



Mary, Queen of Scots: The History and Legacy of Mary Stuart of Scotland

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"Did I not tell you this would happen? I knew they would never allow me to live, I was too great an obstacle to their religion." – Mary, Queen of Scots

The position in history of Mary Queen of Scots is a paradoxical one. Her fame as a monarch lies less in her personality or achievements than in her position within the dynastic maneuvers and political-religious upheavals taking place in northwest Europe in the 16th century. Most monarchs spend their early years learning in preparation to rule and then spend the latter part of their lives wielding power and status, but Mary was thrust upon the throne when she was only a week old, and she ceased to be queen nearly 20 years before her death.

Mary's was an unusual reign in a tumultuous period, and her tragedy was intertwined with her country's transformation. In Mary's case, she was a second cousin once removed of England's Queen Elizabeth I, which made her a rival for the throne. Mary was the granddaughter of Margaret Tudor, Henry VIII's sister, and her Catholicism made Mary the true and rightful Queen of England in the eyes of many Catholics and the Vatican.

These facts, coupled with the realization that several English Catholics (especially rebels active in the Rising of the North movement) supported Mary, ardently made Elizabeth I uneasy. Mary also did not help herself when she married James Hepburn, 4th Earl of Bothwell, who was widely accused of raping her. The Scottish people rebelled, and Mary abdicated and fled southwards towards England.

Elizabeth I was unsure at first what to do with Mary, so she kept Mary imprisoned in several castles and manor houses inside England (making escape difficult and thus unlikely). After 18 years and 9 months in Elizabeth's custody, it became clear that the situation was becoming untenable mainly due to Catholic efforts on the continent and within England to have Elizabeth I assassinated and to raise Mary Stuart to England's throne after marrying her to the recusant Catholic Thomas Howard, Duke of Norfolk.

By some accounts, Elizabeth's spymaster and principal secretary Francis Walsingham, either trapped Mary or fabricated evidence on high treason charges associated with the plot initiated by Anthony Babington. In 1587, Mary was executed for her involvement in conspiracies to assassinate Elizabeth. Elizabeth is said to have had deep misgivings about executing a fellow sovereign and thereby setting a pernicious precedent. Nor could Elizabeth forget that her own mother, Anne Boleyn (though only a queen consort), had also been executed.

Though she had put Mary to death, Elizabeth's unmarried and childless status left no Tudor to follow her. Thus, she was succeeded by her Mary's son James, whose reign united the two kingdoms of England and

Scotland. All British monarchs have since descended from James.

Mary, Queen of Scots: The History and Legacy of Mary Stuart of Scotland chronicles the tumultuous life of Mary and her role in history. Along with pictures of important people, places, and events, you will learn about Mary Stuart like never before, in no time at all.

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