GREAT LOVE STORIES OF HISTORY

By ALBERT PAYSON TERHUNE

Mary, Queen of Scots, and Bothwell

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This is the love story of a fascinating, wicked woman and of a man who was quite as wicked without being in the least fascinating. The woman was Mary Queen of Scots. The man was her husband, James Hepburn, earl of Bothwell.

Mary inherited the crown of Scotland. In early youth she married King Francis II. of France. He died and she came back to rule her own country. The gay, frivolous French court had just suited Mary's light nature. With the harsh, grave, quarrelsome Scots who now surrounded her she had nothing in common. She shocked them. They bored her. For state reasons she married her cousin, young Lord Darnley. He was a big, awkward, stupid, weak fellow whom Mary grew to despise. He was desperately afraid of her, and was jealous as well. He had ample cause for both emotions. The marriage was unhappy. So was Mary's whole reign. She disliked her people. They distrusted her. From the first everything seemed to go wrong.

It was when affairs were at their worst that Bothwell loomed up big on the political horizon. Though of high rank, he was a ruffian adventurer, who had more than once been mixed up in treasonable and other unlawful escapades. Darnley murdered Rizzio, the queen's elderly secretary, and in a fit of rage sought Mary's death or imprisonment. Bothwell, with a strong army at his back, interfered in her behalf. He also helped to stir her dislike for Darnley into hatred. Soon afterward Darnley was assassinated. There can be no doubt that Bothwell caused his murder or that Mary knew beforehand what fate the earl had plotted for her young husband. With Darnley out of the way all was clear sailing for Bothwell. He had gained tremendous influence over the queen. Where other men flattered her he bullied her. Where others begged for her favor Bothwell brutally demanded it. He was her master by sheer force of will and rough strength. This sort of man appealed to Mary's fickle heart. She loved him more and more devotedly the more brutal treatment she received at his hands. Whatever orders he gave she meekly obeyed. It was another case of Beauty and the Beast.

A Queen and an Adventurer.

Directly after Darnley's murder Bothwell planned a master stroke in his game of courtship and statecraft. As Mary was riding back to Edinburgh on April 24, 1567, from a visit to her infant son (who was afterward James I. of England), Bothwell, at the head of an armed force, met her and carried her away to Dunbar castle. Though this daring act was supposed to be nothing less than a piece of lawless kidnaping, it is more than probable that Mary not only freely consented to the scheme, but had helped to plan it. At any rate, she made no resistance. Bothwell promptly divorced his faithful wife, and on May 15, 1567 (barely three months after Darnley's death), he and Mary were married. Mary had meanwhile made Bothwell duke of Orkney. But he was, to all intents and purposes, the real ruler of Scotland. When he and Mary appeared in public he used to hold his cap in his hand to show he was her subject. But Mary would snatch the cap from him and put it on his head to indicate that he was her equal. He tyrannized over her and behaved toward her with none of the courtesy or deference due her rank. He had apparently won his life's ambition and no longer troubled to show civility to the woman to whom he owed all. But the more cruelly he treated her the more Mary loved him.

The Scotch lords hated Bothwell and had no idea of accepting him as their ruler. They rose in arms and took Mary away from him. She escaped from them disguised as a boy and joined Bothwell. Then the lords marched against the lovers in open warfare. Bothwell, who was as brave as he was brutal, offered to settle the quarrel by single combat with any champion the lords might name. The challenge was rejected. The queen's followers deserted her. She was at the lords' mercy.

The End of the Romance.

Hemmed in and unable to escape, she kissed Bothwell good-by with many tears and surrendered to her foes. Bothwell, seeing all was lost, deserted her, and, slipping through the enemy's lines, escaped to Norway. There he was captured, and died insane in a Scandinavian prison. Mary was dethroned. She fled for protection to England. There Queen Elizabeth cast her into prison and later had her beheaded.

But, indirectly, the Scotch queen was avenged. Her descendants, the Stuart kings, misruled England and (by their fickleness and other evil qualities inherited from Mary) made that country suffer untold misfortunes.

QUEEN ELIZABETH AND ESSEX

Queen Elizabeth of England at the time this story begins was 60 years old. She was tall, thin, and ugly and had a fearful temper. Her teeth were black from tobacco and decay, and she wore a red wig. Robert Devereux, earl of Essex, was barely 21. He was handsome, accomplished and of fine figure, besides being one of the best educated men of his day. He was popular and seemed to have a great future in store. It pleased Elizabeth to fancy herself in love with him. This love affair was destined to make both of the participants miserable and to end Essex's life at 34.

Elizabeth was the daughter of Henry VIII. and Anne Boleyn. On the death of her half-sister, Mary, she became queen of England. She surrounded herself with wise counsellors, and encouraged literature, exploration and all the arts. For this reason her reign was England's "golden age." Elizabeth never married. Yet she was in the habit of falling in love with nobles of her own court and of carrying on violent flirtations with them. Their flattery delighted her. She believed in it all. Such men as succeeded in making the queen think they adored her usually rose high in power; but they found it no easy task to gratify her tremendous vanity or to avoid her furious temper. The best and last of these nobles who won her fleeting affections was the young earl of Essex. He was at 21 an accomplished soldier and courtier. That he really loved Elizabeth is very doubtful. But he was ambitious and jumped at so dazzling a chance for advancing his own interests. At heart he was honest and impulsive. It was not as easy for him as for his predecessors to keep on good terms with the cranky old queen and to soothe her ill-humor with pretty speeches. In fact, so tiresome did he find the royal flirtation that he tried to amuse himself more once by making love to her majesty's maids of honor. But this was perilous pastime. For Elizabeth was as jealous as she was vain.

A Royal Flirtation.

Court life wearied young Essex. Wars, explorations and other sorts of adventure were going on all about him. But Elizabeth would not let him take part in any of these expeditions. She could not bear to have him out of her sight. He loved excitement and found existence dreary at the palace. So in 1587, when he was 22, he slipped away secretly and joined Drake's fleet that was sailing on Portugal. But Elizabeth sent a message after the fleet commanding Essex "at his uttermost peril" to come back at once. Back he came, angry and chagrined, in no mood to meet Elizabeth's reproaches. In this mood he picked a quarrel with Sir Charles Blount, on whom the queen had also deigned to cast a favoring eye. He and Blount fought a duel, in which Essex was wounded and disarmed.

Life at the court dragged on for a while longer. Then Essex fell in love with the clever widow of Sir Philip Sydney and married her. The marriage was kept secret for fear of the queen's wrath. Nor was the fear in vain. When Elizabeth learned of the wedding she was enraged beyond measure. Yet such was her fondness for Essex that she at last pretended to forgive him, and he was in a measure restored to royal favor. High honors and offices were showered upon him. Yet Elizabeth, it seems, never quite pardoned his crime of daring to prefer another woman to herself. His former power over her was gone. The end was drawing near. She no longer forbade him to embark on dangerous enterprises; but she managed to see that he got scant profit or glory from such expeditions. Once, when he protested against a piece of manifest injustice on her part, Elizabeth publicly boxed his ears, and with a volley of profanity bade him "go to the devil." This scene killed any lingering trace of affection between the two.

The Fall of the Favorite.

In 1599 he was made lord lieutenant of Ireland and sent to quell an uprising in that country. He failed to carry out his mission, and on his return was deprived of his titles and put under arrest. Soon he was set free, but forbidden to come to court. He now tasted all the bitterness of a fallen favorite of fortune. The wealth, high offices and power lavished upon him by Elizabeth were snatched away. He had sacrificed his youth, his independence, his ambitions—all for nothing.

To a man like Essex such a fall from favor was intolerable. Misfortune turned his brain. Instead of accepting his ill-luck gracefully the misguided man actually tried to stir up a revolution. He was captured and condemned to death. On February 21, 1601, the sentence was carried out. Essex was beheaded. He was only 34. But for his unfortunate affair with the queen he might have won permanent greatness and fame.

Elizabeth is said to have been distracted with grief and remorse at her former favorite's death and to have reproached herself bitterly for her treatment of the young earl. She survived him by only two years.

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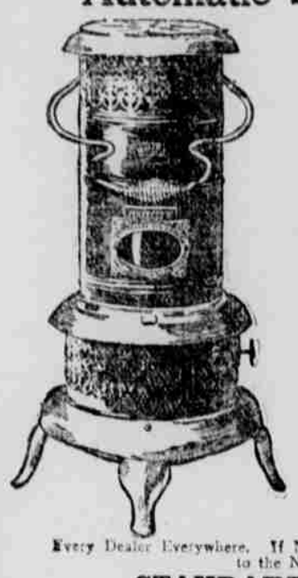

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