

February Anniversary.



ESCAPE OF MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS FROM LOCHLEVEN CASTLE.

DEATH OF MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS.

FEBRUARY 8, 1587, Mary was beheaded for alleged conspiracy, in Fotheringay Castle, in the 45th year of her age.

Every phase in the life of this ill-fated sovereign is regarded with interest, and her entire career would seem to belong to the romance of history. Neither of its strange events, however, surpasses the escape of the imprisoned Queen from the Castle of Lochleven, an ancient fortress situate on a small island at the north-west end of the lake, in Kinross-shire, Scotland. It was once the property of the Douglasses of Lochleven, but is now a heap of ruins. Thence Mary escaped on the 2nd of May, 1568.

It appears that the marriage of Queen Mary with Bothwell raised the public indignation to such a pitch, that the nobles rose against them, and they fled before an armed and indignant people from fortress to fortress. At length, after they had collected some followers, a pitched battle near Carberry Hill was about to ensue, when Mary abandoned Bothwell, and threw herself on the mercy of her subjects. They conducted her first to Edinburgh, where, as she still persisted in regarding Bothwell as her husband, the nobles resolved that she should be confined during her life in the fortress of Lochleven. She was in a paroxysm of distress when Lords Ruthven and Lindsey arrived at the Palace of Holyrood to inform her that they were commanded to put in execution the order for her commitment. They charged her women to take from her all her ornaments and royal attire; and, being clothed in a mean dress, she was conveyed to the prison appointed for her. The Lords Seton, Yester, and Borthwick endeavoured to rescue her, but failed in the attempt. She was delivered over to William Douglas, the Governor of the Castle of Lochleven, who was nearly related to the Regent Morton. Here, however, Mary continued a prisoner less than twelve months, when she effected her escape by the aid of the Governor's brother, George Douglas, who had become enamoured of her. On May 2, in the year above named, when her keeper was at supper with his family, George Douglas having possessed himself of the keys of the Castle, hastened to the Queen's apartment, and conducted her out of prison. Having locked the Castle gates, they entered a boat which awaited them, and being rowed across the lake, the Lord Seton received the Queen with a chosen band of horsemen in complete armour. That night he conveyed her to his house of Niddrie, in West Lothian; having rested there a few hours, she set out for Hamilton, and was soon at the head of a gallant army.

Mary Stuart, famous for her beauty, her wit, her learning, and her misfortunes, was daughter of James V. King of Scotland, and succeeded her father in 1542, eight days after her birth. In 1558 she married François, dauphin, and afterwards King of France, by which means she became Queen of France. This monarch dying in 1560, she returned into Scotland, and married her cousin, Henry Stuart, Lord Darnley, in 1565. Being excluded from any share of the Government (as he suspected) by the advice of Rizzio, an Italian musician, her favourite and secretary, the King, by the counsel and assistance of some of the principal nobility, suddenly surprised them together, and Rizzio was slain, in the Queen's presence, in 1566. An apparent reconciliation afterwards took place, when Darnley, who had continued to reside separately from the Queen, was assassinated, and the house he had inhabited was blown up with gunpowder, in February, 1567. This barbarous transaction was but very imperfectly investigated; and in the month of May following, she wedded the Earl of Bothwell, who was openly accused as the murderer of the late King. Scotland soon became a scene of confusion and civil discord. Bothwell, took refuge in Denmark; and Mary, made a captive, was treated with insult and contempt. After some months' confinement she effected her escape, and, assisted by the few friends who still remained attached to her, made an effort for the recovery of her power. She was opposed by the Earl of Murray, the natural son of James V., who had obtained the Regency in the minority of her son. The battle of Langside ensured the triumph of her enemies; and, to avoid again falling into their power, she fled to England, and sought the protection of Queen Elizabeth; but that Princess treated her as a personal and political rival, and kept her in safe custody for a period of eighteen years. And during the whole of that long term she was considered as the head of the Popish party, who wished to see a Princess of their persuasion on the throne of England. Mary, despairing of recovering that of Scotland, most assuredly became a dupe to this party, and countenanced, if she was not directly concerned in, their plots. She was accordingly tried for a conspiracy against the life of the Queen of England, condemned, and suffered decapitation. Her body was interred with great pomp, in Peterborough Cathedral, but subsequently removed by her son, James I, to Henry the Seventh's Chapel, Westminster-Abbey, where a magnificent monument was erected to her memory. The character and conduct of Mary, Queen of Scots, have been made the subject of much controversy; but the fact of her marrying Bothwell, "stained as he was by universal suspicion of Darnley's murder, is a spot upon her character for which we in vain seek an apology."