

MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS IN THE LIGHT OF RECENT HISTORICAL INVESTIGATIONS¹

Among the contemporary Lennox Papers there exists an early form of Buchanan's "Detectio," called "Probable and Infallible Conjectures." The title is not inapplicable to the great bulk of Marian literature which has since been produced. Ingenious theories have been propounded only to be overthrown in rapid succession by the emergence of some fresh piece of evidence. It is only with the comparatively recent publication of new documents, since 1889, that opinions and conjectures have begun to be replaced by facts. Bain's Scottish Papers and Hume's Spanish Calendars contain essential information; the Bardon Papers, 1909, summarize the official case of the English government against Mary and throw light upon the ultimate reasons of her unhappy fate; the Lennox Papers, not yet published, have become known through Pollen, Lang and Henderson, and furnish important information on the relations of Mary and Darnley, and the vexed problem of the Casket Letters; while first in merit and importance, filling the greatest gap in the records of Mary's life, is Pollen's "Papal Negotiations with Mary Queen of Scots," 1901, based largely upon the Secret Archives of the Vatican. Great Britain, the Netherlands, France, Spain and Italy have now yielded up the bulk of their stores. The most important documentary gap which still exists is Mary's correspondence with the Cardinal of Lorraine, which has defied all search. The principal works of criticism and interpretation which have accompanied these publications and discoveries are the minutely critical biography by Hay Fleming; Hume's "Love Affairs of Mary Queen of Scots"; the two editions of Lang's "Mystery of Mary Stuart"; and Henderson's "Mary Queen of Scots, her Environment and Tragedy," 1905, with its examination of the latest documents and theories, and its notable critique of Andrew Lang.

It is in connection with Mary's relations with the Papacy, her religious policy,² and the Casket Letters, that research has made the greatest progress.

Father Pollen's documents contain, as a whole, convincing evidence that Mary did not, as Froude asserts, enter Scotland with a purpose "fixed as the stars to undo the Reformation." Randolph, the English ambassa-

¹This article, in slightly condensed form, was read before the Pacific Coast Branch of the American Historical Association at Berkeley, California, on November 18, 1910.

²An admirable discussion of Mary's personal religious views and the character of her religious policy will be found in the Quarterly Review, Vol. 195, Jan., 1902, pp. 221-244.

dor, expressed her early attitude with perfect correctness when he wrote at the close of 1562: "She knows the necessitie of my sovereigne's friendship to be greater than a preste bablinge at an autour; she is not so affectioned to her masse that she wyll leave a kyngdome for yt." The restoration of Scotland to the Roman Obedience was not, in truth, the chief end of her policy. Her primary aim was to secure formal acknowledgment of her rightful claim to the English succession, and she ruled as a Politique rather than as a religious extremist. Papal diplomatists seem never to have been consulted about the assumption of the English arms, and until 1571 Elizabeth was regarded by the Pope as the rightful Queen of England. The Guises and the papal nuncio talk of "concord and union" between Mary and Elizabeth as a "settled thing." Mary's letter to the Duke of Guise—one of the most important new documents—proves clearly that Mary looked forward to an English alliance and was not oppressed by her duty as a Catholic sovereign. No general Catholic League existed in 1565—at least none such is extant in the archives of any European power—and Mary therefore did not sign it. She usually evinces a much greater desire for Roman subsidies than for Roman rites, and her conduct was not pleasing to the Pope. It was the tortuous policy of Elizabeth which ultimately forced her into the arms of the Catholics and brought about her ruin. The transition begins in January, 1563; the first active measures are taken after Moray's downfall in 1565, and the process culminates in Riccio's murder, 1566. But Riccio was not a papal emissary; his name occurs but once in Pollen's Roman documents, when he is barely mentioned as the "Piedmontese secretary of the queen."

The dispensation for the Darnley marriage affords an important illustration both of Mary's ecclesiastical attitude and personal character. Father Pollen, in his "Papal Negotiations" and a subsequent article of April, 1907, in the *Scottish Historical Review*, dispels all the mysteries heretofore attached to the transaction. Mary married Darnley July 29; the dispensation was issued in September, but ante-dated to the 25th of May. This date is genuine. Mary, therefore, married Darnley before the dispensation had been granted, and allowed her advisers to believe that a "complimentary exhortation to constancy," which happened to arrive from the Pope, was the indispensable document itself. Mary was not without excuses, yet, after every allowance, the fact remains that her action involved a deliberate violation of the canon law and exhibited both disregard for the church and indifference to personal purity. Her want of principle regarding the sacredness of marriage in this instance augurs ill for her constancy in the time of greater temptation soon to come.

A broader knowledge of facts has produced two fundamental changes in the character of Marian literature. First, the question of personal guilt or innocence is relegated to the background as a comparatively negligible factor; emphasis is laid instead upon those political and religious conditions throughout Europe which so largely predetermined her career. Second, her case has been shifted from a legal to a historical basis of treatment.

The late Major Hume regards Mary as representing "in her own person the principle which, if she had succeeded, would have destroyed the Reformation and established the supremacy of Spanish Catholicism in Europe." Personal wickedness would not have altered the result, if her marriage policies had been successful. These, therefore, are the key to her career. The "main source of her fascination was her power of sensuous allurements"; her ruin resulted primarily from the "irresistible rush of purely sexual passion" combined with an unquenchable ambition derived from the House of Guise. The crucial point of her career was her first meeting with Darnley, when for the first time amorous passion overrode her judgment and brought about a union, unnecessary and unwise.—It is a pity that the author of the "Love Affairs of Mary Queen of Scots" did not employ the new material produced by Father Pollen.

Henderson's fundamental theory as to Mary's failure is diametrically opposed to Hume's and is essentially the same as Lang's, with personal reasons minimized and with greater rigidity. Discounting the love-element, he considers that policy (i. e., ambition) was not superseded by passion as a motive-force until after Riccio's murder, when political exigencies, combined with an irresistible reaction from hopes irretrievably ruined, threw her into Bothwell's arms. Mary was really the predestined victim of a bitter religious quarrel. The difficulty of her task—in itself all but impossible—was so aggravated by accidental circumstances that hardly a chance was left of escape from signal calamity. "The processes which determined her life towards its tragic close seemed ever to go on with the regularity of clock-work." "Her imperfections and mistakes become dwarfed into insignificance as the determining causes of her failure by reason of the ascendant influence in her life of what may be termed fate." Her early connection with Catholic France, founded and dissolved by circumstances beyond her control; the religious revolution in Scotland, consummated in her absence with English help, which established first a religious, and later a political severance between Mary and her subjects; Elizabeth's inflexible determination never to recognize an heir; the undying hostility of Knox and the extreme Protestants; the divergence of the French and Guisard interests from Mary's, which in 1563 deprived her both of French and Spanish aid, embittered her relations with England and compelled her to turn to Darnley and a Catholic restoration; the fac-

tional intrigues of the Scotch nobility; the colossal folly of her husband—such were some of the inexorable forces which ruined her ecclesiastical policies, disappointed her political ambitions, destroyed her domestic happiness—and left her a prey to recklessness, personal passion and dishonor. It was the permanence given Bothwell's power, rather than any complicity in Darnley's murder, which caused her political ruin.

The sharp distinction which writers are now drawing between the legal and historical case against Mary is thoroughly scientific and tells heavily against her. Her accusers at Westminster, some of whom were themselves guilty, dared not present the entire truth; their case is, therefore, full of inconsistencies and technical deficiencies. Their chronology is impossible; they deliberately suppressed evidence. It was easy for Mary's defenders to answer the legal case; the historical case stands upon a different footing. At Fotheringhay, also, the sweeping character of her denials tends to prove her guilt. Morgan, the central agent of the Babington conspiracy, was no pensioner of hers, she said; yet her private correspondence with Mendoza reveals her activity in his behalf. She hinted that Nau, her secretary, had confessed, through fear, untruths; yet, as we know, though the commissioners did not, she wrote to Mendoza not that he confessed falsely, but that he "had confessed everything."³

Mary's love affairs were mainly political. She was not a Messalina. As to the poet Chastelard, she showed an imprudent fondness for his society—nothing more. There is no serious reason to believe that her relations with Riccio were other than official and social—never guilty. Accusation against him date from a time when Darnley and Riccio's enemies were seeking to destroy him. As to Darnley, Lang and Hume believe she loved him; Father Pollen rejects the idea of love at first sight; Henderson rejects it entirely. As to Bothwell, apart from the Casket Letters, there seems no convincing proof that Mary was guilty with him during Darnley's life: sheer hatred of Darnley would account for his murder. As to the Bothwell marriage, Mary is to be condemned with no recommendation to mercy. The best Catholic opinion rejects the validity of his divorce, and the Pope breaks off all negotiations with Mary for two years.

Apart from the direct evidence of the long letter alleged to have been written to Bothwell by Mary at Glasgow—a letter which, if authentic, is final—there may be said to exist a general consensus of opinion that Mary brought Darnley to Edinburgh to facilitate the plans of Bothwell against him. The circumstantial evidence against her is overwhelmingly strong. "It is from Mary's relations to the various parties," writes Hume Brown, the royal historiographer of Scotland, "and from her conduct

³Henderson, II., 609-610.

before and after the deed that we are justified in concluding her guilty." The main question seems to be the degree of culpability.

The Casket Letters,⁴ with their cry of illicit passion, their instigations to Darnley's murder and Mary's own abduction, were the only direct evidence which the queen's accusers could bring against her. If genuine, no further proofs were needed. In the solution of the vexed question of their authenticity a new era was reached when there appeared, in 1889, Mr. Henderson's "Casket Letters and Mary Queen of Scots." This work proved, beyond a peradventure, that the original French versions of the Letters—authentic, forged, or garbled—were produced at the English conferences of 1568. The following canons of criticism, based mainly on Mr. Henderson's demonstration, are accepted by recent investigators and may be regarded as scientifically established. First, certain copies of Letters III., IV., V., VI. and IX. (the Sonnets) may be called the original French of those letters and treated as such for purposes of discussion. All arguments for forgery, based upon the supposed non-existence of French originals, are therefore obsolete. Second, orthographic tests are not admissible. Father Pollen has demonstrated that copyists of that era made no attempt to preserve accurately the spelling of originals. Third, no arguments *against* forgery can be based on imitations of peculiarities of phrase which an hypothetical forger would be sure to know and reproduce. Many of the phrases of the Letters and Sonnets are literary and conventional. Fourth, with respect to Letters I. and II. (the all-important Glasgow Letter) no valid arguments can be based upon discrepancies between the Scotch and English versions. All discussions based on such discrepancies are obsolete. The English version, defective through extreme haste, omits and mistranslates; the Scotch version can be proved to omit, through sheer inadvertence, unimportant passages and, therefore, no valid argument can be drawn from the absence of passages of greater importance. This is Mr. Lang's contribution to the subject in his "Mystery of Mary Stuart." Cardauns and Philippon had already shown that the English translator possessed both the French and Scotch versions. The best texts are printed by Mr. Lang in his Appendix.

Of late years the appearance of fresh material has rendered wholly untenable the old positions of forgery theorists and immensely strengthened the case for the authenticity of the Letters—particularly of the fatal Glasgow Letter. The chief discoveries are five in number.⁵ First, the proof, delivered by Mr. Henderson in 1889, that the original language of

⁴The name is derived from a silver casket which fell into the hands of the Earl of Morton shortly after Mary's capture at Carberry Hill and which contained certain letters and a sonnet-sequence alleged to have been written by Mary to Bothwell.

⁵Compare Henderson, II., 634.

the Letters was French, and that the originals were produced at Westminster and Hampton Court. Second, the publication, also by Mr. Henderson in 1889, of the full text of Morton's sworn Declaration as to the discovery and inspection of the Casket. Its evidential value is two-fold; it names the witnesses, both Catholic and Protestant, Marian and anti-Marian, who were present at the Casket's opening; it limits to the almost impossible period of five days the operations of a potential forger. Most critics, I believe, accept the Declaration as furnishing conclusive proof of the nature of the documents within the Casket; Mr. Lang, declaring that the list of witnesses adds nothing to the credibility of the account per se, dissents. Third, the publication by Major Hume in 1892 in the Spanish Calendar of a dispatch which proved that du Croc, the French ambassador, was given copies of the Letters within a fortnight of the Casket's opening. This overthrew all arguments against their authenticity founded upon the long delay in their production. Fourth, the publication by Major Hume, in the same Calendar, of de Silva's dispatch, showing that Moray, on his return to Scotland, gave him an account of a long letter which was presumably the Glasgow Letter. The cumulative effect of these four discoveries, wrote Mr. Henderson in 1905, was "so to supplement the evidence previously available that they seemed to prove beyond a doubt that the Glasgow Letter was in existence before the Casket was opened on the 21st of June." Except upon the score of one possible interpolation—the notable Crawford Declaration—its authenticity seemed unassailable. At this point Mr. Lang received Father Pollen's transcripts of the Lennox Papers, discovered in them—as he thought—reason for the repudiation of the Casket Letters, and gave to the world in 1901 his "Mystery of Mary Stuart." Into the intricacies of his argument as there produced I cannot enter, nor into the equally complex—but much more cogent—arguments of Mr. Henderson's rejoinder in the Appendix of his "Mary Stuart," 1905. The conclusion of their warfare is to be found in Mr. Lang's articles in the *Scottish Historical Review* of October, 1907, and Mr. Henderson's reply of January, 1908. Mr. Lang maintained in his "Mary Stuart," and still maintains, on the conjoined evidence of the de Silva-Moray report and a certain document in the Lennox Papers, that there existed a forged letter, antecedent to the Glasgow Letter, but never produced. Reversing his position, however, on the Glasgow Letter itself, he accepts its complete authenticity. It would be rash to assert that this surrender of Mary's most ingenious champion terminates the Casket controversy. Mr. Henderson receives from Mr. Lang only indirect credit for his change of mind and heart. Both accept the genuineness of the Letter, but on different grounds. Mr. Lang, by his continued belief in the forgery which was never produced and by his acceptance of the authenticity of the Glasgow Letter

merely on the score of old evidence maturely considered, may logically reopen the question at a later date. Mr. Henderson, by his recognition of the evidential value of a Lennox Paper which he is the first to print—the *draft* of Crawford's Declaration—may have closed the controversy forever. The existence of the draft in the Lennox Papers, together with the character of erasures and certain alterations, prove, he with apparent justice maintains, that Crawford's Declaration could not have been in existence as early as the Glasgow Letter and that Crawford made use of the Scotch version of this Letter in preparing his draft. There was therefore no interpolation. The production of this fifth and final document in the series of discoveries to date has therefore transformed an old objection into one of the strongest proofs of complete authenticity, and shifted the controversy from the realm of opinion to that of fact.

Mr. Lang in his preface to the revised version of his "Mystery" does not profess to establish the innocence of Queen Mary, but rather "to show that the methods of her accusers were so clumsy and so manifestly perfidious that they all but defeated the object of the prosecution." His book was conceived in a spirit of boundless suspicion and the characters of the principal Scotch noblemen, Lethington especially, were indiscriminately blackened. The forgery of the Casket Letters was vital to his case. He has now been constrained to admit the authenticity of the fatal Glasgow Letter. The ultimate effect of his work tends therefore to turn the immediate investigations of historians away from Mary and towards her *entourage*. Moray must receive his first biography. The life of Lethington must be rewritten. The Lennox Papers should be published by Father Pollen *in extenso*. These three are the greatest needs of present historical writing concerning Mary Queen of Scots.

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