

Mary Queen of Scots in History

C. A. Campbell

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No tale of romance possesses a more lasting charm than does the simple history of Mary Stewart, Queen of Scots. Since the day on which Sir Ralph Sadler, Ambassador of Queen Elizabeth, was privileged to see her in the nursery at Linlithgow, and pronounced her a "right fair and goodly child," every fresh contribution to her history has been welcomed with unparalleled eagerness. Nor is there any indication that her life-story will lose its fascination with the lapse of time. Scarcely a year passes away that does not see a considerable addition made to the already ponderous store of Mary-Stewart literature. Nevertheless, very many even of her admirers have, to say the least, an inadequate knowledge of her life. They know her only as a heroine of romance, or as a pious widow, kneeling in devotion with the Rosary hanging at her girdle, or as a cheerful martyr resigning her head to the block; and they forget that for seven years she reigned over the most turbulent nation of Europe, that she opened and closed parliament, deliberated in the Council Chamber, led armies to the field, that, in a word, she lived a most real and stirring life.

I confess it is no easy task to present a complete and, at the same time, correct picture of her career. The difficulty is owing to the large amount of matter, written in different and contradictory spirits, with which some of the most important events of her life have been obscured. Religion, politics, patriotism, avarice, personal friendships and hatreds, either conjointly or individually, determined the actions of those who had part in framing the history of the period. It becomes necessary, therefore, to learn how far the men on whose testimony, or from whose conduct, we have to pass judgment on certain incidents in Mary's life, were influenced by one or other of these motives.



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