

**LIFE OF MARY
STUART,
QUEEN OF SCOTS**

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Life of Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots by Alphonse de Lamartine

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ALPHONSE DE LAMARTINE

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MARY STUART,
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BY

Alphonse de Lamartine.

NEW YORK:
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55 BEEKMAN STREET.
1879.

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

No apology is needed for offering to the public a new biographical sketch of Mary Queen of Scots. To Scottish or English, or even to French students of history, the subject is one of romantic and surpassing interest, over which, as indeed over all else, genius can ever shed a new and unfading light.

It may be remarked that the present is the only work of M. de Lamartine which has appeared solely in an English form, having been expressly translated from the original unpublished MS.

4 *Translator's Preface.*

As for the attempts to translate into English verse the quaint and beautiful lines of Ronsard, and of Mary herself, which are interspersed throughout the volume, it is hoped that any artistic imperfections will be passed over in consideration of their true interpretation of the originals.

J. M. H.

PARIS *April*, 1859.

MARY STUART,
QUEEN OF SCOTS.

I.

If another Homer were to arise, and if the poet were to seek another Helen for the subject of a modern epic of war, religion, and love, he would beyond all find her in Mary Stuart, the most beautiful, the weakest, the most attractive and most attracted of women, raising around her, by her irresistible fascinations, a whirlwind of love, ambition, and jealousy, in which her lovers became, each in his turn, the motive, the instrument,

and the victim of a crime; leaving, like the Greek Helen, the arms of a murdered husband for those of his murderer; sowing the seeds of internecine, religious, and foreign war at every step, and closing by a saintly death the life of a Clytemnestra; leaving behind her indistinct memories exaggerated equally by Protestant and Catholic parties, the former interested in condemning her for all, the latter in absolving her from all, as if the same factions who had fought for her during her life had resolved to continue the combat after her death! Such was Mary Stuart.

That which a new Homer has not yet done in poetry, a sympathetic historian, M. Dargaud, enlightened by the researches of other learned writers, has recently achieved in his history of the Queen of Scots. It is from the extremely interesting documents collected by M. Dargaud, that we shall now recompose—

though frequently in a different spirit—that fair figure, and give a rapid sketch of a great picture.

II.

MARY STUART was the only daughter of James V., King of Scotland, and of Marie de Lorraine, daughter of the Duke of Guise. She was born in Scotland on the 7th December, 1542. Her father was one of those adventurous, romantic, gallant, and poetic characters who leave behind them popular traditions of bravery and of licentiousness in the imagination of their country, like Francis I. and Henry IV. of France. Her mother possessed that genius, at once grave, ambitious, and sectarian, which distinguished the princes of the House of Guise, those true Macca-bees of Popery on this side the Alps.

James V. died young, prophesying a mournful destiny for his daughter, yet in

her cradle. This prophecy was suggested by his misgivings regarding the fate of a child, delivered up, during a long minority, to the contentions of a small kingdom torn by feudal and priestly factions, and coveted by a neighbor so powerful as England. Protestantism and Catholicism had already embittered their dissensions with the fanaticism of two hostile religions defying each other face to face. The dying king had, after long hesitation, adopted the Catholic policy, and proscribed the Puritans. M. Dargaud sees in this policy of James V. the cause of the ruin of Scotland and of the misfortunes of Mary, and at first sight we were tempted to think as he does. After a closer view, however, and on a consideration of the general political situation of Europe, and more particularly of Scotland, perhaps the Catholic party adopted by the king might have been safest for that country, if, indeed, Scotland could