

MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS

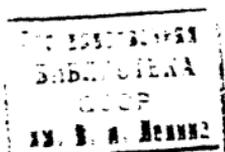
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Mary Queen of Scots

From her Birth to her Flight
into England: A Brief Biography:
*with Critical Notes, a few Docu-
ments hitherto unpublished, and an
Itinerary by David Hay Fleming*

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PREFACE

So long ago as 1773 one of the most capable and most cautious of Scottish historical students expressed the opinion that the Marian controversy had already become too angry and too voluminous. Its subsequent tone was not sweetened by such writers as Whitaker and Chalmers. If in recent years it has become much less acrimonious, it has also become so much more voluminous that comparatively few readers can afford the requisite time to master a subject so intricate, and of which nearly all the details have been keenly contested for three centuries. Too many of the literary combatants have been content to derive their materials at second, third, or even fourth hand, with the result that mere opinions and conjectures have frequently been borrowed and repeated as well-established facts. Not a few of these 'fictitious facts,' as well as other blunders more or less blameworthy, have been exposed or exploded in the following pages; but they will doubtless be again resuscitated by those who are more anxious to uphold theories than to ascertain truth.

PREFACE

My aim has been to state—fairly, briefly, and clearly—all the more important and more interesting events in Mary's life up to the date of her flight into England, without attempting to suggest or sustain any theory. The text has been almost entirely drawn from the State Papers, the official records, and the letters of the period, and from the contemporary histories and chronicles. Controverted points are freely dealt with in the Notes; and there special attention has been paid to the works of two of the Queen's most recent and best-known biographers—Father Stevenson and Mr. (now Sir John) Skelton. It will be seen that the former has dimmed his great reputation as an historical student by prejudice, partiality, and perversion; and that the latter not only rivals him in these faults, but is so reckless in matters of fact and so careless in quotation that no reliance can be placed on his statements, no weight on his opinions.

The *Hamilton Papers*, the Calendars of Venetian and Spanish State Papers, and the documents printed by M. Philippson, have been examined, as well as the Foreign and Domestic Calendars, and the Reports of the Historical MSS. Commission. Fresh material has also been derived from the forthcoming volume of the *Register of the Scottish Privy Council*, edited by Professor Masson; and from unpublished original documents in the Register House—of which documents a selection is printed in the