen; have warned her oft
Of coming dangers; and have cherished long
The wish that I but once might speak with her
In plain-souled confidence; being well assured,
Had we but once met, there an end had been
Of jealousies between us: but our foes,
With equal wrong toward either, treacherously
Have kept us still in sunder: by whose craft
And crooked policy hath my sister's crown
Fallen in great peril, and myself have been
Imprisoned, and inveterately maligned,
And here must now be murdered. But I know

That only for my faith's sake I must die,
And this to know for truth is recompense
As large as all my sufferings. For the crime
Wherewith I am charged, upon this holy book
I lay mine hand for witness of my plea,
I am wholly ignorant of it ; and solemnly
Declare that never yet conspiracy
Devised against the queen my sister's life
Took instigation or assent from me.

KENT

You swear but on a popish Testament :
Such oaths are all as worthless as the book.

MARY STUART

I swear upon the book wherein I trust :
Would you give rather credit to mine oath
Sworn on your scriptures that I trust not in?

KENT

Madam, I fain would have you heartily
Renounce your superstition ; toward which end
With us the godly dean of Peterborough,
Good Richard Fletcher, well approved for faith
Of God and of the queen, is hither come
To proffer you his prayerful ministry.

MARY STUART

If you, my lords, or he will pray for me,
I shall be thankful for your prayers ; but may not
With theirs that hold another faith mix mine.

I pray you therefore that mine almoner may
Have leave to attend on me, that from his hands
I, having made confession, may receive
The sacrament.

KENT

We may not grant you this.

MARY STUART

I shall not see my chaplain ere I die?
But two months gone this grace was granted me
By word expressly from your queen, to have
Again his ministration: and at last
In the utter hour and bitter strait of death
Is this denied me?

KENT

Madam, for your soul
More meet it were to cast these mummeries out,
And bear Christ only in your heart, than serve
With ceremonies of ritual hand and tongue
His mere idolatrous likeness.

MARY STUART

This were strange,
That I should bear him visible in my hand
Or keep with lips and knees his titular rites
And cast in heart no thought upon him. Nay,
Put me, I pray, to no more argument:
But if this least thing be not granted, yet
Grant me to know the season of my death.

SHREWSBURY

At eight by dawn to-morrow you must die.

MARY STUART

So shall I hardly see the sun again.
By dawn to-morrow? meanest men condemned
Give not their lives' breath up so suddenly:
Howbeit, I had rather yield you thanks, who make
Such brief end of the bitterness of death
For me who have borne such bitter length of life,
Than plead with protestation of appeal
For half a piteous hour's remission: nor
Henceforward shall I be denied of man
Aught, who may never now crave aught again
But whence is no denial. Yet shall this
Not easily be believed of men, nor find
In foreign ears acceptance, that a queen
Should be thrust out of life thus. Good my friend,
Bid my physician Gorion come to me:
I have to speak with him—sirs, with your leave—
Of certain monies due to me in France.
What, shall I twice desire your leave, my lords,
To live these poor last hours of mine alive
At peace among my friends? I have much to do,
And little time wherein to do it is left.

SHREWSBURY [*To* KENT *apart.*

I pray she may not mean worse than I would
Against herself ere morning.

KENT

Let not then
This French knave's drugs come near her, nor himself:
We will take order for it.

SHREWSBURY

Nay, this were but
To exasperate more her thwarted heart, and make
Despair more desperate than itself. Pray God
She be not minded to compel us put
Force at the last upon her of men's hands
To hale her violently to death, and make
Judgment look foul and fierce as murder's face
With stain of strife and passion.

[*Exeunt all but* MARY STUART *and* MARY BEATON.

MARY STUART

So, my friend,
The last of all our Maries are you left
To-morrow. Strange has been my life, and now
Strange looks my death upon me: yet, albeit
Nor the hour nor manner of it be mine to choose,
Ours is it yet, and all men's in the world,
To make death welcome in what wise we will.
Bid you my chaplain, though he see me not,
Watch through the night and pray for me: perchance,
When ere the sundawn they shall bring me forth,
I may behold him, and upon my knees
Receive his blessing. Let our supper be
Served earlier in than wont was: whereunto
I bid my true poor servants here, to take

Farewell and drink at parting to them all
The cup of my last kindness, in good hope
They shall stand alway constant in their faith
And dwell in peace together : thereupon
What little store is left me will I share
Among them, and between my girls divide
My wardrobe and my jewels severally,
Reserving but the black robe and the red
That shall attire me for my death : and last
With mine own hand shall be my will writ out
And all memorials more set down therein
That I would leave for legacies of love
To my next kinsmen and my household folk.
And to the king my brother yet of France
Must I write briefly, but a word to say
I am innocent of the charge whereon I die
Now for my right's sake claimed upon this crown,
And our true faith's sake, but am barred from sight
Even of mine almoner here, though hard at hand ;
And I would bid him take upon his charge
The keeping of my servants, as I think
He shall not for compassionate shame refuse,
Albeit his life be softer than his heart ;
And in religion for a queen's soul pray
That once was styled Most Christian, and is now
In the true faith about to die, deprived
Of all her past possessions. But this most
And first behoves it, that the king of Spain
By Gorion's word of mouth receive my heart,
Who soon shall stand before him. Bid the leech
Come hither, and alone, to speak with me.

[*Exit* MARY BEATON.

She is dumb as death : yet never in her life
Hath she been quick of tongue. For all the rest,

Poor souls, how well they love me, all as well
I think I know : and one of them or twain
At least may surely see me to my death
Ere twice the hours have changed again. Perchance
Love that can weep not would the gladlier die
For those it cannot weep on. Time wears thin :
They should not now play laggard : nay, he comes,
The last that ever speaks alone with me
Before my soul shall speak alone with God.

Enter GORION

I have sent once more for you to no such end
As sick men for physicians : no strong drug
May put the death next morning twelve hours back
Whose twilight overshadows me, that am
Nor sick nor medicinable. Let me know
If I may lay the last of all my trust
On you that ever shall be laid on man
To prove him kind and loyal.

GORION

So may God
Deal with me, madam, as I prove to you
Faithful, though none but I were in the world
That you might trust beside.

MARY STUART

With equal heart
Do I believe and thank you. I would send
To Paris for the ambassador from Spain
This letter with two diamonds, which your craft

For me must cover from men's thievish eyes
Where they may be not looked for.

GORION

Easily
Within some molten drug may these be hid,
And faithfully by me conveyed to him.

MARY STUART

The lesser of them shall he keep in sign
Of my good friendship toward himself: but this
In token to King Philip shall he give
That for the truth I die, and dying commend
To him my friends and servants, Gilbert Curle,
His sister, and Jane Kennedy, who shall
To-night watch by me; and my ladies all
That have endured my prison: let him not
Forget from his good favour one of these
That I remember to him: Charles Arundel,
And either banished Paget; one whose heart
Was better toward my service than his hand,
Morgan: and of mine exiles for their faith,
The prelates first of Glasgow and of Ross;
And Liggons and Throgmorton, that have lost
For me their leave to live on English earth;
And Westmoreland, that lives now more forlorn
Than died that earl who rose for me with him.
These I beseech him favour for my sake
Still: and forget not, if he come again
To rule as king in England, one of them
That were mine enemies here: the treasurer first,
And Leicester, Walsingham, and Huntingdon,
At Tutbury once my foe, fifteen years gone,

And Wade that spied upon me three years since,
And Paulet here my gaoler: set them down
For him to wreak wrath's utmost justice on,
In my revenge remembered. Though I be
Dead, let him not forsake his hope to reign
Upon this people: with my last breath left
I make this last prayer to him, that not the less
He will maintain the invasion yet designed
Of us before on England: let him think,
It is God's quarrel, and on earth a cause
Well worthy of his greatness: which being won,
Let him forget no man of these nor me.
And now will I lie down, that four hours' sleep
May give me strength before I sleep again
And need take never thought for waking more.

SCENE II. *The Presence Chamber*

SHREWSBURY, KENT, PAULET, DRURY, MELVILLE, *and Attendants*

KENT

The stroke is past of eight.

SHREWSBURY

Not far, my lord.

KENT

What stays the provost and the sheriff yet
That went ere this to bring the prisoner forth?
What, are her doors locked inwards? then perchance

Our last night's auguries of some close design
By death contrived of her self-slaughterous hand
To baffle death by justice hit but right
The heart of her bad purpose.

SHREWSBURY

Fear it not:
See where she comes, a queenlier thing to see
Than whom such thoughts take hold on.

Enter MARY STUART, *led by two gentlemen and preceded by the Sheriff;* MARY BEATON, BARBARA MOWBRAY, *and other ladies behind, who remain in the doorway*

MELVILLE (*kneeling to* MARY)

Woe am I,
Madam, that I must bear to Scotland back
Such tidings watered with such tears as these.

MARY STUART

Weep not, good Melville: rather should your heart
Rejoice that here an end is come at last
Of Mary Stuart's long sorrows; for be sure
That all this world is only vanity.
And this record I pray you make of me,
That a true woman to my faith I die,
And true to Scotland and to France: but God
Forgive them that have long desired mine end
And with false tongues have thirsted for my blood
As the hart thirsteth for the water-brooks.
O God, who art truth, and the author of all truth,

Thou knowest the extreme recesses of my heart,
And how that I was willing all my days
That England should with Scotland be fast friends.
Commend me to my son: tell him that I
Have nothing done to prejudice his rights
As king: and now, good Melville, fare thee well.
My lord of Kent, whence comes it that your charge
Hath bidden back my women there at door
Who fain to the end would bear me company?

KENT

Madam, this were not seemly nor discreet,
That these should so have leave to vex men's ears
With cries and loose lamentings: haply too
They might in superstition seek to dip
Their handkerchiefs for relics in your blood.

MARY STUART

That will I pledge my word they shall not. Nay,
The queen would surely not deny me this,
The poor last thing that I shall ask on earth.
Even a far meaner person dying I think
She would not have so handled. Sir, you know
I am her cousin, of her grandsire's blood,
A queen of France by marriage, and by birth
Anointed queen of Scotland. My poor girls
Desire no more than but to see me die.

SHREWSBURY

Madam, you have leave to elect of this your train
Two ladies with four men to go with you.

MARY STUART

I choose from forth my Scottish following here
Jane Kennedy, with Elspeth Curle : of men,
Bourgoin and Gorion shall attend on me,
Gervais and Didier. Come then, let us go.

[*Exeunt : manent* MARY BEATON *and* BARBARA MOWBRAY.

BARBARA

I wist I was not worthy, though my child
It is that her own hands made Christian : but
I deemed she should have bid you go with her.
Alas, and would not all we die with her ?

MARY BEATON

Why, from the gallery here at hand your eyes
May go with her along the hall beneath
Even to the scaffold : and I fain would hear
What fain I would not look on. Pray you, then,
If you may bear to see it as those below,
Do me that sad good service of your eyes
For mine to look upon it, and declare
All that till all be done I will not see ;
I pray you of your pity.

BARBARA

Though mine heart
Break, it shall not for fear forsake the sight
That may be faithful yet in following her,
Nor yet for grief refuse your prayer, being fain

To give your love such bitter comfort, who
So long have never left her.

MARY BEATON

Till she die—
I have ever known I shall not till she die.
See you yet aught? if I hear spoken words,
My heart can better bear these pulses, else
Unbearable, that rend it.

BARBARA

Yea, I see
Stand in mid hall the scaffold, black as death,
And black the block upon it: all around,
Against the throng a guard of halberdiers;
And the axe against the scaffold-rail reclined,
And two men masked on either hand beyond:
And hard behind the block a cushion set,
Black, as the chair behind it.

MARY BEATON

When I saw
Fallen on a scaffold once a young man's head,
Such things as these I saw not. Nay, but on:
I knew not that I spake: and toward your ears
Indeed I spake not.

BARBARA

All those faces change;
She comes more royally than ever yet
Fell foot of man triumphant on this earth,
Imperial more than empire made her, born

Enthroned as queen sat never. Not a line
Stirs of her sovereign feature: like a bride
Brought home she mounts the scaffold; and her eyes
Sweep regal round the cirque beneath, and rest,
Subsiding with a smile. She sits, and they,
The doomsmen earls, beside her; at her left
The sheriff, and the clerk at hand on high,
To read the warrant.

MARY BEATON

None stands there but knows
What things therein are writ against her: God
Knows what therein is writ not. God forgive
All.

BARBARA

Not a face there breathes of all the throng
But is more moved than hers to hear this read,
Whose look alone is changed not.

MARY BEATON

Once I knew
A face that changed not in as dire an hour
More than the queen's face changes. Hath he not
Ended?

BARBARA

You cannot hear them speak below:
Come near and hearken; bid not me repeat
All.

MARY BEATON

I beseech you—for I may not come.

BARBARA

Now speaks Lord Shrewsbury but a word or twain,
And brieflier yet she answers, and stands up
As though to kneel, and pray.

MARY BEATON

I too have prayed—
God hear at last her prayers not less than mine,
Which failed not, sure, of hearing.

BARBARA

Now draws nigh
That heretic priest, and bows himself, and thrice
Strives, as a man that sleeps in pain, to speak,
Stammering: she waves him by, as one whose prayers
She knows may nought avail her: now she kneels,
And the earls rebuke her, and she answers not,
Kneeling. O Christ, whose likeness there engraved
She strikes against her bosom, hear her! Now
That priest lifts up his voice against her prayer,
Praying: and a voice all round goes up with his:
But hers is lift up higher than climbs their cry,
In the great psalms of penitence: and now
She prays aloud in English; for the Pope
Our father, and his church; and for her son,
And for the queen her murderess; and that God
May turn from England yet his wrath away;
And so forgives her enemies; and implores
High intercession of the saints with Christ,
Whom crucified she kisses on his cross,
And crossing now her breast—Ah, heard you not?
Even as thine arms were spread upon the cross,

So make thy grace, O Jesus, wide for me,
Receive me to thy mercy so, and so
Forgive my sins.

MARY BEATON

So be it, if so God please.
Is she not risen up yet?

BARBARA

Yea, but mine eyes
Darken: because those deadly twain close masked
Draw nigh as men that crave forgiveness, which
Gently she grants: *for now*, she said, *I hope*
You shall end all my troubles. Now meseems
They would put hand upon her as to help,
And disarray her raiment: but she smiles—
Heard you not that? can you nor hear nor speak,
Poor heart, for pain? *Truly*, she said, *my lords*,
I never had such chamber-grooms before
As these to wait on me.

MARY BEATON

An end, an end.

BARBARA

Now come those twain upon the scaffold up
Whom she preferred before us: and she lays
Her crucifix down, which now the headsman takes
Into his cursed hand, but being rebuked
Puts back for shame that sacred spoil of hers.
And now they lift her veil up from her head

Softly, and softly draw the black robe off,
And all in red as of a funeral flame
She stands up statelier yet before them, tall
And clothed as if with sunset: and she takes
From Elspeth's hand the crimson sleeves, and draws
Their covering on her arms: and now those twain
Burst out aloud in weeping: and she speaks—
Weep not; I promised for you. Now she kneels;
And Jane binds round a kerchief on her eyes:
And smiling last her heavenliest smile on earth,
She waves a blind hand toward them, with *Farewell, Farewell, to meet again:* and they come down
And leave her praying aloud, *In thee, O Lord, I put my trust:* and now, that psalm being through,
She lays between the block and her soft neck
Her long white peerless hands up tenderly,
Which now the headsman draws again away,
But softly too: now stir her lips again—
Into thine hands, O Lord, into thine hands, Lord, I commend my spirit: and now—but now,
Look you, not I, the last upon her.

MARY BEATON

Ha!

He strikes awry: she stirs not. Nay, but now
He strikes aright, and ends it.

BARBARA

Hark, a cry.

VOICE BELOW

So perish all found enemies of the queen!

ANOTHER VOICE

Amen.

MARY BEATON

I heard that very cry go up
Far off long since to God, who answers here.

APPENDIX

I

MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS

Mary Queen of Scots, daughter of King James V. and his wife Mary of Lorraine, was born in December 1542, a few days before the death of her father, heart-broken by the disgrace of his arms at Solway Moss, where the disaffected nobles had declined to encounter an enemy of inferior force in the cause of a king whose systematic policy had been directed against the privileges of their order, and whose representative on the occasion was an unpopular favourite appointed general in defiance of their ill-will. On September 9 following the ceremony of coronation was duly performed upon the infant. A scheme for her betrothal to Edward Prince of Wales was defeated by the grasping greed of his father, whose obvious ambition to annex the crown of Scotland at once to that of England aroused instantly the general suspicion and indignation of Scottish patriotism. In 1548 the queen of six years old was betrothed to the dauphin Francis, and set sail for

France, where she arrived on August 15. The society in which the child was thenceforward reared is known to readers of Brantôme as well as that of imperial Rome at its worst is known to readers of Suetonius or Petronius,—as well as that of papal Rome at its worst is known to readers of the diary kept by the domestic chaplain of Pope Alexander VI. Only in their pages can a parallel be found to the gay and easy record which reveals without sign of shame or suspicion of offence the daily life of a court compared to which the court of King Charles II. is as the court of Queen Victoria to the society described by Grammont. Debauchery of all kinds and murder in all forms were the daily subjects of excitement or of jest to the brilliant circle which revolved around Queen Catherine de' Medici. After ten years' training under the tutelage of the woman whose main instrument of policy was the corruption of her own children, the queen of Scots, aged fifteen years and five months, was married to the eldest and feeblest of the brood on April 24, 1558. On November 17, Elizabeth became queen of England, and the princes of Lorraine—Francis the great duke of Guise and his brother the cardinal—induced their niece and her husband to assume, in addition to the arms of France and Scotland, the arms of a country over which they asserted the right of Mary Stuart to reign as legitimate heiress of Mary Tudor. Civil strife broke out in Scotland between John Knox and the queen dowager—between the self-styled 'congregation of the Lord' and the adherents of the regent, whose French troops repelled the combined forces of the Scotch and their English allies from the beleaguered walls of Leith, little more than a

month before the death of their mistress in the castle of Edinburgh, on June 10, 1560. On August 25 Protestantism was proclaimed and Catholicism suppressed in Scotland by a convention of states assembled without the assent of the absent queen. On December 5, Francis the Second died; in August 1561 his widow left France for Scotland, having been refused a safe-conduct by Elizabeth on the ground of her own previous refusal to ratify the treaty made with England by her commissioners in the same month of the preceding year. She arrived nevertheless in safety at Leith, escorted by three of her uncles of the house of Lorraine, and bringing in her train her future biographer, Brantôme, and Chastelard, the first of all her voluntary victims. On August 21 she first met the only man able to withstand her; and their first passage of arms left, as he has recorded, upon the mind of John Knox an ineffaceable impression of her 'proud mind, crafty wit, and indurate heart against God and his truth.' And yet her acts of concession and conciliation were such as no fanatic on the opposite side could have approved. She assented, not only to the undisturbed maintenance of the new creed, but even to a scheme for the endowment of the Protestant ministry out of the confiscated lands of the Church. Her half-brother, Lord James Stuart, shared the duties of her chief counsellor with William Maitland of Lethington, the keenest and most liberal thinker in the country. By the influence of Lord James, in spite of the earnest opposition of Knox, permission was obtained for her to hear mass celebrated in her private chapel—a licence to which, said the Reformer, he would have preferred the invasion of ten thousand

Frenchmen. Through all the first troubles of her reign the young queen steered her skilful and dauntless way with the tact of a woman and the courage of a man. An insurrection in the north, headed by the earl of Huntly under pretext of rescuing from justice the life which his son had forfeited by his share in a homicidal brawl, was crushed at a blow by the Lord James, against whose life, as well as against his sister's liberty, the conspiracy of the Gordons had been aimed, and on whom, after the father had fallen in fight and the son had expiated his double offence on the scaffold, the leading rebel's earldom of Murray was conferred by the gratitude of the queen. Exactly four months after the battle of Corrichie, and the subsequent execution of a criminal whom she is said to have 'loved entirely,' had put an end to the first insurrection raised against her, Pierre de Boscosel de Chastelard, who had returned to France with the other companions of her arrival and in November 1562 had revisited Scotland, expiated with his head the offence or the misfortune of a second detection at night in her bed-chamber. In the same month, twenty-five years afterwards, the execution of his mistress, according to the verdict of her contemporaries in France, avenged the blood of a lover who had died without uttering a word to realize the apprehension which (according to Knox) had before his trial impelled her to desire her brother 'that, as he loved her, he would slay Chastelard, and let him never speak word.' And in the same month, two years from the date of Chastelard's execution, her first step was unconsciously taken on the road to Fotheringay, when she gave her heart at first sight to her kinsman Henry Lord Darnley, son

of Matthew Stuart, earl of Lennox, who had suffered an exile of twenty years in expiation of his intrigues with England, and had married the niece of King Henry the Eighth, daughter of his sister Margaret, the widow of James the Fourth, by her second husband, the earl of Angus. Queen Elizabeth, with the almost incredible want of tact or instinctive delicacy which distinguished and disfigured her vigorous intelligence, had recently proposed as a suitor to the Queen of Scots her own high-born and low-souled favourite, Lord Robert Dudley, the widower if not the murderer of Amy Robsart; and she now protested against the project of marriage between Mary and Darnley. Mary, who had already married her kinsman in secret at Stirling Castle with Catholic rites celebrated in the apartment of David Rizzio, her secretary for correspondence with France, assured the English ambassador, in reply to the protest of his mistress, that the marriage would not take place for three months, when a dispensation from the Pope would allow the cousins to be publicly united without offence to the Church. On July 29, 1565, they were accordingly remarried at Holyrood. The hapless and worthless bridegroom had already incurred the hatred of two powerful enemies, the earls of Morton and Glencairn; but the former of these took part with the queen against the forces raised by Murray, Glencairn, and others, under the nominal leadership of Hamilton, duke of Chatelherault, on the double plea of danger to the new religion of the country, and of the illegal proceeding by which Darnley had been proclaimed king of Scots without the needful constitutional assent of the estates of the realm. Murray was cited to attend the 'raid' or array levied

by the king and queen, and was duly denounced by public blast of trumpet for his non-appearance. He entered Edinburgh with his forces, but failed to hold the town against the guns of the castle, and fell back upon Dumfries before the advance of the royal army, which was now joined by James Hepburn, earl of Bothwell, on his return from a three years' outlawed exile in France. He had been accused in 1562 of a plot to seize the queen and put her into the keeping of the earl of Arran, whose pretentions to her hand ended only when his insanity could no longer be concealed. Another new adherent was the son of the late earl of Huntly, to whom the forfeited honours of his house were restored a few months before the marriage of his sister to Bothwell. The queen now appealed to France for aid; but Castelnau, the French ambassador, replied to her passionate pleading by sober and earnest advice to make peace with the malcontents. This counsel was rejected, and in October 1565 the queen marched an army of 18,000 men against them from Edinburgh; their forces dispersed in face of superior numbers, and Murray, on seeking shelter in England, was received with contumely by Elizabeth, whose half-hearted help had failed to support his enterprise, and whose intercession for his return found at first no favour with the queen of Scots. But the conduct of the besotted boy on whom at their marriage she had bestowed the title of king began at once to justify the enterprise and to play into the hands of all his enemies alike. His father set him on to demand the crown matrimonial, which would at least have assured to him the rank and station of independent royalty for life. Rizzio, hitherto his friend and advocate, in-

duced the queen to reply by a reasonable refusal to this hazardous and audacious request. Darnley at once threw himself into the arms of the party opposed to the policy of the queen and her secretary—a policy which at that moment was doubly and trebly calculated to exasperate the fears of the religious and the pride of the patriotic. Mary was invited if not induced by the king of Spain to join his league for the suppression of Protestantism ; while the actual or prospective endowment of Rizzio with Morton's office of chancellor, and the projected attainder of Murray and his allies, combined to inflame at once the anger and the apprehension of the Protestant nobles. According to one account, Darnley privately assured his uncle George Douglas of his wife's infidelity ; he had himself, if he might be believed, discovered the secretary in the queen's apartment at midnight, under circumstances yet more unequivocally compromising than those which had brought Chastelard to the scaffold. Another version of the pitiful history represents Douglas as infusing suspicion of Rizzio into the empty mind of his nephew, and thus winning his consent to a deed already designed by others. A bond was drawn in which Darnley pledged himself to support the confederates who undertook to punish 'certain privy persons' offensive to the state, 'especially a stranger Italian called Davie ;' another was subscribed by Darnley and the banished lords, then biding their time in Newcastle, which engaged him to procure their pardon and restoration, while pledging them to ensure to him the enjoyment of the title he coveted, with the consequent security of an undisputed succession to the crown, despite the counter claims of the house of Hamilton, in case

his wife should die without issue—a result which, intentionally or not, he and his fellow conspirators did all that brutality could have suggested to accelerate and secure. On March 9, the palace of Holyrood was invested by a troop under the command of Morton, while Rizzio was dragged by force out of the queen's presence and slain without trial in the heat of the moment. The parliament was discharged by proclamation issued in the name of Darnley as king; and in the evening of the next day the banished lords, whom it was to have condemned to outlawry, returned to Edinburgh. On the day following they were graciously received by the queen, who undertook to sign a bond for their security, but delayed the subscription till next morning under plea of sickness. During the night she escaped with Darnley, whom she had already seduced from the party of his accomplices, and arrived at Dunbar on the third morning after the slaughter of her favourite. From thence they returned to Edinburgh on March 28, guarded by 2,000 horsemen under the command of Bothwell, who had escaped from Holyrood on the night of the murder, to raise a force on the queen's behalf with his usual soldierly promptitude. The slayers of Rizzio fled to England, and were outlawed; Darnley was permitted to protest his innocence and denounce his accomplices; after which he became the scorn of all parties alike, and few men dared or cared to be seen in his company. On June 19, a son was born to his wife, and in the face of his previous protestations he was induced to acknowledge himself the father. But, as Murray and his partisans returned to favour and influence no longer incompatible with that of Bothwell and Huntly, he grew desperate

enough with terror to dream of escape to France. This design was at once frustrated by the queen's resolution. She summoned him to declare his reasons for it in presence of the French ambassador and an assembly of the nobles ; she besought him for God's sake to speak out, and not spare her ; and at last he left her presence with an avowal that he had nothing to allege. The favour shown to Bothwell had not yet given occasion for scandal, though his character as an adventurous libertine was as notable as his reputation for military hardihood ; but as the summer advanced his insolence increased with his influence at court and the general aversion of his rivals. He was richly endowed by Mary from the greater and lesser spoils of the Church ; and the three wardenships of the border, united for the first time in his person, gave the lord high admiral of Scotland a position of unequalled power. In the gallant discharge of its duties he was dangerously wounded by a leading outlaw, whom he slew in single combat ; and while yet confined to Hermitage Castle he received a visit of two hours from the queen, who rode thither from Jedburgh and back through twenty miles of the wild borderland, where her person was in perpetual danger from the free-booters whom her father's policy had striven and had failed to extirpate. The result of this daring ride was a ten days' fever, after which she removed by short stages to Craigmillar, where a proposal for her divorce from Darnley was laid before her by Bothwell, Murray, Huntly, Argyle, and Lethington, who was chosen spokesman for the rest. She assented on condition that the divorce could be lawfully effected without impeachment of her son's legitimacy ;

whereupon Lethington undertook in the name of all present that she should be rid of her husband without any prejudice to the child—at whose baptism a few days afterwards Bothwell took the place of the putative father, though Darnley was actually residing under the same roof, and it was not till after the ceremony that he was suddenly struck down by a sickness so violent as to excite suspicions of poison. He was removed to Glasgow, and left for the time in charge of his father ; but on the news of his progress towards recovery a bond was drawn up for execution of the sentence of death which had secretly been pronounced against the twice-turned traitor who had earned his doom at all hands alike. On the 22nd of the next month (January 1567) the queen visited her husband at Glasgow and proposed to remove him to Craigmillar Castle, where he would have the benefit of medicinal baths ; but instead of this resort he was conveyed on the last day of the month to the lonely and squalid shelter of the residence which was soon to be made memorable by his murder. Between the ruins of two sacred buildings, with the town-wall to the south and a suburban hamlet known to ill fame as the Thieves' Row to the north of it, a lodging was prepared for the titular king of Scotland, and fitted up with tapestries taken from the Gordons after the battle of Corrichie. On the evening of Sunday, February 9, Mary took her last leave of the miserable boy who had so often and so mortally outraged her as consort and as queen. That night the whole city was shaken out of sleep by an explosion of gunpowder which shattered to fragments the building in which he should have slept and perished ; and next morning the bodies of Darnley and a page

were found strangled in a garden adjoining it, whither they had apparently escaped over a wall, to be despatched by the hands of Bothwell's attendant confederates.

Upon the view which may be taken of Mary's conduct during the next three months depends the whole debatable question of her character. According to the professed champions of that character, this conduct was a tissue of such dastardly imbecility, such heartless irresolution, and such brainless inconsistency, as for ever to dispose of her time-honoured claim to the credit of intelligence and courage. It is certain that just three months and six days after the murder of her husband she became the wife of her husband's murderer. On February 11 she wrote to the bishop of Glasgow, her ambassador in France, a brief letter of simple eloquence, announcing her providential escape from a design upon her own as well as her husband's life. A reward of two thousand pounds was offered by proclamation for discovery of the murderer. Bothwell and others, his satellites or the queen's, were instantly placarded by name as the criminals. Voices were heard by night in the streets of Edinburgh calling down judgment on the assassins. Four days after the discovery of the bodies, Darnley was buried in the chapel of Holyrood with secrecy as remarkable as the solemnity with which Rizzio had been interred there less than a year before. On the Sunday following, Mary left Edinburgh for Seton Palace, twelve miles from the capital, where scandal asserted that she passed the time merrily in shooting-matches with Bothwell for her partner against Lords Seton and Huntly; other accounts represent Huntly and Bothwell as left at Holyrood in charge of the

infant prince Gracefully and respectfully, with statesmanlike yet feminine dexterity, the demands of Darnley's father for justice on the murderers of his son were accepted and eluded by his daughter-in-law. Bothwell, with a troop of fifty men, rode through Edinburgh defiantly denouncing vengeance on his concealed accusers. As weeks elapsed without action on the part of the royal widow, while the cry of blood was up throughout the country, raising echoes from England and abroad, the murmur of accusation began to rise against her also. Murray, with his sister's ready permission, withdrew to France. Already the report was abroad that the queen was bent on marriage with Bothwell, whose last year's marriage with the sister of Huntly would be dissolved, and the assent of his wife's brother purchased by the restitution of his forfeited estates. According to the *Memoirs* of Sir James Melville, both Lord Herries and himself resolved to appeal to the queen in terms of bold and earnest remonstrance against so desperate and scandalous a design; Herries, having been met with assurances of its unreality and professions of astonishment at the suggestion, instantly fled from court; Melville, evading the danger of a merely personal protest without backers to support him, laid before Mary a letter from a loyal Scot long resident in England, which urged upon her consideration and her conscience the danger and disgrace of such a project yet more freely than Herries had ventured to do by word of mouth; but the sole result was that it needed all the queen's courage and resolution to rescue him from the violence of the man for whom, she was reported to have said, she cared not if she lost

France, England, and her own country, and would go with him to the world's end in a white petticoat before she would leave him. On March 28 the privy council, in which Bothwell himself sat, appointed April 12 as the day of his trial; Lennox, instead of the crown, being named as the accuser, and cited by royal letters to appear at 'the humble request and petition of the said Earl Bothwell,' who on the day of the trial had 4,000 armed men behind him in the streets, while the castle was also at his command. Under these arrangements it was not thought wonderful that Lennox discreetly declined the danger of attendance, even with 3,000 men ready to follow him, at the risk of desperate street fighting. He pleaded sickness, asked for more time, and demanded that the accused, instead of enjoying special favour, should share the treatment of other suspected criminals. But as no particle of evidence on his side was advanced, the protest of his representative was rejected, and Bothwell, acquitted in default of witnesses against him, was free to challenge any persistent accuser to the ancient ordeal of battle. His wealth and power were enlarged by gift of the parliament which met on the 14th and rose on the 19th of April.—a date made notable by the subsequent supper at Ainslie's tavern, where Bothwell obtained the signatures of its leading members to a document affirming his innocence, and pledging the subscribers to maintain it against all challengers, to stand by him in all his quarrels, and finally to promote by all means in their power the marriage by which they recommended the queen to reward his services and benefit the country. On the second day following Mary went to visit her child at Stirling,

where his guardian, the earl of Mar, refused to admit more than two women in her train. It was well known in Edinburgh that Bothwell had a body of men ready to intercept her on the way back, and carry her to Dunbar—not, as was naturally inferred, without good assurance of her consent. On April 24, as she approached Edinburgh, Bothwell accordingly met her at the head of 800 spearmen, assured her (as she afterwards averred) that she was in the utmost peril, and escorted her, together with Huntly, Lethington, and Melville, who were then in attendance, to Dunbar Castle. On May 3, Lady Jane Gordon, who had become countess of Bothwell on February 22 of the year preceding, obtained, on the ground of her husband's infidelities, a separation which, however, would not under the old laws of Catholic Scotland have left him free to marry again; on the 7th, accordingly, the necessary divorce was pronounced, after two days' session, by a clerical tribunal which ten days before had received from the queen a special commission to give judgment on a plea of somewhat apocryphal consanguinity alleged by Bothwell as the ground of an action for divorce against his wife. The fact was studiously evaded or concealed that a dispensation had been granted by the archbishop of St. Andrews for this irregularity, which could only have arisen through some illicit connection of the husband with a relative of the wife between whom and himself no affinity by blood or marriage could be proved. On the day when the first or Protestant divorce was pronounced, Mary and Bothwell returned to Edinburgh with every prepared appearance of a peaceful triumph. Lest her captivity should have been held to invalidate the late

legal proceedings in her name, proclamation was made of forgiveness accorded by the queen to her captor in consideration of his past and future services, and her intention was announced to reward them by further promotion; and on the same day (May 12) he was duly created duke of Orkney and Shetland. The duke, as a conscientious Protestant, refused to marry his mistress according to the rites of her church; and she, the chosen champion of its cause, agreed to be married to him, not merely by a Protestant, but by one who before his conversion had been a Catholic bishop, and should therefore have been more hateful and contemptible in her eyes than any ordinary heretic, had not religion as well as policy, faith as well as reason, been absorbed or superseded by some more mastering passion or emotion. This passion or emotion, according to those who deny her attachment to Bothwell, was simply terror—the blind and irrational prostration of an abject spirit before the cruel force of circumstances and the crafty wickedness of men. Hitherto, according to all evidence, she had shown herself on all occasions, as on all subsequent occasions she indisputably showed herself, the most fearless, the most keen-sighted, the most ready-witted, the most high-gifted and high-spirited of women; gallant and generous, skilful and practical, never to be cowed by fortune, never to be cajoled by craft; neither more unselfish in her ends nor more unscrupulous in her practice than might have been expected from her training and her creed. But at the crowning moment of trial there are those who assert their belief that the woman who on her way to the field of Corrichie had uttered her wish to be a man, that she

might know all the hardship and all the enjoyment of a soldier's life, riding forth 'in jack and knapscull'—the woman who long afterwards was to hold her own for two days together without help of counsel against all the array of English law and English statesmanship, armed with irrefragable evidence and supported by the resentment of a nation—showed herself equally devoid of moral and of physical resolution; too senseless to realize the significance and too heartless to face the danger of a situation from which the simplest exercise of reason, principle, or courage must have rescued the most unsuspicious and inexperienced of honest women who was not helplessly deficient in self-reliance and self-respect. The famous correspondence produced next year in evidence against her at the conference of York may have been, as her partisans affirm, so craftily garbled and falsified by interpolation, suppression, perversion, or absolute forgery, as to be all but historically worthless. Its acceptance or its rejection does not in any degree whatever affect, for better or for worse, the rational estimate of her character. The problem presented by the simple existence of the facts just summed up remains in either case absolutely the same.

That the coarse and imperious nature of the hardy and able ruffian who had now become openly her master should no less openly have shown itself even in the first moments of their inauspicious union is what any bystander of common insight must inevitably have foreseen. Tears, dejection, and passionate expressions of a despair 'wishing only for death,' bore fitful and variable witness to her first sense of a heavier yoke than yet had galled her spirit and her pride. At other times her affectionate gaiety would

give evidence as trustworthy of a fearless and improvident satisfaction. They rode out in state together, and if he kept cap in hand as a subject she would snatch it from him and clap it on his head again; while in graver things she took all due or possible care to gratify his ambition, by the insertion of a clause in their contract of marriage which made their joint signature necessary to all documents of state issued under the sign-manual. She despatched to France a special envoy, the bishop of Dumblane, with instructions setting forth at length the unparalleled and hitherto ill-requited services and merits of Bothwell, and the necessity of compliance at once with his passion and with the unanimous counsel of the nation,—a people who would endure the rule of no foreign consort, and whom none of their own countrymen were so competent to control, alike by wisdom and by valour, as the incomparable subject of her choice. These personal merits and this political necessity were the only pleas advanced in a letter to her ambassador in England. But that neither plea would avail her for a moment in Scotland she had ominous evidence on the thirteenth day after her marriage, when no response was made to the usual form of proclamation for a raid or levy of forces under pretext of a campaign against the reivers of the border. On the 6th or 7th of June Mary and Bothwell took refuge in Borthwick Castle, twelve miles from the capital, where the fortress was in the keeping of an adherent whom the diplomacy of Sir James Melville had succeeded in detaching from his allegiance to Bothwell. The fugitives were pursued and beleaguered by the earl of Morton and Lord Hume, who declared their purpose to rescue

the queen from the thraldom of her husband. He escaped, leaving her free to follow him or to join the party of her professed deliverers. But whatever cause she might have found since marriage to complain of his rigorous custody and domineering brutality was insufficient to break the ties by which he held her. Alone, in the disguise of a page, she slipped out of the castle at midnight, and rode off to meet him at a tower two miles distant, whence they fled together to Dunbar. The confederate lords on entering Edinburgh were welcomed by the citizens, and after three hours' persuasion Lethington, who had now joined them, prevailed on the captain of the castle to deliver it also into their hands. Proclamations were issued in which the crime of Bothwell was denounced, and the disgrace of the country, the thraldom of the queen, and the mortal peril of her infant son were set forth as reasons for summoning all the lieges of the chief cities of Scotland to rise in arms on three hours' notice and join the forces assembled against the one common enemy. News of his approach reached them on the night of June 14, and they marched before dawn with 2,200 men to meet him near Musselburgh. Mary meanwhile had passed from Dunbar to Haddington, and thence to Seton, where 1,600 men rallied to her side. On June 15, one month from their marriage day, the queen and Bothwell, at the head of a force of fairly equal numbers but visibly inferior discipline, met the army of the confederates at Carberry Hill, some six miles from Edinburgh. Du Croc, the French ambassador, obtained permission through the influence of Maitland to convey to the queen the terms proposed by their leaders,—that she and

Bothwell should part, or that he should meet in single combat a champion chosen from among their number. Bothwell offered to meet any man of sufficient quality ; Mary would not assent. As the afternoon wore on their force began to melt away by desertion and to break up for lack of discipline. Again the trial by single combat was proposed, and thrice the proposal fell through, owing to objections on this side or on that. At last it was agreed that the queen should yield herself prisoner, and Bothwell be allowed to retire in safety to Dunbar with the few followers who remained to him. Mary took leave of her first and last master with passionate anguish and many parting kisses ; but in face of his enemies, and in hearing of the cries which burst from the ranks, demanding her death by fire as a murderess and harlot, the whole heroic and passionate spirit of the woman represented by her admirers as a spiritless imbecile flamed out in responsive threats to have all the men hanged and crucified, in whose power she now stood helpless and alone. She grasped the hand of Lord Lindsay as he rode beside her, and swore 'by this hand' she would 'have his head for this.' In Edinburgh she was received by a yelling mob, which flaunted before her at each turn a banner representing the corpse of Darnley with her child beside it invoking on his knees the retribution of Divine justice. From the violence of a multitude in which women of the worst class were more furious than the men she was sheltered in the house of the provost, where she repeatedly showed herself at the window, appealing aloud with dishevelled hair and dress to the mercy which no man could look upon her and refuse. At nine in the evening she was

removed to Holyrood, and thence to the port of Leith, where she embarked under guard, with her attendants, for the island castle of Lochleven. On the 20th a silver casket containing letters and French verses, miscalled sonnets, in the handwriting of the queen, was taken from the person of a servant who had been sent by Bothwell to bring it from Edinburgh to Dunbar. Even in the existing versions of the letters, translated from the lost originals and re-translated from this translation of a text which was probably destroyed in 1603 by order of King James on his accession to the English throne,—even in these possibly disfigured versions, the fiery pathos of passion, the fierce and piteous fluctuations of spirit between love and hate, hope and rage and jealousy, have an eloquence apparently beyond the imitation or invention of art. Three days after this discovery Lord Lindsay, Lord Ruthven, and Sir Robert Melville were despatched to Lochleven, there to obtain the queen's signature to an act of abdication in favour of her son, and another appointing Murray regent during his minority. She submitted, and a commission of regency was established till the return from France of Murray, who, on August 15, arrived at Lochleven with Morton and Athole. According to his own account, the expostulations as to her past conduct which preceded his admonitions for the future were received with tears, confessions, and attempts at extenuation or excuse; but when they parted next day on good terms she had regained her usual spirits. Nor from that day forward had they reason to sink again, in spite of the close keeping in which she was held, with the daughters of the house for bed-fellows. Their

mother and the regent's, her father's former mistress, was herself not impervious to her prisoner's lifelong power of seduction and subjugation. Her son George Douglas fell inevitably under the charm. A rumour transmitted to England went so far as to assert that she had proposed him to their common half-brother Murray as a fourth husband for herself; a later tradition represented her as the mother of a child by him. A third report, at least as improbable as either, asserted that a daughter of Mary and Bothwell, born about this time, lived to be a nun in France. It is certain that the necessary removal of George Douglas from Lochleven enabled him to devise a method of escape for the prisoner on March 25, 1568, which was frustrated by detection of her white hands under the disguise of a laundress. But a younger member of the household, Willie Douglas, aged eighteen, whose devotion was afterwards remembered and his safety cared for by Mary at a time of utmost risk and perplexity to herself, succeeded on May 2 in assisting her to escape by a postern gate to the lake-side, and thence in a boat to the mainland, where George Douglas, Lord Seton, and others were awaiting her. Thence they rode to Seton's castle of Niddry, and next day to Hamilton Palace, round which an army of 6,000 men was soon assembled, and whither the new French ambassador to Scotland hastened to pay his duty. The queen's abdication was revoked, messengers were despatched to the English and French courts, and word was sent to Murray at Glasgow that he must resign the regency, and should be pardoned in common with all offenders against the queen. But on the day when Mary arrived at Hamilton Murray had summoned to

Glasgow the feudatories of the crown, to take arms against the insurgent enemies of the infant king. Elizabeth sent conditional offers of help to her kinswoman, provided she would accept of English intervention and abstain from seeking foreign assistance; but the messenger came too late. Mary's followers had failed to retake Dunbar Castle from the regent, and made for Dumbarton instead, marching two miles south of Glasgow, by the village of Langside. Here Murray with 4,500 men, under leaders of high distinction, met the 6,000 of the queen's army, whose ablest man, Herries, was as much distrusted by Mary as by every one else, while the Hamiltons could only be trusted to think of their own interests, and were suspected of treasonable designs on all who stood between their house and the monarchy. On May 13, the battle or skirmish of Langside determined the result of the campaign in three quarters of an hour. Kirkaldy of Grange, who commanded the regent's cavalry, seized and kept the place of vantage from the beginning, and at the first sign of wavering on the other side shattered at a single charge the forces of the queen, with a loss of one man to three hundred. Mary fled sixty miles from the field of her last battle before she halted at Sanquhar, and for three days of flight, according to her own account, had to sleep on the hard ground, live on oatmeal and sour milk, and fare at night like the owls, in hunger, cold, and fear. On the third day from the rout of Langside she crossed the Solway, and landed at Workington in Cumberland, May 16, 1568. On the 20th Lord Scrope and Sir Francis Knollys were sent from court to carry messages and letters of comfort from Elizabeth to Mary at Carlisle. On June 11 Knollys wrote

to Cecil at once the best description and the noblest panegyric extant of the queen of Scots—enlarging, with a brave man's sympathy, on her indifference to form and ceremony, her daring grace and openness of manner, her frank display of a great desire to be avenged of her enemies, her readiness to expose herself to all perils in hope of victory, her delight to hear of hardihood and courage, commending by name all her enemies of approved valour, sparing no cowardice in her friends, but above all things athirst for victory by any means at any price, so that for its sake pain and peril seemed pleasant to her, and wealth and all things, if compared with it, contemptible and vile. What was to be done with such a princess, whether she were to be nourished in one's bosom, above all whether it could be advisable or safe to try any diplomatic tricks upon such a lady, Knollys left for the minister to judge. It is remarkable that he should not have discovered in her the qualities so obvious to modern champions of her character—easiness, gullibility, incurable innocence and invincible ignorance of evil, incapacity to suspect or resent anything, readiness to believe and forgive all things. On July 15, after various delays interposed by her reluctance to leave the neighbourhood of the border, where on her arrival she had received the welcome and the homage of the leading Catholic houses of Northumberland and Cumberland, she was removed to Bolton Castle in North Yorkshire. During her residence here a conference was held at York between her own and Elizabeth's commissioners and those appointed to represent her son as king of Scots. These latter, of whom Murray himself was the chief, privately laid before the English commis-

sioners the contents of the famous casket. On October 24 the place of the conference was shifted from York to London, where the inquiry was to be held before Queen Elizabeth in council. Mary was already aware that the chief of the English commissioners, the duke of Norfolk, was secretly an aspirant to the peril of her hand ; and on October 21 she gave the first sign of assent to the suggestion of a divorce from Bothwell. On October 26 the charge of complicity in the murder of Darnley was distinctly brought forward against her in spite of Norfolk's reluctance and Murray's previous hesitation. Elizabeth, by the mouth of her chief justice, formally rebuked the audacity of the subjects who durst bring such a charge against their sovereign, and challenged them to advance their proofs. They complied by the production of an indictment under five heads, supported by the necessary evidence of documents. The number of English commissioners was increased, and they were bound to preserve secrecy as to the matters revealed. Further evidence was supplied by Thomas Crawford, a retainer of the house of Lennox, tallying so exactly with the text of the Casket Letters as to have been cited in proof that the latter must needs be a forgery. Elizabeth, on the close of the evidence, invited Mary to reply to the proofs alleged before she could be admitted to her presence ; but Mary simply desired her commissioners to withdraw from the conference. She declined with scorn the proposal made by Elizabeth through Knollys, that she should sign a second abdication in favour of her son. On January 10, 1569, the judgment given at the conference acquitted Murray and his adherents of rebellion, while affirming that nothing had been proved against

Mary—a verdict accepted by Murray as equivalent to a practical recognition of his office as regent for the infant king. This position he was not long to hold; and the fierce exultation of Mary at the news of his murder gave to those who believed in her complicity with the murderer, on whom a pension was bestowed by her unblushing gratitude, fresh reason to fear, if her liberty of correspondence and intrigue were not restrained, the likelihood of a similar fate for Elizabeth. On January 26, 1569, she had been removed from Bolton Castle to Tutbury in Staffordshire, where proposals were conveyed to her, at the instigation of Leicester, for a marriage with the duke of Norfolk, to which she gave a graciously conditional assent; but the discovery of these proposals consigned Norfolk to the Tower, and on the outbreak of an insurrection in the north Mary, by Lord Hunsdon's advice, was again removed to Coventry, when a body of her intending deliverers was within a day's ride of Tutbury. On January 23 following Murray was assassinated; and a second northern insurrection was crushed in a single sharp fight by Lord Hunsdon. In October Cecil had an interview with Mary at Chatsworth, when the conditions of her possible restoration to the throne in compliance with French demands were debated at length. The queen of Scots, with dauntless dignity, refused to yield the castles of Edinburgh and Dumbarton into English keeping, or to deliver up her fugitive English partisans then in Scotland; upon other points they came to terms, and the articles were signed October 16. On the same day Mary wrote to Elizabeth, requesting with graceful earnestness the favour of an interview which might reassure her against the suggestion that

this treaty was a mere pretence. On November 28 she was removed to Sheffield Castle, where she remained for the next fourteen years in charge of the earl of Shrewsbury. The detection of a plot, in which Norfolk was implicated, for the invasion of England by Spain on behalf of Mary, who was then to take him as the fourth and most contemptible of her husbands, made necessary the reduction of her household and the stricter confinement of her person. On May 28, 1572, a demand from both houses of parliament for her execution as well as Norfolk's was generously rejected by Elizabeth ; but after the punishment of the traitorous pretender to her hand, on whom she had lavished many eloquent letters of affectionate protestation, she fell into 'a passion of sickness' which convinced her honest keeper of her genuine grief for the ducal caitiff. A treaty projected on the news of the massacre of St. Bartholomew, by which Mary should be sent back to Scotland for immediate execution, was broken off by the death of the earl of Mar, who had succeeded Lennox as regent ; nor was it found possible to come to acceptable terms on a like understanding with his successor Morton, who in 1577 sent a proposal to Mary for her restoration, which she declined, in suspicion of a plot laid to entrap her by the policy of Sir Francis Walsingham, the most unscrupulously patriotic of her English enemies, who four years afterwards sent word to Scotland that the execution of Morton, so long the ally of England, would be answered by the execution of Mary. But on that occasion Elizabeth again refused her assent either to the trial of Mary or to her transference from Sheffield to the Tower. In 1581 Mary accepted the advice of Catherine de'

Medici and Henry III. that she should allow her son's title to reign as king of Scotland conjointly with herself when released and restored to a share of the throne. This plan was but part of a scheme including the invasion of England by her kinsman the duke of Guise, who was to land in the north and raise a Scottish army to place the released prisoner of Sheffield beside her son on the throne of Elizabeth. After the overthrow of the Scottish accomplices in this notable project, Mary poured forth upon Elizabeth a torrent of pathetic and eloquent reproach for the many wrongs she had suffered at the hands of her hostess, and pledged her honour to the assurance that she now aspired to no kingdom but that of heaven. In the spring of 1583 she retained enough of this saintly resignation to ask for nothing but liberty, without a share in the government of Scotland ; but Lord Burghley not unreasonably preferred, if feasible, to reconcile the alliance of her son with the detention of his mother. In 1584 the long-suffering earl of Shrewsbury was relieved of his fourteen years' charge through the involuntary good offices of his wife, whose daughter by her first husband had married a brother of Darnley ; and their orphan child Arabella, born in England, of royal descent on the father's side, was now, in the hopeful view of her grandmother, a more plausible claimant than the king or queen of Scots to the inheritance of the English throne. In December 1583 Mary had laid before the French ambassador her first complaint of the slanders spread by Lady Shrewsbury and her sons, who were ultimately compelled to confess the falsehood of their imputations on the queen of Scots and her keeper. It was probably at the time when

a desire for revenge on her calumniatress made her think the opportunity good and safe for discharge of such a two-edged dart at the countess and the queen that Mary wrote, but abstained from despatching, the famous and terrible letter in which, with many gracious excuses and professions of regret and attachment, she transmits to Elizabeth a full and vivid report of the hideous gossip retailed by Bess of Hardwick regarding her character and person at a time when the reporter of these abominations was on friendly terms with her husband's royal charge. In the autumn of 1584 she was removed to Wingfield Manor under charge of Sir Ralph Sadler and John Somers, who accompanied her also on her next removal to Tutbury in January 1585. A letter received by her in that cold, dark, and unhealthy castle, of which fifteen years before she had made painful and malodorous experience, assured her that her son would acknowledge her only as queen-mother, and provoked at once the threat of a parent's curse and an application to Elizabeth for sympathy. In April 1585 Sir Amyas Paulet was appointed to the office of which Sadler, accused of careless indulgence, had requested to be relieved; and on Christmas Eve she was removed from the hateful shelter of Tutbury to the castle of Chartley in the same county. Her correspondence in cipher from thence with her English agents abroad, intercepted by Walsingham and deciphered by his secretary, gave eager encouragement to the design for a Spanish invasion of England under the prince of Parma—an enterprise in which she would do her utmost to make her son take part, and in case of his refusal would induce the Catholic nobles of Scotland to betray

him into the hands of Philip, from whose tutelage he should be released only on her demand, or if after her death he should wish to return, nor then unless he had become a Catholic. But even these patriotic and maternal schemes to consign her child and reconsign the kingdom to the keeping of the Inquisition, incarnate in the widower of Mary Tudor, were superseded by the attraction of a conspiracy against the throne and life of Elizabeth. Anthony Babington, in his boyhood a ward of Shrewsbury, resident in the household at Sheffield Castle, and thus subjected to the charm before which so many victims had already fallen, was now induced to undertake the deliverance of the queen of Scots by the murder of the queen of England. It is maintained by those admirers of Mary who assume her to have been an almost absolute imbecile, gifted with the power of imposing herself on the world as a woman of unsurpassed ability, that, while cognisant of the plot for her deliverance by English rebels and an invading army of foreign auxiliaries, she might have been innocently unconscious that this conspiracy involved the simultaneous assassination of Elizabeth. In the conduct and detection of her correspondence with Babington, traitor was played off against traitor, and spies were utilized against assassins, with as little scruple as could be required or expected in the diplomacy of the time. As in the case of the Casket Letters, it is alleged that forgery was employed to interpolate sufficient evidence of Mary's complicity in a design of which it is thought credible that she was kept in ignorance by the traitors and murderers who had enrolled themselves in her service,—that one who pensioned the actual

murderer of Murray and a would-be murderer of Elizabeth was incapable of approving what her keen and practised intelligence was too blunt and torpid to anticipate as inevitable and inseparable from the general design. In August the conspirators were netted, and Mary was arrested at the gate of Tixall Park, whither Paulet had taken her under pretence of a hunting party. At Tixall she was detained till her papers at Chartley had undergone thorough research. That she was at length taken in her own toils even such a dullard as her admirers depict her could not have failed to understand ; that she was no such dastard as to desire or deserve such defenders the whole brief course of her remaining life bore consistent and irrefragable witness. Her first thought on her return to Chartley was one of loyal gratitude and womanly sympathy. She cheered the wife of her English secretary, now under arrest, with promises to answer for her husband to all accusations brought against him, took her new-born child from the mother's arms, and in default of clergy baptized it, to Paulet's Puritanic horror, with her own hands by her own name. The next or the twin-born impulse of her indomitable nature was, as usual in all times of danger, one of passionate and high-spirited defiance, on discovering the seizure of her papers. A fortnight afterwards her keys and her money were confiscated, while she, bedridden, and unable to move her hand, could only ply the terrible weapon of her bitter and fiery tongue. Her secretaries were examined in London, and one of them gave evidence that she had first heard of the conspiracy by letter from Babington, of whose design against the life of Elizabeth she thought it best to take no notice in her

reply, though she did not hold herself bound to reveal it. On September 25 she was removed to the strong castle of Fotheringay in Northamptonshire. On October 6 she was desired by letter from Elizabeth to answer the charges brought against her before certain of the chief English nobles appointed to sit in commission on the cause. In spite of her first refusal to submit, she was induced by the arguments of the vice-chamberlain, Sir Christopher Hatton, to appear before this tribunal on condition that her protest should be registered against the legality of its jurisdiction over a sovereign, the next heir of the English crown.

On October 14 and 15, 1586, the trial was held in the hall of Fotheringay Castle. Alone, 'without one counsellor on her side among so many,' Mary conducted the whole of her own defence with courage incomparable and unsurpassable ability. Pathos and indignation, subtlety and simplicity, personal appeal and political reasoning, were the alternate weapons with which she fought against all odds of evidence or inference, and disputed step by step every inch of debatable ground. She repeatedly insisted on the production of proof in her own handwriting as to her complicity with the project of the assassins who had expiated their crime on the 20th and 21st of the month preceding. When the charge was shifted to the question of her intrigues with Spain, she took her stand resolutely on her right to convey whatever right she possessed, though now no kingdom was left her for disposal, to whomsoever she might choose. One single slip she made in the whole course of her defence; but none could have been more unluckily characteristic and significant. When

Burghley brought against her the unanswerable charge of having at that moment in her service, and in receipt of an annual pension, the instigator of a previous attempt on the life of Elizabeth, she had the unwary audacity to cite in her justification the pensions allowed by Elizabeth to her adversaries in Scotland, and especially to her son. It is remarkable that just two months later, in a conversation with her keepers, she again made use of the same extraordinary argument in reply to the same inevitable imputation, and would not be brought to admit that the two cases were other than parallel. But except for this single instance of oversight or perversity her defence was throughout a masterpiece of indomitable ingenuity, of delicate and steadfast courage, of womanly dignity and genius. Finally she demanded, as she had demanded before, a trial either before the estates of the realm lawfully assembled, or else before the queen in council. So closed the second day of the trial; and before the next day's work could begin a note of two or three lines hastily written at midnight informed the commissioners that Elizabeth had suddenly determined to adjourn the expected judgment and transfer the place of it to the star-chamber. Here, on October 25, the commissioners again met; and one of them alone, Lord Zouch, dissented from the verdict by which Mary was found guilty of having, since June 1 preceding, compassed and imagined divers matters tending to the destruction of Elizabeth. This verdict was conveyed to her, about three weeks later, by Lord Buckhurst and Robert Beale, clerk of the privy council. At the intimation that her life was an impediment to the security of the received religion, 'she

seemed with a certain unwonted alacrity to triumph, giving God thanks, and rejoicing in her heart that she was held to be an instrument' for the restoration of her own faith. This note of exultation as in martyrdom was maintained with unflinching courage to the last. She wrote to Elizabeth and the duke of Guise two letters of almost matchless eloquence and pathos, admirable especially for their loyal and grateful remembrance of all her faithful servants. Between the date of these letters and the day of her execution wellnigh three months of suspense elapsed. Elizabeth, fearless almost to a fault in face of physical danger, constant in her confidence even after discovery of her narrow escape from the poisoned bullets of household conspirators, was cowardly even to a crime in face of subtler and more complicated peril. She rejected with resolute dignity the intercession of French envoys for the life of the queen-dowager of France; she allowed the sentence of death to be proclaimed, and welcomed with bonfires and bell-ringing throughout the length of England; she yielded a respite of twelve days to the pleading of the French ambassador, and had a charge trumped up against him of participation in a conspiracy against her life; at length, on February 1, 1587, she signed the death warrant, and then made her secretaries write word to Paulet of her displeasure that in all this time he should not of himself have found out some way to shorten the life of his prisoner, as in duty bound by his oath, and thus relieve her singularly tender conscience from the guilt of bloodshed. Paulet, with loyal and regretful indignation, declined the disgrace proposed to him in a suggestion 'to shed blood without law or warrant'; and on

February 7 the earls of Shrewsbury and Kent arrived at Fotheringay with the commission of the council for execution of the sentence given against his prisoner. Mary received the announcement with majestic tranquillity, expressing in dignified terms her readiness to die, her consciousness that she was a martyr for her religion, and her total ignorance of any conspiracy against the life of Elizabeth. At night she took a graceful and affectionate leave of her attendants, distributed among them her money and jewels, wrote out in full the various legacies to be conveyed by her will, and charged her apothecary Gorion with her last messages for the king of Spain. In these messages the whole nature of the woman was revealed. Not a single friend, not a single enemy, was forgotten; the slightest service, the slightest wrong, had its place assigned in her faithful and implacable memory for retribution or reward. Forgiveness of injuries was as alien from her fierce and loyal spirit as forgetfulness of benefits; the destruction of England and its liberties by Spanish invasion and conquest was the strongest aspiration of her parting soul. At eight next morning she entered the hall of execution, having taken leave of the weeping envoy from Scotland, to whom she gave a brief message for her son; took her seat on the scaffold, listened with an air of even cheerful unconcern to the reading of her sentence, solemnly declared her innocence of the charge conveyed in it and her consolation in the prospect of ultimate justice, rejected the professional services of Richard Fletcher, dean of Peterborough, lifted up her voice in Latin against his in English prayer, and when he and his fellow-worshippers had fallen duly silent prayed

aloud for the prosperity of her own Church, for Elizabeth, for her son, and for all the enemies whom she had commended overnight to the notice of the Spanish invader; then, with no less courage than had marked every hour and every action of her life, received the stroke of death from the wavering hand of the headsman.

Mary Stuart was in many respects the creature of her age, of her creed, and of her station; but the noblest and most noteworthy qualities of her nature were independent of rank, opinion, or time. Even the detractors who defend her conduct on the plea that she was a dastard and a dupe are compelled in the same breath to retract this implied reproach, and to admit, with illogical acclamation and incongruous applause, that the world never saw more splendid courage at the service of more brilliant intelligence; that a braver if not 'a rarer spirit never did steer humanity.' A kinder or more faithful friend, a deadlier or more dangerous enemy, it would be impossible to dread or to desire. Passion alone could shake the double fortress of her impregnable heart and ever active brain. The passion of love, after very sufficient experience, she apparently and naturally outlived; the passion of hatred and revenge was as inextinguishable in her inmost nature as the emotion of loyalty and gratitude. Of repentance it would seem that she knew as little as of fear; having been trained from her infancy in a religion where the Decalogue was supplanted by the Creed. Adept as she was in the most exquisite delicacy of dissimulation, the most salient note of her original disposition was daring rather than subtlety. Beside or behind the voluptuous or intellectual

attractions of beauty and culture, she had about her the fresher charm of a fearless and frank simplicity, a genuine and enduring pleasure in small and harmless things no less than in such as were neither. In 1562 she amused herself for some days by living 'with her little troop' in the house of a burgess of St. Andrews 'like a burgess's wife,' assuring the English ambassador that he should not find the queen there,—'nor I know not myself where she is become.' From Sheffield Lodge, twelve years later, she applied to the archbishop of Glasgow and the cardinal of Guise for some pretty little dogs, to be sent her in baskets very warmly packed—'for besides reading and working, I take pleasure only in all the little animals that I can get.' No lapse of reconciling time, no extent of comparative indulgence, could break her into resignation, submission, or toleration of even partial restraint. Three months after the massacre of St. Bartholomew had caused some additional restrictions to be placed upon her freedom of action, Shrewsbury writes to Burghley that 'rather than continue this imprisonment she sticks not to say she will give her body, her son, and country for liberty'; nor did she ever show any excess of regard for any of the three. For her own freedom of will and of way, of passion and of action, she cared much; for her creed she cared something; for her country she cared less than nothing. She would have flung Scotland with England into the hellfire of Spanish Catholicism rather than forego the faintest chance of personal revenge. Her profession of a desire to be instructed in the doctrines of Anglican Protestantism was so transparently a pious fraud as rather to afford confirmation than to

arouse suspicion of her fidelity to the teaching of her Church. Elizabeth, so shamefully her inferior in personal loyalty, fidelity, and gratitude, was as clearly her superior on the one all-important point of patriotism. The saving salt of Elizabeth's character, with all its wellnigh incredible mixture of heroism and egotism, meanness and magnificence, was simply this ; that, overmuch as she loved herself, she did yet love England better. Her best though not her only fine qualities were national and political, the high public virtues of a good public servant : in the private and personal qualities which attract and attach a friend to his friend and a follower to his leader, no man or woman was ever more constant and more eminent than Mary Queen of Scots.

II

THE CHARACTER OF MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS

Among the various points of view taken in time past and present by students of a subject which must surely have lost its interest long since if that interest were less than inexhaustible, I have always missed, and wondered at the general oversight which appears to ignore it, one which would most naturally seem to present itself for candid and rational consideration by either party to the argument. Every shade of possible opinion on the matter has found in its various champions every possible gradation of ability in debate. And the universal result, as it appears to an outsider,—to a student of history unconscious alike of prejudice and of prepossession,—is that they who came to curse the memory of Mary Stuart have blessed it as with the blessing of a Balaam, and they who came to bless it, with tribute of panegyric or with testimony in defence, have inevitably and invariably cursed it altogether. To vindicate her from the imputations of her vindicators would be the truest service that could now be done by the most loyal devotion to her name and fame.

A more thorough, more earnest, and on the

whole a more able apology for any disputed or debatable character in all the range of history it would indeed be hard to find than that which has been attempted by Mr. Hosack in his two copious and laborious volumes on *Mary Queen of Scots and her Accusers*. Every point of vantage throughout the intricacies of irreconcilable evidence is clearly seen, is swiftly seized, is manfully defended. And the ultimate outcome of all is the presentation of a figure beside which, I do not say the Mary Stuart of Mr. Froude, but the Mary Stuart of George Buchanan, is an acceptable and respectable type of royal womanhood—a pardonable if not admirable example of human character. Many bitter and terrible things were said of that woman in her lifetime by many fierce and unscrupulous enemies of her person or her creed; many grave and crushing charges were alleged against her on plausible or improbable grounds of impeachment or suspicion. But two things were never imputed to her by the most reckless ferocity of malice or of fear. No one ever dreamed of saying that Mary Queen of Scots was a fool. And no one ever dared to suggest that Mary Queen of Scots was a coward.

That there are fewer moral impossibilities than would readily be granted by the professional moralist, those students of human character who are not professional moralists may very readily admit. A very short and a very narrow experience will suffice to preserve a man—or for that matter a boy—of average intelligence from any sense of shocked astonishment when his expectation is confronted by 'fears of the brave and follies of the wise,' instances of mercy

in the unmerciful or cruelty in the humane. But there is a limit to the uttermost range of such paradoxical possibilities. And that limit is reached and crossed, cleared at a leap and left far out of sight, by the theorist who demands our assent to such a theorem as this : That a woman whose intelligence was below the average level of imbecility, and whose courage was below the average level of a coward's, should have succeeded throughout the whole course of a singularly restless and adventurous career in imposing herself upon the judgment of every man and every woman with whom she ever came into any sort or kind of contact, as a person of the most brilliant abilities and the most dauntless daring. Credat Catholicus ; for such faith must surely exceed the most credulous capacity of ancient Jew or modern Gentile.

But this is not all, or nearly all. Let us admit, though it be no small admission, that Mary Stuart, who certainly managed to pass herself off upon every one who came near her under any circumstances as the brightest and the bravest creature of her kind in any rank or any country of the world, was dastard enough to be cowed into a marriage which she was idiot enough to imagine could be less than irretrievable ruin to her last chance of honour or prosperity. The violence of Bothwell and the perfidy of her council imposed forsooth this miserable necessity on the credulous though reluctant victim of brute force on the one hand and treasonable fraud on the other. Persuaded by the request and convinced by the reasoning of those about her, Lucretia felt it nothing less than a duty to accept the hand of Tar-

quin yet reeking from the blood of Collatinus. The situation is worthy of one of Mr. Gilbert's incomparable ballads or burlesques; and her contemporaries, Catholic or Protestant, friend or foe, rival or ally, may be forgiven if they failed at once to grasp and realize it as a sufficiently plausible solution of all doubts and difficulties not otherwise as rationally explicable. Yet possibly it may not be impossible that an exceptionally stupid girl, reared from her babyhood in an atmosphere of artificially exceptional innocence, might play at once the active and the passive part assigned to Mary, before and after the execution of the plot against her husband's life, by the traducers who have undertaken her defence. But for this improbability to be possible it is obviously necessary to assume in this pitiable puppet an extent of ignorance to be equalled only, and scarcely, by the depth and the density of her dullness. A woman utterly wanting in tact, intuition, perception of character or grasp of circumstance—a woman abnormally devoid of such native instinct and such acquired insight as would suffice to preserve all but the dullest of natures from ludicrous indiscretion and perilous indelicacy—might perhaps for lack of experience be betrayed into such a succession of mishaps as the training of an ideally rigid convent might have left it difficult or impossible for her fatuous innocence to foresee. But of the convent in which Mary Stuart had passed her novitiate the Lady Superior was Queen Catherine de' Medici. The virgins who shared the vigils of her maidenhood or brightened the celebrations of her nuptials were such as composed the Queen-Mother's famous 'flying

squadron' of high-born harlots, professionally employed in the task of making the worship of Venus Pandemos subserve the purposes of Catholic faith or polity, and occasionally, as on the Feast of St. Bartholomew, exhilarated by such diversions as the jocose examination of naked and newly-murdered corpses with an eye to the satisfaction of a curiosity which the secular pen of a modern historian must decline to explain with the frankness of a clerical contemporary. The cloistral precinct which sheltered her girlhood from such knowledge of evil as might in after days have been of some protection to her guileless levity was the circuit of a court whose pursuits and recreations were divided between the alcoves of Sodom and the playground of Aceldama. What were the vices of the society described by Brantôme it is impossible, or at least it would be repulsive, to suggest by so much as a hint: but its virtues were homicide and adultery. Knox or Ascham would have given plainer and juster expression, in shorter terms of speech more purely English, to the fact that no man was honoured who could not show blood on his hands, no woman admired who would not boast as loudly of the favours she had granted as her gallants of the favours they had received. It is but a slight matter to add that the girl who was reared from her very infancy in this atmosphere—in the atmosphere of a palace which it would be flattery to call a brothel or a slaughter-house—had for her mother a woman of the blood-stained house of Guise, and for her father the gaberlunzieman or jolly beggar of numberless and nameless traditional adventures in promiscuous erotic intrigue.

The question of family is of course very far from conclusive, though certainly it may help 'to thicken other proofs that do demonstrate thinly.' The calender of saints includes a Borgia; or, to put it perhaps more forcibly, the house of Borgia contains a saint. And some writers—Landor among them, who had little love for the brood—have averred that the Bonaparte family did once produce an honest man and equitable ruler—Louis king of Holland, whose only son gave his life in vain for Italy. It would certainly have been no greater miracle than these, no more startling exception to the general rule, that the daughter of James V. and Mary of Guise should have been a blameless though imbecile creature, an innocent in the least flattering sense of the word, whose blood was very snow-broth and whose brain a very feather. But mere innocence, as distinguished from the absolute idiocy which even her warmest admirers would hesitate to ascribe to her, will hardly suffice to explain her course of conduct in the most critical period of her life. A woman who could play the part assigned to Mary by the Whitakers, Stricklands, Aytouns and Hosacks whose laudations have so cruelly libelled her, must have been either the veriest imbecile whose craven folly ever betrayed in every action an innate and irresponsible impotence of mind, or at least and at best a good girl of timid temper and weak intellect, who had been tenderly sheltered all her life from any possible knowledge or understanding of evil, from all apprehension as from all experience of wickedness and wrong. Now it is of course just barely possible that a girl might come innocent as Shakespeare's Marina even out of such a house of entertainment as that kept by the last

princes of the race of Valois: but it is absolutely and glaringly impossible that she should come forth from it ignorant of evil. And it is not a jot less impossible that an innocent woman who was not animally idiotic or angelically ignorant, a drivelling craven or a thing enskied and sainted, the pitifullest or the purest, the most thick-witted or the most unspotted of her kind, could have borne herself as did Mary after the murder of her caitiff husband. Let us assume, though it is no small assumption, that all her enemies were liars and forgers. Let us imagine that except among her adherents there was not a man of any note in all Scotland who was not capable of treason as infamous as that of the English conspirators on her behalf against the life of Elizabeth and the commonwealth of their country. Let us suppose that a Buchanan, for example, was what Mr. Hosack has called him, 'the prince of literary prostitutes': a rascal cowardly enough to put forth in print a foul and formless mass of undigested falsehood and rancorous ribaldry, and venal enough to traffic in the disgrace of his dishonourable name for a purpose as infamous as his act. Let us concede that a Maitland was cur enough to steal that name as a mask for the impudent malice of ingratitude. Let us allow that Murray may have been the unscrupulous traitor and Elizabeth the malignant rival of Marian tradition. Let us admit that the truest solution of a complicated riddle may be that most ingenious theory advocated by Mr. Hosack, which addresses to Darnley instead of Bothwell the most passionate and pathetic of the Casket Letters, and cancels as incongruous forgeries all those which refuse to fit into this scheme of explanation. Let us

grant that the forgers were at once as clumsy as Cloten and as ingenious as Iago. The fact remains no less obvious and obtrusive than before, that it is very much easier to blacken the fame of Mary's confederate enemies than to whitewash the reputation of Bothwell's royal wife. And what manner of whitewash is that which substitutes for the features of an erring but heroic woman those of a creature not above but beneath the human possibility of error or of sin?

But if we reject as incredible the ideal of Prince Labanoff's loyal and single-hearted credulity, does it follow that we must accept the ideal of Mr. Froude's implacable and single-eyed animosity? Was the mistress of Bothwell, the murderess of Darnley, the conspiratress against the throne and life of her kinswoman and hostess, by any necessary consequence the mere panther and serpent of his fascinating and magnificent study? This seems to me no more certain a corollary than that because she went to the scaffold with a false front her severed head, at the age of forty-five, must have been that 'of a grizzled, wrinkled old woman.' By such flashes of fiery and ostentatious partisanship the brilliant and fervent advocate of the Tudors shows his hand, if I may say so without offence, a little too unconsciously and plainly. And his ultimate conclusion that 'she was a bad woman, disguised in the livery of a martyr,' (vol. xii., ch. 34) seems to me not much better supported by the sum of evidence producible on either side than the counter inference of his most pertinacious antagonist that 'this illustrious victim of sectarian violence and barbarous statecraft will ever occupy the most prominent place in the annals of her sex'

(Hosack, vol. ii., ch. 27). There are annals and annals, from the Acta Sanctorum to the Newgate Calendar. In the former of these records Mr. Hosack, in the latter Mr. Froude, would inscribe—as I cannot but think, with equal unreason—the name of Mary Stuart.

'She was a bad woman,' says the ardent and energetic advocate on the devil's side in this matter, because 'she was leaving the world with a lie on her lips,' when with her last breath she protested her innocence of the charge on which she was condemned to death. But the God of her worship, the God in whom she trusted, the God on whom she had been taught to lean for support of her conscience, would no more have been offended at this than the God of Dahomey is offended by human sacrifice. Witness all the leading spirits among his servants, in that age if in no other, from pope to king and from king to cutthroat—from Gregory XIII. and Sextus V. to Philip II. and Charles IX., and from Philip II. and Charles IX. to Saulx-Tavannes and Maurevel. To their God and hers a lie was hardly less acceptable service than a murder; Blessed Judas was a servant only less commendable than Saint Cain. Nor, on the whole, would it appear that the lapse of time has brought any perceptible improvement to the moral character of this deity. The *coup d'état* of August 24, 1572, was not an offering of sweeter savour in his expansive and insatiable nostrils than was the St. Bartholomew of December 2, 1851. From the same chair the vicar of the same God bestowed the same approving benediction on Florentine and on Corsican perjurer and murderer. And in a worshipper of this divine devil, in the ward of a Medici or a Bonaparte,

it would be an inhuman absurdity to expect the presence or condemn the absence of what nothing far short of a miracle could have implanted—the sense of right and wrong, the distinction of good from evil, the preference of truth to falsehood. The heroine of Fotheringay was by no means a bad woman: she was a creature of the sixteenth century, a Catholic and a queen. What is really remarkable is what is really admirable in her nature, and was ineradicable as surely as it was unteachable by royal training or by religious creed. I desire no better evidence in her favour than may be gathered from the admissions of her sternest judge and bitterest enemy. 'Throughout her life,' Mr. Froude allows, 'she never lacked gratitude to those who had been true to her.—Never did any human creature meet death more bravely.' Except in the dialect of the pulpit, she is not a bad woman of whom so much at least must be said and cannot be denied. Had she been born the man that she fain would have been born, no historian surely would have refused her a right to a high place among other heroes and above other kings. All Mr. Froude's vituperative terms cannot impair the nobility of the figure he presents to our unapproving admiration: all Mr. Hosack's sympathetic phrases cannot exalt the poverty of the spirit he exposes for our unadmiring compassion. For however much we may admire the courage he ascribes to her at the last, we cannot remember with less than contemptuous pity the pusillanimous imbecility which on his showing had been the distinctive quality of her miserable life. According to her champion, a witness against her more pitiless than John Knox or Edmund Spenser, she had done nothing

in her time of trial that an innocent woman would have done, and left nothing undone that an innocent woman would have studiously abstained from doing, if she had not been in the idiotic sense an innocent indeed. But it is in their respective presentations of the closing scene at Fotheringay that the incurable prepossession of view which is common to both advocates alike springs suddenly into sharpest illustration and relief. Mr. Froude cannot refrain from assuming, on grounds too slight for Macaulay to have accepted as sufficient for the damnation of a Jacobite, that on receipt of her death-warrant the queen of Scots 'was dreadfully agitated,' and 'at last broke down altogether,' before the bearers of the sudden intelligence had left her. Now every line of the narrative preceding this imputation makes it more and more insuperably difficult to believe that in all her dauntless life Queen Mary can ever have been 'dreadfully agitated,' except by anger and another passion at least as different from fear. But this exhibition of prepense partisanship is nothing to the grotesque nakedness of Mr. Hosack's. At a first reading it is difficult for a reader to believe the evidence of his eyesight when he finds a historian who writes himself 'barrister at-law,' and should surely have some inkling of the moral weight or worth of evidence as to character, deliberately asserting that in her dying appeal for revenge to the deadliest enemy of England and its queen, Mary, after studious enumeration of every man's name against whom she bore such resentment as she desired might survive her death, and strike them down with her dead hand by way of retributive sacrifice, 'exhibited an unparalleled instance of

feminine forbearance and generosity' (the sarcasm implied on womanhood is too savage for the most sweeping satire of a Thackeray or a Pope) 'in omitting the name of Elizabeth.' *O sancta simplicitas!* Who shall say after this that the practice of the legal profession is liable to poison the gushing springs of youth's ingenuous trustfulness and single-minded optimism?

An advocate naturally or professionally incapable of such guileless confidence and ingenuous self-betrayal is Father John Morris, 'Priest of the Society of Jesus,' and editor of 'The Letter-books of Sir Amias Poulet, Keeper of Mary Queen of Scots': a volume nothing less than invaluable as well as indispensable to all serious students of the subject in hand. Writers of genius and impetuosity such as Mr. Froude's and the late Canon Kingsley's lay themselves open at many points of minor importance to the decisive charge or the wary fence of an antagonist expert in the fine art of controversy: but their main or ultimate positions may prove none the less difficult to carry by the process of countermine or other sacerdotal tactics. Father Morris is not quite so hard on his client as Mr. Hosack: for by admitting something of what is undeniable in the charges of history against her he attenuates the effect and diminishes the prominence of his inevitable and obvious prepossessions: and though he suggests (p. 275) that 'perhaps Mary was not quite "the fiery woman" Mr. Froude imagines her to have been,' he does not pretend to exhibit her as the watery thing of tears and terrors held up to our compassion by the relentless if unconscious animosity of the implacable counsel for her defence.

On one point (p. 143) the pleading of Father Morris must in no inconsiderable measure command the sympathy of all Englishmen who honestly love fair play, and that not only when it plays into their own hands. It is surely much more than high time, after the lapse of three centuries, that honest and generous men of different creeds and parties should be equally ready to do justice, if not to each other's God,—since Gods are by necessity of nature irreconcilable and internecine,—at least to the memories of their common countrymen, who played their part manfully in their day on either side with fair and loyal weapons of attack and defence. We regard with disgust and the horror of revolted conscience that vile and execrable doctrine which assures us in childhood that the glory of martyrdom depends on the martyr's orthodoxy of opinion, on the accuracy of his reckoning or the justice of his conjecture as to spiritual matters of duty or of faith, on the happiness of a guess or the soundness of an argument; but surely it profits us little to have cleared our conscience of such a creed if we remain incapable of doing justice to Jesuit and Calvinist, creedsman and atheist, alike. It profits us little if we are to involve in one ignominy with the unscrupulous and treasonous intrigues of Parsons and Garnet the blameless labours and the patient heroism of Edmund Campion. So far, then, Father Morris has a good card in hand, and plays it well and fairly, when he pleads, for example, against Mr. Froude's charges, and on behalf of his own famous Society, that 'Gilbert Gifford had no "Jesuit training," and "the Order" never had anything to do with him;—but it is necessary to note that all through Mr. Froude's

History he habitually styles "Jesuits" those who never had anything in the world to do with the Society of which St. Ignatius Loyola was the founder.' Gilbert Gifford was a traitor, and any man must be eager to avoid the disgrace of any connection, though never so remote or oblique, with a traitor's infamy. But I hope it may not be held incompatible with all respect for the conscientious labours of Father Morris, and with all gratitude for help and obligation conferred by them, to remark with due deference that a champion of Jesuits against the malignant errors of calumnious misrepresentation would be wise to avoid all occasion given to heretical pravity for a scoff on the old scores of pious fraud or suggestion of falsehood. Exactly two hundred and five pages after this pathetic protest of conscious virtue and candid indignation against the inexcusable injustice of an anti-Catholic historian, this denouncer of Mr. Froude's unfair dealing and unfounded statements, 'the parallel of which it would be difficult to find in any one claiming to occupy the judicial position of a historian,' affords the following example of his own practical respect for historical justice and accuracy of statement.

'Not only,' he says, with righteous disgust at such brutality, 'not only would Poulet deprive Mary of Melville and du Préau, but, writing too from his own sick bed, he betrays his wish to remove the medical attendants also, though his prisoner was in chronic ill health.'

The whole and sole ground for such an imputation is given, with inconsistent if not unwary frankness, on the very next page but one in the text of Paulet's letter to Davison.

'The physician, apothecary, and the surgeon have been so often allowed to this lady by her Majesty's order, that I may not take upon me to displace them without special warrant, referring the same to your better consideration.'[1]

It is scarcely by the display of such literary tactics as these that a Jesuit will succeed in putting to shame the credulity of unbelievers who may be so far misguided by heretical reliance on a groundless tradition as to attribute the practice of holy prevarication, and the doctrine of an end which sanctifies the most equivocal means of action or modes of argument, to the ingenuous and guileless children of Ignatius. For refutation of these inexplicable calumnies and explosion of this unaccountable error we must too evidently look elsewhere.

An elder luminary of the Roman Church, the most brilliant and impudent chronicler of courtly brothelry between the date of Petronius and the date of Grammont, has left on record that when news came to Paris of the execution at Fotheringay the general verdict passed by most of her old acquaintances on the Queen Dowager of France was that her death was a just if lamentable retribution for the death of Chastelard. The despatch of a disloyal husband by means of gunpowder was not, in the eyes of these Catholic moralists, an offence worth mention if set against the execution of a loyal lover, 'even in her sight he

[1] 'Who would have thought,' says Father Morris, just seventy-four pages earlier, with a triumphant sneer at Mr. Froude's gratuitous inferences, 'who would have thought that all this could have been drawn out of Poulet's postscript?' Who would have thought that the merest novice in controversy could have laid himself so heedlessly open to such instant and inevitable retort?

loved so well.' That the luckless young rhymester and swordsman had been Mary's favoured lover—a circumstance which would of course have given no scandal whatever to the society in which they had grown up to years of indiscretion—can be neither affirmed nor denied on the authority of any positive and incontrovertible proof: and the value of such moral if not legal evidence as we possess depends mainly on the credit which we may be disposed to assign to the reported statement of Murray.[1] Knox, who will not generally be held capable of deliberate forgery and lying, has left an account of the affair which can hardly be regarded as a possible misrepresentation or perversion of fact, with some grain of discoloured and distorted truth half latent in a heap of lies. Either the falsehood is absolute, or the conclusion is obvious.

The first sentences of his brief narrative may be set down as giving merely an austere and hostile summary of common rumours. That Chastelard 'at that tyme passed all otheris in credytt with the Quene'; that 'in dansing of the Purpose, (so terme thei that danse, in the which man and woman talkis secreatlie—wyese men wold judge such fassionis

[1] Mr. Hosack, with even unusual infelicity, observes (ii. 494) that 'the insinuations regarding Chatelar (*sic*) to be found in Knox were circulated long after the event.' According to the 'chronological notes' of Mr. David Laing (*Works of John Knox*, vol. i. p. 20) it is in 1566, just three years 'after the event,' that 'he appears to have written the most considerable portion of his History of the Reformation; having commenced the work in 1559 or 1560.' And whatever else may be chargeable against the memory of John Knox, this, I should imagine, is the first time that he has ever been held up to historic scorn as an insinuating antagonist.

more lyke to the bordell than to the comelynes of honest wemen,) in this danse the Quene chosed Chattelett, and Chattelett took the Quene'; that 'Chattelett had the best dress'; that 'all this winter' (1563) 'Chattelett was so familiare in the Quenis cabinett, ayre and laitt, that scarslye could any of the Nobilitie have access unto hir'; that 'the Quene wold ly upoun Chattelettis shoulder, and sometymes prively she wold steall a kyss of his neck'; these are records which we may or may not pass by as mere court gossip retailed by the preacher, and to be taken with or without discount as the capable and equanimous reader shall think fit. We may presume however that the prophet-humourist did not append the following comment without sardonic intention. 'And all this was honest ynouch; for it was the gentill entreatment of a stranger.' The kernel of the matter lies in the few sentences following.

'But the familiaritie was so great, that upoun a nycht, he privelie did convoy him self under the Quenis bed; but being espyed, he was commanded away. But the bruyte arysing, the Quene called the Erle of Murray, and bursting forth in a womanlie affectioun, charged him, "That as he loved hir, he should slay Chattelett, and let him never speak word." The other, at the first, maid promesse so to do; but after calling to mynd the judgementis of God pronunced against the scheddaris of innocent bloode, and also that none should dye, without the testimonye of two or thre witnesses, returned and fell upoun his kneis befoir the Quene, and said, "Madam, I beseak your Grace, cause me not tack the bloode of this man upoun me. Your Grace has entreated him so familiarlie befoir, that ye have offended all your Nobilitie; and now yf he shalbe secreatlie slane at your awin commandiment, what shall the world judge of it? I shall bring him to the presence of Justice, and let him suffer

be law according to his deserving." "Oh," said the Quene, "ye will never let him speak?" "I shall do," said he, "Madam, what in me lyeth to saiff your honour."' [1]

'Upon this hint I spake,' when in the last year of my life as an undergraduate I began my play of *Chastelard*; nor have I to accuse myself, then or since, of any voluntary infraction of recorded fact or any conscious violation of historical chronology, except—to the best of my recollection—in two instances: the date of Mary's second marriage, and the circumstances of her last interview with John Knox. I held it as allowable to anticipate by two years the event of Darnley's nuptials, or in other words to postpone for two years the event of Chastelard's execution, as to compile or condense into one dramatic scene the details of more than one conversation recorded by Knox between Mary and himself.

To accept the natural and unavoidable inference from the foregoing narrative, assuming of course that it is not to be dismissed on all accounts as pure and simple falsehood, may seem equivalent to an admission that the worst view ever yet taken of Queen Mary's character is at least no worse than was undeniably deserved. And yet, without any straining of moral law or any indulgence in paradoxical casuistry, there is something if not much to be offered in her excuse. To spare the life of a suicidal young monomaniac who would not accept his dismissal with due submission to the inevitable and suppression of natural regret, would probably in her own eyes have been no less than ruin to her cha-

[1] *The History of the Reformation in Scotland*, Book IV.: *The Works of John Knox;* collected and edited by David Laing. Vol. ii., p. 368.

racter under the changed circumstances and in the transformed atmosphere of her life. As, in extenuation of his perverse and insuppressible persistency in thrusting himself upon the compassion or endurance of a woman who possibly was weary of his homage, it may doubtless be alleged that Mary Stuart was hardly such a mistress as a man could be expected readily to resign, or perhaps, at Chastelard's age, to forego with much less reluctance than life itself; so likewise may it be pleaded on the other hand that the queen of Scotland could not without at least equal unreason be expected to sacrifice her reputation and imperil her security for the sake of a cast-off lover who could not see that it was his duty as a gentleman of good sense to submit himself and his passion to her pleasure and the force of circumstances. The act of Chastelard was the act of a rebel as surely as the conduct of Darnley three years afterwards was the conduct of a traitor; and by all the laws then as yet unrepealed, by all precedents and rights of royalty, the life of the rebellious lover was scarce less unquestionably forfeit than the life of the traitorous consort. Nobody in those days had discovered the inestimable secret of being royalists or Christians by halves. At least, it was an unpromising time for any one who might attempt to anticipate this popular modern discovery.

It must be admitted that Queen Mary was generally and singularly unlucky in her practical assertion of prerogative. To every one of her royal descendants, with the possible exception of King Charles the Second, she transmitted this single incapacity by way of counterpoise to all the splendid and seductive gifts which she likewise bequeathed to not a few of

their luckless line. They were a race of brilliant blunderers, with obtuse exceptions interspersed. To do the right thing at the wrong time, to fascinate many and satisfy none, to display every kind of faculty but the one which might happen to be wanted, was as fatally the sign of a Stuart as ever ferocity was of a Claudius or perjury of a Bonaparte. After the time of Queen Mary there were no more such men born into the race as her father and half-brother. The habits of her son were as suggestive of debased Italian blood in the worst age of Italian debasement as the profitless and incurable cunning with which her grandson tricked his own head off his shoulders, the swarthy levity and epicurean cynicism of his elder son, or the bloody piety and sullen profligacy of his younger. The one apparently valid argument against the likelihood of their descent from Rizzio is that Darnley would undoubtedly seem to have pledged what he called his honour to the fact of his wife's infidelity. Towards that unhappy traitor her own conduct was not more merciless than just, or more treacherous than necessary, if justice was at all to be done upon him. In the house of Medici or in the house of Lorraine she could have found and cited at need in vindication of her strategy many far less excusable examples of guile as relentless and retaliation as implacable as that which lured or hunted a beardless Judas to his doom. If the manner in which justice was done upon him will hardly be justified by the most perverse and audacious lover of historical or moral paradox, yet neither can the most rigid upholder of moral law in whom rigour has not got the upper hand of reason deny that never was a lawless act committed with more excuse or

more pretext for regarding it as lawful. To rid herself of a traitor and murderer who could not be got rid of by formal process of law was the object and the problem which the action of Darnley had inevitably set before his royal consort. That the object was attained and the problem solved with such inconceivable awkwardness and perfection of mismanagement is proof that no infusion of Guisian blood or training of Medicean education could turn the daughter of an old heroic northern line into a consummate and cold intriguer of the southern Catholic pattern. The contempt of Catherine for her daughter-in-law when news reached Paris of the crowning blunder at Kirk of Field must have been hardly expressible by human utterance. At her best and worst alike, it seems to my poor apprehension that Mary showed herself a diplomatist only by education and force of native ability brought to bear on a line of life and conduct most alien from her inborn impulse as a frank, passionate, generous, unscrupulous, courageous and loyal woman, naturally self-willed and trained to be self-seeking, born and bred an imperial and royal creature, at once in the good and bad or natural and artificial sense of the words. In such a view I can detect no necessary incoherence; in such a character I can perceive no radical inconsistency. But 'to assert,' as Mr. Hosack says (ch. 27), 'that any human being,' neither a born idiot nor a spiritless dastard, 'could have been guilty' of such utterly abject and despicable conduct as the calumnious advocates of her innocence find themselves compelled to impute to her, 'is,' as I have always thought and must always continue to think, 'an absurdity which refutes itself.' The

theory that an 'unscrupulous oligarchy at length accomplished her ruin by forcing her'—of all things in the world—'to marry Bothwell' is simply and amply sufficient, if accepted, to deprive her of all claim on any higher interest or any nobler sympathy than may be excited by the sufferings of a beaten hound. Indeed, the most impossible monster of incongruous merits and demerits which can be found in the most chaotic and inconsequent work of Euripides or Fletcher is a credible and coherent production of consistent nature if compared with Mr. Hosack's heroine. Outside the range of the clerical and legal professions it should be difficult to find men of keen research and conscientious ability who can think that a woman of such working brain and burning heart as never faltered, never quailed, never rested till the end had come for them of all things, could be glorified by degradation to the likeness of a brainless, heartless, sexless and pusillanimous fool. Supposing she had taken part in the slaying of Darnley, there is every excuse for her; supposing she had not, there is none. Considered from any possible point of view, the tragic story of her life in Scotland admits but of one interpretation which is not incompatible with the impression she left on all friends and all foes alike. And this interpretation is simply that she hated Darnley with a passionate but justifiable hatred, and loved Bothwell with a passionate but pardonable love. For the rest of her career, I cannot but think that whatever was evil and ignoble in it was the work of education or of circumstance; whatever was good and noble, the gift of nature or of God.

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