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ELIZABETH THE MATCHMAKER:
THE PROPOSED MARRIAGE BETWEEN
MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS AND ROBERT DUDLEY

Johanna Rickman



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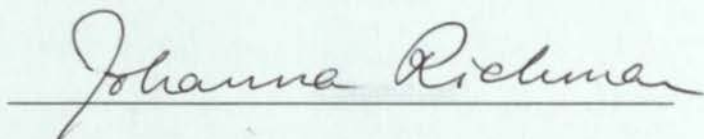


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Elizabeth the Matchmaker: The Proposed Marriage between Mary Queen of Scots and
Robert Dudley

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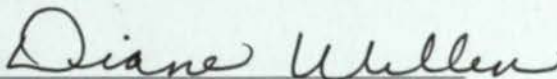
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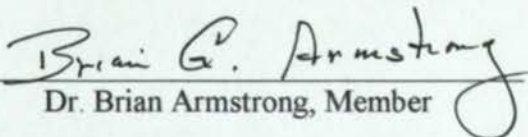
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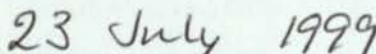
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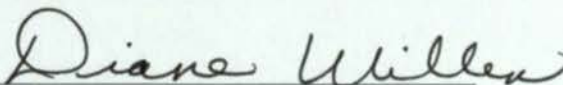
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List of Abbreviations

- CSP Domestic* *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, of the Reigns of Edward VI., Mary, Elizabeth, 1547-1580.* Ed. by Robert Lemon. London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans, and Roberts, 1856.
- CSP Foreign* *Calendar of State Papers, Foreign Series, of the Reign of Elizabeth, 1558-1582.* Ed. by Joseph Stevenson. Vol. 3-8. London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts and Green, 1863-1909.
- CSP Scot* *Calendar of State Papers Relating to Scotland and Mary, Queen of Scots, 1547-1603.* Vol. 1-2. Ed. by Joseph Bain. Edinburgh: General Register House, 1900.
- CSP Span* *Calendar of State Papers Relating to English Affairs, Preserved Principally in the Archives of Simancas, (Spanish)* Vol. 1. Ed. by Martin A. S. Hume. Public Record Office, 1892. Reprint, London: Kraus Reprint, 1971.
- Burghley Papers* *A Collection of State Papers Relating to Affairs in the Reigns of King Henry VIII, King Edward VI, Queen Mary, and Queen Elizabeth, From the Year 1542 to 1570 Transcribed from Original Letters and Other Authentick Memorials, Never before Published, Left by William Cecil Lord Burghley.* 2 vols. Ed. by Samuel Haynes and William Murdin. London: William Bowyer, 1740.

Introduction

If Mary Queen of Scots wished to marry, she would do very well for herself if she took for her husband Robert, Lord Dudley, the English Master of the Horse. Such was the message that Queen Elizabeth conveyed to the Scottish secretary William Maitland of Lethington in March 1563. Elizabeth continued by elaborating on Dudley's many fine qualities. He was one "in whom nature had implanted so many graces," Elizabeth assured the Scotsman, "that if she wished to marry herself she would prefer him to all the princes in the world." Lethington, as a skillful diplomat was wont to do, replied with tact. The fact that Elizabeth was willing to give up "a thing so dearly prized" was great proof of her love for his mistress, yet he was certain that Mary could never deprive her beloved cousin of "all the joy and solace she received from his [Dudley's] companionship." Nonetheless, Elizabeth continued by musing that it was a shame Ambrose Dudley, the earl of Warwick, was not as handsome as his brother Robert, because otherwise Mary and Elizabeth could *each* marry a Dudley. Lethington, utterly confused and embarrassed, did not know how to reply. Elizabeth, paying no heed to the speechless secretary, corrected herself: Warwick, by no means ugly nor ungraceful, was not quite as "gentle" and sophisticated as Robert, but he was still "worthy of being the husband of any great princess." Lethington, who by now had recovered himself, was anxious to put an end to this awkward conversation. He thus brought up the question of the English succession, which "he knew would shut her mouth directly." Jokingly, he said that Elizabeth should marry Dudley herself, and when she died, she could leave "both her kingdom and her husband" to Mary. The children of these marriages could then rule over a union of

Scotland and England. As he anticipated, Elizabeth had nothing more to say on the subject.¹

Even though Lethington temporarily stayed Elizabeth's unwelcome suggestions, her silence was not to last for very long. In the fall of the same year, Elizabeth sent Thomas Randolph to the Scottish court to begin official negotiations for a marriage between Mary and Dudley (although Randolph was actually not allowed to reveal Dudley's name until the following spring). The Dudley negotiations then continued intermittently until the summer of 1565. Although the chances for Mary accepting Elizabeth's choice seemed slim at first, Randolph was very optimistic about the prospects of success in the early months of 1565. His hopes were shattered when Mary, tired of Elizabeth's slow and uncertain dealings, decided that she could not put off her marriage any longer. On July 29 1565, Mary wedded her cousin Henry Stewart, Lord Darnley, which effectively put an end to any further ideas of a Scottish royal bride for the English queen's favorite.

This curious early Elizabethan episode has long puzzled historians. As mentioned, Robert Dudley was Elizabeth's Master of the Horse, and he had stood high in her favor from the beginning of her reign. In fact, the queen favored him too much in the opinion of some of her watchful subjects. Dudley was considered a greedy upstart, and his pedigree was certainly tarnished: both his father and his grandfather had been executed for treason in the reigns of Henry VIII and Mary Tudor respectively. Furthermore, the

¹ *Calendar of State Papers Relating to English Affairs, Preserved Principally in the Archives of Simancas*, vol. 1, ed. by Martin S. Hume (Public Record Office, 1892; reprint, London: Kraus Reprint), 313. Hereafter *CSP Span*.

mysterious death of Dudley's unfortunate wife, Amy Robsart, in 1560 caused persistent rumors that he was a cold-blooded murderer. Some thought that he had deliberately done away with his wife to clear the way for a marriage between him and Elizabeth.² In contrast to Dudley's tainted background and questionable reputation, Mary had been the queen of Scotland since her infancy and also briefly queen of France – consort to The Most Christian King – through her marriage with the short-lived Francis II. In addition, she was part of the great and powerful Guise family in France and very aware of her royal status. Thus mystery surrounds Elizabeth's proposal. What caused her to propose the dubious Dudley, her own favorite who hardly ever left her side,³ as a husband for the proud Mary? Other questions follow. Was Elizabeth serious about her proposal? Did she actually wish for the marriage to take place, and if so, did she really think that Mary would agree to it?

Historians have provided different theories concerning this marriage proposal.

Many of Elizabeth's biographers, notably John Neale, Wallace MacCaffrey, and Conyers

² Dudley's contemporaries published some rather scathing writings against him. One example appears in D.C. Peck's "The Letter of Estate: An Elizabethan Libel," *Notes and Queries* 28 (February 1981) : 21-35. Another one was *Leicester's Commonwealth*, published in 1584, and edited by Peck as well. (*Leicester's Commonwealth: The Copy of a Letter Written by a Master of Art of Cambridge (1584) and Related Documents* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1985.)) These writings argue among other things that Dudley was directly responsible for Robsart's death, as well as the death of the husband of his second wife. Although historians such as John Neale did not have much favorable to say about Dudley, more recent works have tried to revise this view. Esther Clifford in "Marriage of True Minds," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 15 (1984) : 37-46, argues that Elizabeth, an intelligent and shrewd woman, would never have favored Dudley for so long if he had been such a scoundrel as some were making him out to be.

³ Elizabeth herself once compared Dudley to "her little dog," because as Elizabeth explained, when people saw her canine companion, they "know that I am coming, and

Read, argue that Elizabeth's main reason was to prevent Mary from marrying one of the powerful Catholic princes on the Continent.⁴ Elizabeth certainly had reasons to fear such an alliance, as Mary was actively seeking a match with the Spanish prince Don Carlos, as well as with her young brother-in-law Charles IX, the new king of France. Archduke Charles of Austria, the emperor's son, was also mentioned in connection with the Scottish queen. Those historians arguing for Elizabeth's preventative tactic, however, disagree on whether or not she was serious in her offer of Dudley. Read and Neale argue that Elizabeth sincerely wished to see Dudley married to Mary, whereas MacCaffrey finds the thought of Elizabeth willingly giving up Dudley to her rival queen in the north difficult to swallow. The main concern in the matter of Elizabeth's sincerity is of course the nature of the close relationship between the queen and her favorite; why would she want to let him go?⁵

when you [Dudley] are seen, they say I am not far off." Quoted in Elizabeth Jenkins, *Elizabeth and Leicester* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1961), 129.

⁴ Wallace MacCaffrey, *Elizabeth I* (New York: Edward Arnold, 1993) 84-7; same in *The Shaping of the Elizabethan Regime* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), 160; Conyers Read, *Mr. Secretary Cecil and Queen Elizabeth* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1961), 303-25. John Neale, *Queen Elizabeth I* (1934; reprint, New York: Anchor Books, 1957), 124-5. See also Jenkins, 93-5; Milton Waldman, *Elizabeth and Leicester* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1945), 106-11.

⁵ Read, 303-4; Neale, 125, MacCaffrey, *Elizabeth*, 85-6 and *Shaping*, 165. Allison Plowden argues that Elizabeth was not serious in offering Dudley and believes that her insincerity shows that Elizabeth was merely wasting Mary's precious time when proposing that she marry Dudley. Plowden, *Elizabeth Tudor and Mary Stewart: Two Queens in One Isle* (Totowa: Barnes and Noble Books, 1984), 83-98. Norman Jones thinks that Elizabeth was "dishonest" in her negotiations. Jones, *The Birth of the Elizabethan Age: England in the 1560s* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1993), 141. Caroline Bingham suggests that the Dudley proposal was intended to prevent Mary from marrying at all. Bingham, *Darnley: A Life of Henry Stuart, Lord Darnley Consort of Mary Queen of Scots* (London: Constable, 1995), 82.

Other historians look more to Elizabeth's personal reasons. Geoffrey Elton believes that Elizabeth offered Dudley to Mary as a punishment for his role in the 1563 Parliament, where he helped Cecil encourage the MPs' petition that she should marry. Dudley was of course hoping that he would be Elizabeth's first choice if she had to pick a husband. As a side-note, Elton agrees that "this revenge had multiple uses," since it would also hinder Mary's marriage plans.⁶ Susan Doran argues that by offering Dudley to someone else in marriage, Elizabeth was attempting to salvage her own rather tarnished reputation. Furthermore, Doran states that by 1563, "Elizabeth had apparently little desire and certainly no intention of taking Dudley as her husband."⁷ If true, it would certainly strengthen the position that Elizabeth was ready to have Dudley marry Mary.

Yet another 'set' of historians focus on the Anglo-Scottish relations in the beginning of the 1560s, and see the marriage proposal as either a positive or negative attempt to deal with the tentative amity between the two states since the Treaty of Edinburgh in 1560. Simon Adams suggests that Elizabeth earnestly offered Dudley to keep the amity going, and that it was Mary's obsession with the English succession which eventually soured the friendship between the Scottish and the English.⁸ Jane Dawson also believes that the Dudley marriage was offered to cement an Anglo-Scottish alliance, but unlike Adams, she puts the blame of the eventual diplomatic breakdown on Elizabeth's obstinate refusal to name a successor, even though it was clear that she

⁶ Geoffrey Elton, *The Parliament of England 1559-1581* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 358-63.

⁷ Susan Doran *Monarchy and Matrimony: The Courtships of Elizabeth I* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 64-6.

avored Mary over the other claimants to her throne.⁹ Stephen Alford emphasizes the importance of religion, and states that Elizabeth offered Dudley to assure herself of an English Protestant on the throne to “neutralize” Mary’s “political effect as the single and sovereign power in Scotland.”¹⁰

Those historians who look at the episode with an Anglo-Scottish perspective, although they offer much detail about the negotiations and the events surrounding them, often do not really discuss Elizabeth’s initial motives for specifically offering Dudley. If she simply wanted Mary to marry an Englishman, could she not have found a more fitting bridegroom? The old problem still comes back: why her own favorite? Neither Alford, Adams, nor Dawson properly address this question. Likewise, Gordon Donaldson, a biographer of Mary, dismisses the Dudley proposal as “hardly credible,” and then goes on to talk about the implications of the Darnley marriage.¹¹ Frederick Chamberlin records Lethington’s – and everyone else’s – surprise at Elizabeth’s suggestion, but does not speculate further about her motives.¹² One must take into account that the negotiations for this “hardly credible” proposal went on for about a year and a half, and that before Darnley entered Scotland in early 1565, Mary appeared to be rather favorable to the proposition.

⁸ Simon Adams, “The Release of Lord Darnley and the Failure of the Amity,” *Imes Review* 38 (April 1991): 123-53.

⁹ Jane Dawson, “Mary Queen of Scots, Lord Darnley, and Anglo-Scottish Relations in 1565,” *International Historical Review* (February 1986): 21.

¹⁰ Stephen Alford, *The Early Elizabethan Polity: William Cecil and the British Succession Crisis, 1558-1569* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 122.

¹¹ Gordon Donaldson, *Mary Queen of Scots* (London: English University Press, 1974), 78-79.

Most of the historians who have written on Elizabeth's proposal spend only a few pages on the episode, and then go on to discuss the well-known consequences of Mary's marriage with Darnley: the revolt of Moray, the Riccio murder, the Darnley murder, the Bothwell marriage, and finally abdication, flight into England, and execution. However, studying the Dudley negotiations closely can give important insights into the politics and policy in both Elizabeth and Mary's early years of rule (in the case of Mary, the early years of her *personal* rule).

In the early 1560s, Elizabeth's position on the English throne was not at all as secure as it was later to become. Although her reign turned out to be very long – forty-four years – it is important not to apply hindsight to the early events which occurred before she had consolidated her position. Ultimately, Mary's reign was not successful. Although she possessed a captivating personality, she was not a very able ruler. However, the shortcomings of the Scottish Queen were not revealed immediately; her decline in power was not evident until sometime after the summer of 1565. Thus when Mary returned to Scotland from France in 1561, her presence was a threat to Elizabeth's very throne, or at least perceived as such. Although Mary ruled over subjects who had declared themselves Protestant, she had strong ties to the ultra-Catholic Guise family in France. She was a young, attractive widow, actively looking to make a good marriage, and with a keen eye on the crown of England. The Dudley negotiations were thus held at a time of English insecurity and apparent Catholic strength.

¹² Frederick Chamberlin, *Elizabeth and Leicester* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co, 1939), 135-36.

Furthermore, both Elizabeth and Mary had to contend with the problems presented by their gender. The fact that they were sovereigns in their own right made their prospective marriages carry much more weight than the marriages of their male counterparts. That they would marry was a foregone conclusion; an unmarried woman, unless she was a nun, was considered an anomaly in sixteenth century Europe. Marriage was also needed to produce royal offspring; in the early 1560s, both Mary and Elizabeth were childless and their realms therefore threatened by an uncertain succession. Consequently, the succession question was very prominent throughout Elizabeth's reign, and indeed especially urgent in the early 1560s. Looking at the Dudley negotiations thus sheds some light on the importance and nature of royal marriages and marriage negotiations in the latter half of the sixteenth century.

Focusing on a relatively short period of time and a specific episode can also bring to the fore the nature of Elizabethan policy. In general, the personal life of the monarch was completely intertwined with 'public' affairs. Elizabeth's – and Mary's – personal feelings and ideas about marriage were very much part of the decisions that concerned their entire realms. Likewise, the 'private' friendship of the two queens was crucial for the maintenance of the newfound Anglo-Scottish amity. More specifically, examining these marriage negotiations can also highlight the manner in which Elizabeth conducted the business of her realm. The English queen has often been accused of being unable to make resolute decisions. Instead, she would delay and vacillate, which occasionally "drove her councillors to distraction."¹³ Although extremely irritating for those around

¹³ John Guy, *Tudor England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 252.

her, Elizabeth's peculiar aversion to quick and decisive actions sometimes worked in her favor. She forced others to act, while she could sit back and respond to the new situation, often with more options available than if she had been the one to make the first move. One of the purposes of this essay is thus to investigate the manner in which Elizabeth conducted these marriage negotiations, and assess the significance of her actions.

Before the details of the Dudley negotiations can be properly understood, it is necessary to investigate the political, religious, and cultural context of the early 1560s. Chapter One therefore discusses the complicated question of succession and Elizabeth's obstinate refusal to nominate an heir. It also outlines the events surrounding Mary's return to Scotland, the relationship between the two queens, and the religious troubles in France, which definitely tested the Anglo-Scottish amity. Chapter Two looks at the prevalent ideas of gender and specifically at the problems facing female rulers. The early marriage proposals and negotiations of both queens are also part of the background facts necessary for understanding the Dudley proposal, and are thus included in Chapter Two.

The following chapters present the narrative of the marriage negotiations between Elizabeth and Mary. Chapter Three, then, looks at the beginning of the Dudley negotiations in the fall of 1563 and follows events until the conference at Berwick in 1564, when representatives of the two queens met to discuss the details of Mary's marriage. Chapter Four, with a brief break from the narrative, introduces Mary's future husband, Lord Darnley, and his family with its shifting relations with the English crown. This chapter also looks into his claim to the English throne in more detail, which requires

further knowledge of his mother's genealogy. Chapter Five picks up the narrative of the negotiations from the winter of 1564/65 – when Randolph began to hope that his labors would finally pay off – through the spring and the development of the whirlwind romance between Mary and Darnley, ending with the July-wedding in 1565. Finally, the concluding chapter looks at the aftermath of Mary's fateful marriage, and the consequences it had for the amity between Scotland and England and more especially for the relationship between Elizabeth and Mary. It also attempts an assessment of Elizabeth's motives in the Dudley negotiations, the question of her sincerity in offering her favorite to Mary, and the nature of Elizabethan policymaking.

The main sources used for this essay are the *Calendars of State Papers* (CSP). Not surprisingly, the Scottish calendar has been most useful, but the reports of the Spanish ambassadors in the Spanish calendar are very detailed and thus add much information. The Spanish ambassadors from 1560 to 1565, the bishop de Quadra and Guzman de Silva, both had a good eye (and plenty of spies) for the events at the English court and dutifully reported everything to king Philip and his sister the Duchess of Parma, who controlled the Spanish Netherlands. The Domestic calendar, although its entries are rather terse, contains good information primarily on the early succession question. The Foreign calendar consists mostly of reports from the English ambassadors in France and Spain, and thus gives the continental perspective on the Dudley proposal and the surrounding events.

Other primary sources include the *Register of the Privy Council of Scotland* and the *Papal Negotiations with Mary Queen of Scots during her reign in Scotland, 1561-*

1567, the latter meticulously edited by J. H. Pollen. *The Papal Negotiations* are especially useful in assessing Mary's religious commitments and her continental connections. The papers of Cecil (*The Burghley Papers*) compliment the CSP; the Secretary's "diary" where he outlines important events in chronological order is very helpful. Furthermore, the colorful memoirs of the Scottish Sir James Melville, whom Mary employed as her special envoy to England as well as to the continent, add important information and some interesting assessments of the main personalities in the Dudley negotiations.

¹ *Journal of Mary*, 55.

² See Jones, chapter 1.

Chapter One:

The Early Years

Early in the morning of November 17, 1558 Mary Tudor died. Left to succeed her was the Lady Elizabeth; the royal councilors had pressured the dying queen into formally acknowledging her half-sister as heir apparent on November 6. Elizabeth was at Hatfield House when the news of Mary's death reached her, and although she declared that "the law of nature moves me to sorrow for my sister," she nonetheless felt that God's will had been done. Elizabeth, "ordained to obey His appointment," was "amazed" at her new burden, but yet "desired with the bottom of [her] heart that [she] may have assistance of His grace to be the minister of His heavenly will in this office now committed to [her]."¹ Elizabeth might have been correct in asking guidance from above, for it was certainly not a stable and harmonious realm that the new queen inherited. Apart from long-range problems such as frequent poor harvests, inflation, and pressures from a growing population, Elizabeth also had to face religious divisions and war with France.²

Another pressing concern from the very beginning of Elizabeth's reign was that of the succession. Elizabeth was the last Tudor and she was an unmarried woman. The idea of another woman on the throne after Mary's troublesome reign was frightening enough, but the fact that this particular woman was unmarried and therefore without an immediate heir was almost too much for her subjects to bear. Without an heir apparent, the stability of the country appeared to depend on the life of a single female. If Elizabeth died, the

¹ Quoted in Neale, 55.

² See Jones, chapter 1.

possibility of civil war loomed large; the bloody and protracted Wars of the Roses had ended less than a hundred years ago and still lived on in peoples' memory.

Although Henry VIII married a total of six times, he only managed to produce three children within wedlock.³ Thus when Mary died, Elizabeth was the sole survivor of Henry's progeny. Nonetheless, there were other branches of the Tudor family that could – and did – lay a claim to the throne. The main contestants were four in number: Catherine Grey, Margaret Lennox, the Earl of Huntingdon, and last but not least, Mary Queen of Scots.

Catherine Grey, sister of the luckless Jane Grey, was the granddaughter of Henry VIII's younger sister Mary. Mary had married the duke of Suffolk after a brief period as queen of France through her marriage to Louis XII. The strength of Catherine's claim was based on Henry VIII's will. According to the will, the original copy of which Elizabeth kept under lock and key, the junior Suffolk line was to inherit the crown if Henry's own children died without issue.⁴

However, Catherine's actions brought the wrath of Elizabeth upon her, a wrath which proved to be very long lasting. On August 10, 1561 Elizabeth discovered that Catherine was pregnant. The mother-to-be confessed that she had secretly married Edward Seymore, earl of Hertford, sometime before the previous Christmas. Elizabeth was furious and Catherine soon found herself in the Tower. Convinced that "there hath been great Practisees and Purposees" against her, Elizabeth set about to eliminate the

³ Henry had a son with his mistress, Mary Boleyn. The illegitimate son died a young man.

threat from her Suffolk cousin.⁵ Hertford, who was in France at the time, was summoned and imprisoned at his homecoming.⁶ When Catherine was delivered of a healthy baby-boy on September 24, the queen's anger and anxiety only increased.⁷ Elizabeth ordered an investigation into the validity of the marriage, and since Catherine and Hertford were unable to produce sufficient evidence, their union was declared null and void. This judgement meant that their firstborn – and the second son they managed to conceive while imprisoned in the Tower – were bastardized and thus lost all claims to the throne.⁸

Catherine's troubles grew worse when Elizabeth discovered that a certain lawyer named John Hales had written a pamphlet in which he argued for the validity of Catherine's claim while at the same time excluding the Scottish queen. As Hales was examined, other names connected with the pamphlet became known and among them was Lord John Grey, Catherine's uncle. (Actually, there were so many connected with Hales and his views that Elizabeth had to stop the investigation for fear of having to overcrowd her prisons and putting much of her nobility out of commission.) Grey's involvement only deepened Elizabeth's resentment. Notwithstanding the many pleas for

⁴ Mortimer Levine, *Tudor Dynastic Problems, 1460-1571* (New York: Barnes and Nobles, 1973), 100.

⁵ *A Collection of State Papers Relating to Affairs in the Reigns of King Henry VIII, King Edward VI, Queen Mary, and Queen Elizabeth, From the Year 1542 to 1570 Transcribed from Original Letters and Other Authentick Memorials, Never before Published, Left by William Cecil Lord Burghley*, eds. Samuel Haynes and William Murdin, (London: William Bowyer, 1740), vol. 1, 369. Hereafter *Burghley Papers*.

⁶ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 753.

⁷ *CSP Span*, 176.

⁸ Levine, 102-103. Interestingly, Elizabeth herself, although a legitimate heir according to Henry's will, was technically of illegitimate birth since Henry's marriage to Anne Boleyn had been declared invalid. Elizabeth never bothered to have the act from 1536 which declared her a bastard repealed. See Levine, 98.

mercy from Catherine and Hertford, they both remained in prison. Catherine, weakened by the ordeal, was never to know freedom again. She died, still a prisoner, in January of 1568.⁹

It was primarily Protestants who wanted Catherine to be recognized as Elizabeth's heir. However, before her marriage to Hertford, the Spanish had toyed with the idea of marrying Catherine off to a Spanish nobleman, thus using her as an instrument to usurp the English crown from Elizabeth.¹⁰ Catherine undoubtedly *was* the center of some intrigue, but there is no convincing evidence that she herself, or Hertford for that matter, was striving for Elizabeth's throne. (Surely, her sister's fate would have taught her the dangers in meddling with an uncertain succession.) Although Elizabeth certainly found Catherine's behavior sinister, it appears as if the disputed marriage between Catherine and Hertford was simply an unwise love-match with sad results.¹¹

If Catherine Grey was the choice of many Protestants, Margaret Lennox held the vote of Catholics. Margaret was the daughter of Margaret Tudor, older sister of Henry VIII, and Archibald Douglas, earl of Angus. Angus was Margaret's second husband; she was first married to James IV of Scotland. Lady Lennox acquired her title through her

⁹ Frank Arthur Mumby, *Elizabeth and Mary Stuart: The Beginning of the Feud* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1914); 301. Hertford was finally released shortly thereafter.

¹⁰ *CSP Span*, 176. Thomas Randolph, Elizabeth's ambassador in Scotland, also reported of rumors to marry Catherine to the Scottish earl of Arran. Since Arran had claims to the Scottish succession, this would be a way to unite the realms. *Calendar of State Papers Relating to Scotland and Mary, Queen of Scots, 1547-1603*, ed. Joseph Bain (Edinburgh: General Register House, 1900), vol. 1, 483. Hereafter *CSP Scot*.

¹¹ Levine, 102-103. Catherine's younger sister Mary Grey, obviously not learning anything from her sister's fate, also contracted a secret marriage in 1566. Mary, who is often described as "dwarfish," married a Mr. Keyes, a sergeant-porter at the court who

marriage to Matthew Stewart, earl of Lennox. Margaret clearly had an eye on the English throne, but not primarily for her own sake. Instead, she was working for the benefit of her eldest son, Henry Stewart, the Lord Darnley. The Lennox claims and the designs of Darnley and his ambitious mother will be discussed at some length at a different point in this essay, so I will not belabor the point further here. Suffice it to say that both Margaret Lennox and her husband found themselves in custody in 1562 for their attempts to get Mary to take their son for her husband. For obvious reasons, the Lennoxes had to deal behind Elizabeth's back, which made the royal anger so much stronger when the queen found out about their the plans. The family was not fully restored to favor until the early summer of 1564, but they did not remain so for very long. Darnley's marriage to Mary in July 1565 definitely ended all friendly feelings that Elizabeth might have harbored towards them.

Henry Hastings, the earl of Huntingdon, probably had the weakest claim to the throne, because unlike the other claimants, he was not a descendant of the first Tudor king, Henry VII. Instead, Huntingdon's pedigree revealed Yorkist forefathers; he descended from Edward IV's brother, the duke of Clarence. Moreover, he was undoubtedly a Protestant, which endeared him to the adherents of the same religion. His greatest attraction, however, was the simple fact that he was a *man*. Having a male sovereign would eliminate the problems a ruling queen presented, and if he were declared Elizabeth's successor, the issue of the queen's marriage would loose at least some of its importance. However much others might have liked the idea of Huntingdon on the

was reportedly over six feet tall. Elizabeth quickly separated the mismatched couple.

throne, the earl himself had no such ambitions. The episode with the Grey-Hertford marriage clearly showed that Elizabeth treated the claimants with considerable suspicion. Huntingdon did not wish to live under the shadow of the queen's displeasure.¹²

Finally, of course, there was Mary Queen of Scots. Like Margaret Lennox, she was the granddaughter of Henry VIII's oldest sister Margaret. Unlike Lady Lennox, however, Mary's grandfather was James IV of Scotland, Margaret Tudor's first husband. Mary's parents were James V and the French Mary of Guise. As her father died when she was only a few months old, Mary had been queen of Scotland basically her entire life. Her mother, after usurping the position from the earl of Arran in 1554, acted as Regent until her death in the summer of 1560. Mary was staunchly Catholic, and furthermore, the young queen was more French than Scottish. She had been sent to France as a five-year old, and was trained to shoulder the role of queen of France, as she was betrothed to Francis, the Dauphin.

Although hereditarily Mary was the closest to the English crown, the fact that she was not English barred her from the throne both by the will of Henry VIII and by the common law of the land. Her close connection with France and especially her Guise relations – the Guises were a very powerful and very Catholic French noble family with a far reaching network – made her claim fairly unpopular in England, at least among Protestants. Many Catholics preferred to back the semi-English Margaret Lennox

Jenkins, 151; Doran, 3; MacCaffrey, *Shaping of the Elizabethan Regime*, 187.

¹² Levine, 101. In April, 1563, Huntingdon wrote a letter to Robert Dudley, asking him to use his influence with the queen and persuade her that he had no ambitions in regards to the succession to the throne. Mumby, 283-4.

instead.¹³ Curiously, however, Elizabeth seemed to have favored Mary's claim over the others, probably because she was the only truly royal person of the candidates, as well as being a fellow reigning queen.¹⁴

Nonetheless, Elizabeth had no intention of letting Mary have her throne. The English queen, along with her subjects, was very upset when she found out that Mary was presumptuously calling herself queen of England and Ireland. At the death of Mary Tudor, Henry II of France had immediately convinced Mary to use the English title, since he considered Elizabeth illegitimate and – as a Protestant – unworthy of the crown. Mary complied, and Cecil wrote angrily about reports that ushers had proclaimed to the people crowding around “Place pour la Reine d’Angleterre,” and that the Scottish queen had been sitting under an arch, on which the English arms were carved, during the marriage of Philip of Spain and Elizabeth Valois. Furthermore, Cecil fumed, certain courtly verses recited at the festivities clearly declared Mary “Of Scotland Queen and England too, Of Ireland too, as God hath provided it so.”¹⁵ The Spanish ambassador also reported Elizabeth's anger at Mary's usage of the English title.¹⁶ The topic came up for serious discussion during the peace talks between England, Scotland, and France in the summer of 1560. One point in the final Treaty of Edinburgh demanded that Mary and Frances (who had ascended the French throne after his father's death on June 30, 1559) stop using

¹³ Ibid., 99-100.

¹⁴ Antonia Fraser, *Mary Queen of Scots* (New York: Delacorte Press, 1970), 162-3.

¹⁵ *Burghley Papers*, vol. 2, p. 749.

¹⁶ See for example *CSP Span*, 135.

the title of England, and that all their artifacts on which the contested arms were displayed should be destroyed or declared invalid within a specified time-period.¹⁷

The question of succession became urgent when in October of 1562, Elizabeth contracted smallpox and almost died. For about seven days, it appeared as if Elizabeth's reign would be of even shorter duration than that of her sickly brother. The queen's councilors scrambled to find with a solution in case Elizabeth would not survive the ordeal, but little was accomplished. De Quadra, bishop of Avila and the Spanish ambassador in England, reported to his master that "out of the 15 or 16 of them that there are there were nearly as many different opinions about the succession to the throne."¹⁸ De Quadra probably exaggerated, but it was certainly true that the Privy Council was divided. The only point on which they seem to agree was that Mary should be excluded.¹⁹

Although Elizabeth survived, her illness only exacerbated the discussion of her succession. When she had recuperated, she decided to call Parliament; the queen was seeking to repair her failing finances by taxation. Her subjects, misinterpreting her move, thought that she was ready to settle the succession question. (Hales' book was written and circulated at this time and groups of MP's were meeting secretly to talk about possible solutions to the problem of succession.) When the parliamentary session finally began in the spring of 1563, the Commons petitioned the queen either to settle the succession or marry. Elizabeth, hoping to quiet the unwanted discussion, told them that "as a prince she was not vowed to the unmarried state which as a private woman she would prefer, and

¹⁷ *CSP Scot*, vol. 1, 431.

¹⁸ *CSP Span*, 262.

¹⁹ *Ibid*.

that the problem of the succession was too serious to be quickly decided.” Thus nothing definitive came out of the 1563 Parliament on the matter of succession, and the question would resurface in the Parliament of 1566, again only to be stymied by a then furious Elizabeth. However, the fact that the Commons dared to petition the queen on such a weighty matter showed their great concern.²⁰

Throughout her entire life, Elizabeth was unwilling to declare a successor. When she thought herself dying in 1562, instead of appointing an heir, she requested that her favorite Dudley should be made Protector of the realm. Dudley was not even on the Privy Council at that time (he was raised to that position shortly after her recovery) and although his closeness to the queen had rendered him powerful, he was still only a knight and the Master of the Horse. Making such a man a protector certainly was not a very feasible ‘last wish.’ Furthermore, some forty years later, when Elizabeth was on what proved to be her actual deathbed, she still refused to nominate the next ruler. Although the succession of James VI was both expected and peaceful, Elizabeth had not directly stated that she wished him to have her crown.

Why this refusal to give her subjects the peace of mind they so desperately wanted? Elizabeth’s argument against having a known successor was twofold. First, she considered the safety and peacefulness of her realm; she wanted to avoid having an heir around whom dissenters to her reign could rally. She “knew the inconstancy of the people of England” and explained “how they ever mislike the present government and have their

²⁰ Elton, 358-63.

eyes fixed upon the person that is next to succeed, and naturally men be so disposed.”²¹ Elizabeth certainly had personal experience in this matter.²² She herself was once in danger during the aftermath of Wyatt’s Rebellion in the beginning of Mary Tudor’s reign. Although nothing could be proven against Elizabeth herself, her supporters had not hesitated in their rebellion and thus caused their would-be queen to be put in the Tower. Elizabeth realized that if she declared a successor, she would create even more and sharper factions within her nobility, especially since the question of religion was so central in the support of the claimants. She wanted to avoid all unnecessary bloodshed, and keeping her subjects in suspense, although not an ideal situation, was the least offensive alternative. She was probably correct in her assumption.

Secondly, the succession was a very personal matter for Elizabeth. She did not like people who aspired to her throne, as is evidenced by her treatment of Catherine Grey. She once asked the Scottish envoy Lethington how he could press her to name a successor: “Think you that I could love my own windingsheet?”²³ She was sure that a declared successor would shortly strive for her death to put him or herself in Elizabeth’s place. She also told Mary herself that “nothyng is more mynded than how to possess that which we have, and that is but a sorrowful song, to pretend more shortnes of our lyf than there is cause.”²⁴ Elizabeth was thus not only protecting her realm from disorder, but she also felt as if she was protecting her very own life and position. Despite all the talk of succession, she declared her intentions clearly: “So long as I live, I shall be Queen of

²¹ Quoted in Plowden, 70.

²² *CSP Span*, 374.

²³ Quoted in Plowden, 70.

England. When I am dead, they shall succeed that have most right.”²⁵ Thus Elizabeth was not going to settle the succession question by nominating an heir, because she considered it to be detrimental not only to her own security, but also to that of the country as a whole.

If the succession was a thorny question in the beginning of Elizabeth’s reign, so was the state of foreign policy. The Spanish king Philip II, married to Mary Tudor, had persuaded his wife to enter into a disastrous war against France. Philip himself was at war with the Valois king and wanted English support for his enterprise. As a result, Mary ultimately lost Calais, the last English hold on the continent. The war was concluded in the peace of Cateau-Cambresis in April 1559, and as a part of the treaty, the French were supposed to “pacify the Scottish border.”²⁶ However, the unexpected death of Henry II shortly after the treaty²⁷ brought about a shift in power. Francis II, who succeeded his father, was married to Mary Queen of Scots. Subsequently, Mary’s Guise relations rose in importance and power at the French court. Scotland, with Mary of Guise as Regent, became an “instrument of French foreign policy.”²⁸ When the French troops began occupying the fortresses along the border country, Scottish Protestants rebelled. The

²⁴ *CSP Scot*, vol. 1, 81.

²⁵ Quoted in Plowden, 69-70.

²⁶ *Burghley Papers*, vol. 2, 748. See also Guy, 264.

²⁷ Henry II died from the wounds he contracted in a jousting accident during the celebrations after the treaty. (A piece of broken lance found its way through the openings in his helmet and pierced his eye and throat.) As part of the celebrations, Philip of Spain was to marry Elizabeth Valois, Henry’s daughter. Philip certainly did not waste much time in mourning for Mary who had died only a few months earlier.

²⁸ Guy, 265.

Scottish could not do it by themselves, though, and looked to the south for help. English Protestants realized the danger of war so close by, yet could not deny the advantages. In the well-put words of historian John Guy, by helping their neighbors to the north, “at a stroke the Scottish Reformation could be made the vehicle for French expulsion from the British Isles, Scotland’s position as an English satellite cemented, and Mary’s claim to the throne weakened.”²⁹

Elizabeth, however, was not keen on helping subjects who were openly rebelling against their sovereigns (Francis held the crown matrimonial and was thus king of Scotland and France) and she wanted to avoid costly foreign expeditions. After much pressure, especially from Cecil who greatly favored intervention, Elizabeth finally gave in and agreed to send military help to Scotland. The English troops were not successful at first; Cecil commented on May 6, 1560 that “the first Assault at Leith took not good Effect.”³⁰ The Spanish ambassador in England, bishop Quadra, thought Elizabeth’s actions were pure folly. In February, he reported to Philip that “in the event of the Scotch business turning out badly for her, as it probably will, she will be left helpless.” The English queen ought to know better than to stick her nose in business were it did not belong.³¹

Elizabeth was lucky. Circumstances turned to her favor: the French lost a fleet in a storm, France’s internal religious troubles were breaking into open violence, as

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ *Burghley Papers*, vol. 2, 750.

³¹ *CSP Span*, 129, 172.

evidenced by the Tumult of Ambois in March, and on top of this, Mary of Guise died on June 11. The French were ready for a settlement.

After protracted discussions about the terms, the Treaty of Edinburgh was concluded on July 6, 1560. Cecil and Dr. Wotton, the two English representatives in the negotiations, were fairly pleased with the result, even though Elizabeth felt that the French got off too easily.³² The French troops were forced to leave Scotland and the Scottish nobles were able to consolidate their power and bring about a Protestant settlement. A council of twelve, of which Mary was to choose seven, and the Scottish estates five, would run the country in the absence of the queen. The 'auld alliance' that had existed between France and Scotland, especially strong during the regency of Mary of Guise, was replaced with a new Scottish-English amity, which definitely would help define English foreign policy in the 1560s. Furthermore, the treaty required that Mary and Francis give up the use of the English title and arms 'henceforward.' The demand was formulated in such a way that Mary – if she ratified the treaty – would have to consent to signing away her claim to the English throne not only during the lifetime of Elizabeth and her issue, but for all time.³³

Elizabeth confirmed the treaty in September, and Sir Nicholas Throckmorton, English ambassador in France, was charged with the task of getting Mary and Francis to ratify it as well. This task proved impossible, because Mary – as Cecil so aptly put it –

³² Elizabeth wanted the French to give her back Calais, but Cecil had not received this demand until after the treaty was already signed. The secretary thought this glitch in communications "a happy mishapp," since he was convinced that the French would never have agreed to give up Calais, and thus there would have been no peace treaty. *CSP Scot*, vol. 1, 446.

simply “would not accept it.”³⁴ Elizabeth did not give up, however. When the sickly king Francis died in December of 1560, Elizabeth sent the earl of Bedford to Mary to express the English queen’s condolences as well as to ask for ratification. Mary thanked her ‘sister’ for her kind words, and vaguely stated that she would “do her best to preserve the amity,” but that she could not possibly ratify the treaty without the counsel from the Scottish lords.³⁵

The death of Francis, just like the death of his father only a little over a year earlier, rearranged the power structure in France again. The new French king was Charles, a boy of ten who would obviously need someone to reign in his place until he was of age. Catherine de Medici, his formidable mother, quickly grasped the opportunity and took over political power in the name of her son. Mary found her own position uncertain and the power of the Guises waned. What was she to do? She went from being the queen of France and wife of the Most Christian King to being a widow and the absentee queen of a country in which she had not set foot for thirteen years. Furthermore, Catherine de Medici made it clear that Mary was no longer welcome in France; her purpose there had been to be Francis’ consort, not a rivaling dowager queen backed by the powerful and uncomfortably Catholic Guise family.³⁶

Mary decided to go home. As early as January 1561, she instructed her commissioners to straighten out her finances in Scotland as she was planning on coming

³³ *Burghley Papers*, vol. 1, 354-7; Donaldson, 47.

³⁴ *Burghley Papers*, vol. 2, 751.

³⁵ *CSP Scot*, vol. 1, 476; *Burghley Papers*, vol. 2, 752.

³⁶ Fraser, 115-117; Plowden, 60, Jenny Wormald, *Mary Queen of Scots: A Study in Failure* (London: George Philip, 1983), 104.

there as soon as she could settle her affairs in France.³⁷ Mary's decision was met almost with as much dislike on the other side of the channel as did the Scottish queen's continued presence in France. The queen's own subjects were wary of her coming. They had achieved a tentative settlement of religion and were unsure of what would happen when the Catholic Mary would begin her personal rule. Many of the Protestant lords thought Mary was coming too soon; they wanted some more time to settle things in such a way that she could not easily change them. Randolph reported that "were it not for obedience sake, some of them [the Scottish nobles] care not though they never saw her face!"³⁸

Elizabeth did not want Mary to return either, and certainly not before she had ratified the treaty. She repeatedly sent envoys into France, but could not convince Mary to change her mind regarding the ratification.³⁹ She also felt that Mary would "alter things to the worst" in Scotland, "specially religion and devotion to England."⁴⁰ Thus when Mary sent her envoy Monsieur d'Oysel to ask for a safe-conduct for herself and her retinue to pass through England on her way home, Elizabeth refused to allow it unless Mary would ratify the treaty.⁴¹ Mary, disregarding Elizabeth's rather rude reply,⁴² told

³⁷ *CSP Scot*, vol. 1, 507.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 543.

³⁹ Throckmorton tried – unsuccessfully – many times, and Elizabeth also had letters sent to Mary's uncle, the Cardinal of Lorraine, and to the Scottish estates, asking them to pressure Mary to ratify, all to no avail. *Burghley Papers*, vol. 2, 752; *CSP Scot*, vol. 1, 538.

⁴⁰ *CSP Scot*, vol. 1, 537.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 538, 540.

⁴² Mary made some ironic statements about Elizabeth's "choler and stomache" to Throckmorton. *Calendar of State Papers, Foreign Series, of the Reign of Elizabeth*,

Lethington that she loved her subjects so much that she had resolved to come anyway.⁴³ Even though Throckmorton again tried to persuade her to ratify the treaty only a few days before she left France, Mary stood fast. When Elizabeth realized that the Scottish queen was going to go ahead with her journey despite her best efforts to stop or at least delay her, she quickly tried to save face by issuing a last-minute passport for her cousin. To make matters worse, the safe-conduct arrived too late. On August 15, 1561, Mary boldly set sail for Scotland. Her crossing was unusually quick, and she stepped on Scottish ground at Leith in the morning fog on August 19. Elizabeth's safe-conduct found its way to Scotland four days after Mary's arrival.⁴⁴

Mary had a rather pleasant first meeting with her subjects, who were favorably impressed with her graceful and royal appearance and behavior. The pleasant mood changed when on Sunday the queen ordered mass to be said in the chapel at Holyrood House. Mary had been assured by Lord James – her half-brother who was later to become the earl of Moray – that she would be able to practice Catholicism privately. When some ardent Protestants found out about the mass, they were furious that 'idolatry' should once again be practiced in Scotland. A noisy crowd gathered in the courtyard, and although the mass went off undisturbed, the poor priest was so frightened that he barely could lift the Host at the Elevation.⁴⁵

1558-1582, ed. by Joseph Stevenson (London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts and Green, 1863-1909), vol. 4, 154. Hereafter *CSP Foreign*.

⁴³ *CSP Scot*, vol. 1, 544.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 545.

⁴⁵ *CSP Foreign*, vol. 4, 278.

Mary's continued Catholicism would create tension between the queen and some of her extreme Protestant subjects, such as John Knox. Mary still managed to create some stability in Scotland by her promise to leave religion in the same state as she found it when she arrived, i. e. her subjects were free to practice Protestantism. On Monday, August 25, Mary issued a proclamation which stated that she would make no changes in religion until she had assembled her Estates to discuss the matter. The proclamation also included the right of Mary and her servants to practice their religion without fear of assault.⁴⁶

Although Mary passionately declared that she would rather die than "swerve from obedience to his Holiness and to the Apostolic See" in a letter to the pope,⁴⁷ the Scottish queen appears to have been rather practical when it came to religion. Ignorant of Mary's reluctance as well as her inability to make any major changes in Scotland at least for the time being, the pope hopefully wrote to his "dear daughter in Christ." The pontiff told her to take as a role model the late Mary Tudor, who "surely did not defend the cause of God timidly, nor hesitate in withstanding the foes of the Catholic religion."⁴⁸ But Mary had no intention of imitating her English namesake; religious persecution would only hinder her ultimate objective of getting Elizabeth to nominate her as the rightful successor to the English throne. Instead of declaring herself a champion of the pope, Mary wanted to be Protestant Elizabeth's bosom friend. In January 1562, Mary wrote to her uncle, the duke

⁴⁶ *Register of the Privy Council of Scotland*, ed. John Hill Burton, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: H. M. General Register House, 1877), 266-7. See also Fraser, 153.

⁴⁷ *Papal Negotiations with Mary Queen of Scots during her Reign in Scotland, 1561-1567*, ed. by John Hungerford Pollen (Edinburgh: University Press, 1901), 87.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 74-5.

of Guise, of her close relationship with Elizabeth, especially relishing the thought of “how the others will be astonished if they see us, the Queen of England and I, [getting on] so well.”⁴⁹ These words were hardly the comments of a queen committed to rooting out the Protestant heresy flourishing in both Scotland and England.

Even though Mary had outwitted Elizabeth by going to Scotland without passing through England, the English queen did not give up on the ratification of the treaty of Edinburg. She sent Peter Mewtas to Mary to once again request the Scottish queen’s signature on the treaty. Mary stood fast in her refusal. Exasperated, Elizabeth wrote to her cousin and demanded to know her reasons; the Scottish queen was now among her advisors, so what was it that stayed her still? Mary responded in January. She said that she simply could not ratify the treaty as it stood, because she would have to give up all present and future claims to the English throne. Royal claims and succession were a God-given birthright that could not be denied by man’s own negotiations.⁵⁰ Elizabeth, who expressed the same view of succession and lineage to Lethington, could probably understand Mary’s reasoning. Although the question of Mary’s claim to the succession would never rest, the issue of the ratification of the treaty ran out in the sand.

Next followed a period of studied amity between the two queens. Gracious letters and friendly words were exchanged across the border; Mary, for example, sent Elizabeth a ring with a heart-shaped diamond, accompanied by courtly verses expressing the love she bore her royal cousin. Furthermore, Randolph reported how Mary had pulled a letter

⁴⁹ Ibid., 442-3. See also Burton, ed. *Register of Privy Council of Scotland*, intro, xl, and Fraser, 160.

⁵⁰ *CSP Scot*, vol. 1, 572, 586-7.

from Elizabeth from her “boosame” while explaining to the ambassador that if she could put it “nerrer [her] hart,” she would.⁵¹ Both Elizabeth and Mary expressed a wish to meet each other face to face. Mary was hoping that such a meeting would turn out favorably for her; surely, Elizabeth would not deny her *bonne soeur* her place in the succession. Lethington and Moray wrote to Cecil to scope out the terrain. They wanted to know if a meeting would be favorable to their mistress before they could advise her to set out on such a journey.⁵²

As the spring wore on and preparation were made for the meeting to occur at York in July, Elizabeth’s enthusiasm for the ‘interview’ with her cousin cooled. Religious troubles in France, in which Mary’s Guisan uncles had a crucial part, made her wary of leaving London to venture north. Other arguments put forth by Cecil included the large expense, the discussion of Mary’s title, which would undeniably come up, Mary’s popularity among the northern English Catholics, and the heavy rains that had made the roads difficult to travel. In mid-July, although preparations were in a rather advanced state, Elizabeth officially cancelled the meeting, and Henry Sydney was sent northward to inform Mary of the decision. Mary was sorely disappointed; Sidney reported that the news caused her “great greefe” which she displayed “not only in woordys but in

⁵¹Ibid., 632-3.

⁵²Ibid., 589, 595, 607, 610. The main Scottish concern about the meeting was the great expense. Mary’s finances were already in a bad state. The Scottish, who had silver but not as much gold as the English, were afraid that they would loose out in the exchange. One solution, Mary decided, was to have her subjects wear black mourning-clothes – since the queen herself still wore mourning attire – and thus decrease the expense of costly apparel. Ibid., 620-1.

contenans and watery eyes.”⁵³ She was however comforted by the English declaration that the meeting was merely being postponed, and that they should plan on seeing each other at York the following summer. Mary agreed, and it was decided that June 10, 1563, would be the new date.⁵⁴ Nonetheless, the closest the two queens would ever get to each other was when James VI and I moved his mother’s body in 1612 to Westminster Abbey, where the remains of Elizabeth rested as well.⁵⁵

While Elizabeth and Mary were preparing for a possible meeting in the spring of 1562, on the other side of the channel, France’s great religious tensions could no longer be contained. Catherine de Medici made an attempt to keep France peaceful with the Edict of January, which gave some limited recognition to the French Protestants. The Catholic faction – headed primarily by the Guises – were horrified that the heresy would be allowed to continue with the approval of the crown, no less. They found the edict intolerable. In March of 1562, the massacre of Huguenots at Vassy started the first of the French Wars of Religion, which were to ravage the country for most of the second part of the century.⁵⁶

The fact that one of Mary’s uncles, the duke of Guise, orchestrated the slaughter at Vassy certainly put a strain on Mary and Elizabeth’s relationship. Not only was Mary worried that because of her uncles’ “unadvised enterprise” Elizabeth would no longer

⁵³ Ibid., 641.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 628-50; *CSP Span*, 249-54.

⁵⁵ Fraser, 552.

⁵⁶ Mack Holt, *The French Wars of Religion, 1562-1629* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 46-53.

favor her (for the succession),⁵⁷ but Elizabeth was concerned with how Mary's would react if England became involved in the war in France. Although Elizabeth was unwilling to endure the expense of military action, by fall of 1562, Throckmorton, backed by Dudley, finally managed to convince her to send help to the Huguenots.⁵⁸

Elizabeth's main motive for French intervention was either to win back Calais, or to get her hands on another port city of equal importance. Naturally, such a goal was not 'noble' enough to be her 'official' policy. She wrote to Mary and explained her actions: she was merely sending troops to Normandy "for the safety of her own country," she was trying to stop the horrors that were continuing in France, and seeing "the tender years of the King," she was simply trying to bring some order to his realm, as a good neighbor should. Surely, Mary could understand. In addition, Elizabeth assured the Scottish queen that her love for her cousin had not diminished "any jot" and also expressed her hope that Mary remain as constant in turn, although she knew "what finesse has been and will be used, to draw you from the affection I am assured you bear me."⁵⁹

Mary assured Elizabeth that even if it was a thorny and unwelcome situation, she would not take sides with either Elizabeth or her Guisan uncles, since "by nature" she was "bounde unto them both."⁶⁰ Notwithstanding Mary's assurances, Elizabeth's fears were not unfounded. In a letter to Cecil, Lethington described possible scenarios for

⁵⁷ *CSP Scot*, vol. 1, 627.

⁵⁸ Guy, 266-7.

⁵⁹ *CSP Scot*, vol. 1, 657-60. Cecil also mirrored Elizabeth's reasons for English intervention in France, but he added the more realistic purpose to make sure that Calais would – as according to the Treaty of Cateau-Cambresis – be turned over to England. Cecil believed that the Guise-faction at court was working against English possession on the Continent. *CSP Foreign*, vol. 4, 667-74.

Mary's actions. Since she was so close to not only the Guises, but also to the royal house in France, she would be foolish to turn down a request for help from her friends. If she refused, she would probably lose their friendship forever, which would leave her destitute and isolated. The only alternative, Lethington argued, was for Elizabeth to "solemnly confirm" the amity. If Mary was completely assured of Elizabeth's friendship, she "cared not to hasard all others [other friends]" because she would "best love that person who did show greatest token off love towards her."⁶¹ In other words, if Elizabeth declared Mary her successor, Mary promised not to pay any heed to the French suggestions of a revived 'auld alliance' and military help against Elizabeth.

Elizabeth's involvement in France turned out very badly. English troops held on to Le Havre until March, 1563, when the peace of Amboise ended the first civil war and the English presence in France became unwanted even by their Protestant allies. The earl of Warwick, Dudley's brother and the commander of the French troops, was forced to surrender in July; his troops were not only malnourished, but also dying of the plague in great numbers. To add insult to injury, by the Treaty of Troyes (April 1564) that formally ended the fighting, Elizabeth had to give up on Calais for good; the provisions of the treaty at Cateau-Cambresis were overridden by the new peace.⁶²

Looking back at Elizabeth's first few years on the throne, then, historians certainly find the period neither dull nor uneventful. Elizabeth constantly had to deal with

⁶⁰ *CSP Scot*, vol. 1, 664.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 667.

⁶² Guy, 268.

new events turning up at every corner, and while doing so, she learned more and more about the political game she was playing. One aspect of Elizabeth's early reign has been excluded in this first chapter, not because it is unimportant, but because it requires a chapter of its own: Elizabeth's challenges as a female monarch and the crucial question of her marriage.

Elizabeth's reign was a time of great change in England, of course, Mary Tudor had held the crown before Elizabeth and if the duration rule of Elizabeth in the female line is extended, Mary was the first English queen ever to rule in her own right in England. Mary Stuart relied upon the help of her mother, Mary of Guise, and in France, Catherine de Medici controlled the throne of her young sons.¹ This chapter will briefly look into the implications of female rule, focusing especially on the issue of marriage, which is crucial to the understanding of the relations between Elizabeth and Mary. Studying the narratives of some of the early marriage policies of Elizabeth's reign will highlight the importance of gender and set the stage for Elizabeth's proposal to 1559 that Mary marry Robert Dudley.

In a society where the political gender rules prescribed that women be subordinate to men, a reigning queen naturally presented a social problem. How could a woman whose hold on authority came "wholly and exclusively from God" and in Elizabeth's case, how could a young unmarried woman, technically at the lower end of the social power structure, venture to head the English church in a time when religion was at the

¹ In addition, during the Reformation in France, an unusual number of foreign nobles in power were heavily engaged. Rich, 29. For a more detailed discussion, see Henry II.

Chapter Two:

The Politics Of Gender and Marriage

Although Elizabeth was unique in many ways, she was not the only woman in a position of power in Western Europe during the sixteenth century. Either directly or indirectly, several realms experienced female rule. In England, of course, Mary Tudor had held the crown before Elizabeth and if the disputed rule of Matilda in the twelfth century is excluded, Mary was the first English queen ever to rule in her own right. In Scotland, Mary Stuart ruled with the help of her mother, Mary of Guise, and in France, Catherine de Medici controlled the throne of her young sons.¹ This chapter will briefly look into the implications of female rule, focusing especially on the issue of marriage, which is crucial to the understanding of the relations between Elizabeth and Mary. Studying the narrative of some of the early marriage policies of the two queens will highlight the importance of gender and set the stage for Elizabeth's proposal in 1563 that Mary marry Robert Dudley.

In a society where the existing gender roles prescribed that women be subordinate to men, a reigning queen naturally presented a host of problems. How could a mere woman hold authority over worldly and experienced men? And in Elizabeth's case, how could a young, unmarried woman, normally on the lower end of the social power structure, venture to head the English church in a time when religion was at the

¹ In addition, during the Reformation in France, an unusual number of Huguenot notables in power were actually women. Holt, 39. For a more detailed discussion, see Nancy L.

forefront?² Furthermore, how could a woman, thought to be intellectually inferior to men, actually govern the complicated affairs of the realm?³

Some contemporaries argued that she could not. John Knox, for example, made his opinion clear in the very title of his work *The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women* (1558). Knox, an avid Scottish Reformer, had directed his pamphlet primarily against Catholic Mary Tudor, but the published work became available shortly after Mary's death. Although the timing was terrible given the ascent to the English throne of a Protestant princess, Knox did not change his opinion on female rulers considerably.⁴ Women, according to Knox, could hold no position of authority over men, partly because the apostle Paul, "taking from all women all kinde of superiorite, authorite, and power over man," had clearly stated the order of the sexes.⁵ A woman ruler was simply a subversion of God's established order and not to be tolerated.

Another reformer, John Calvin, was troubled by the idea of female rulers, but was not quite as outspoken and negative as Knox. Calvin felt that a sovereign woman had to be endured, because even if against the natural order of things, God had placed the

Roelker, "The Role of Noblewomen in the French Reformation," *Archive for Reformation History* 63 (1972): 168-94.

² Elizabeth had to compromise here. She called herself the Governor of the Church instead of Head of the Church as her father had done.

³ Elizabeth herself spoke of her limitations as a 'mere woman,' but mostly when it somehow would benefit her to play the role of a weak female "wanting both wit and memory." Cristopher Haigh, *Elizabeth I* (New York: Longman, 1988), 9-10.

⁴ Jordan, Constance "Woman's Rule in Sixteenth-Century British Political Thought" *Renaissance Quarterly* 40 (1987): 432. Jordan, in assessing Knox, states that he made "the strongest case against woman's rule" because it was "the most theoretical and least political text in the entire literature [on women's rule]." Ibid.

⁵ John Knox, *The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women*, 1558 (Reprint, New York: Da Capo Press, 1972), 15.

woman there for a specific purpose. God allowed women to rule “either because he willed by such examples to condemn the supiness of man, or thus show more distinctly his own glory.”⁶ In the same vein, the Englishman Thomas Becon exclaimed in a prayer to his Maker:

Thou hast set to rule over us a woman, whom nature hath formed to be in subjection unto man, and whom thou by thine holy apostle commandest to keep silence and not to speak in congregation. Ah, Lord! to take away the empire from a man, and to give it to a woman, seemeth to be an evident token of thine anger towards us Englishmen.⁷

In other words, God was punishing his flock by giving them a female sovereign; he was forcing men to humble themselves by requiring them to obey a woman.

Supporters of Elizabeth, on the other hand, found themselves trying to defend female rule. John Aylmer, for example, wrote a treatise titled *Harborowe for Faithful and Trewe Subjects* (1559), in which he argued against Knox’s *First Blast of the Trumpet*. Aylmer did not think that scripture necessarily determined either law or civil policy, and certainly not that it forbade women to rule. The Bible itself, he argued, included examples of very capable reigning queens. Aylmer also subscribed to the idea that the person of the ruler was divided into two separate entities: a body politic and a body physical. Elizabeth was the daughter of Henry VIII and the lawful heir to the kingdom. Thus, the queen’s body politic could rule capably and her subjects could in good conscience offer their obedience to their rightful sovereign. In contrast, Elizabeth’s body physical – her femininity – was not really connected to her position in the kingdom.

⁶ Calvin to William Cecil, May 1559, *Selected Works of John Calvin: Tracts and Letters*, vol. 4, eds. Henry Beveridge and Jules Bonnet (reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1983), 40.

According to Aylmer, Elizabeth thus had two roles to play: that of a monarch and that of a woman.⁸

The complexity surrounding the authority of a female ruler only increased when the issue of marriage was thrown into the mix. Women married. A ruling queen was no exception: she should take a husband, because “women [were] thought of as either married or to be married.”⁹ But what would be the role of the queen’s consort? The husband was supposed to be the head of the wife, which meant that the rightful female sovereign would have to follow the wishes of her spouse. The marriage of a reigning queen thus came to take on more importance than that of a reigning king. A queen choosing a husband in essence implied that she was also choosing a co-ruler for the realm, whereas a king looking for a queen was merely selecting a wife and a mother for his children. Although Aylmer argued that Elizabeth the woman could marry and be an obedient wife while Elizabeth the monarch “maye be her husband’s head,” the theory was difficult to put in practice.¹⁰ The English wrestled with the problem of the power of the consort when Mary Tudor married Philip of Spain. Although Mary’s councilors attempted to ameliorate the impact of the queen’s husband by minimizing his political influence, they largely failed. The marriage did not only make Mary desperately

⁷ Quoted in Haigh, 8.

⁸ Aylmer is discussed in Jordan, 437–42. Aylmer also tried to soften the impact of a female ruler by stating that, after all, the queen would have to rely on the all-male council. See Alford, 98.

⁹ *The Laws of Resolution of Women’s Rights* (London, 1632), quoted in Merry Wiesner, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 41.

¹⁰ Aylmer, quoted in Jordan, 440.

unhappy, but it also drew England into an unwanted and disastrous war with France, ultimately resulting in the loss of Calais.¹¹

Most importantly, however, royal marriages were supposed to produce offspring who would continue the line and secure the succession. We have already seen how prominent the succession question was in Elizabeth's early years on the throne. The abundance of possible successors only strengthened the idea that Elizabeth should marry and have children of her own, thereby rendering any appointment of an heir unnecessary. Elizabeth's subjects constantly begged and hoped for a marriage that could provide England with a "little Henry."¹² For example, Cecil and Wotton, writing to Elizabeth from Scotland where they were negotiating the Treaty of Edinburgh, ended their epistle by asking God to bless the queen with "the fruit of [her] womb."¹³ The historian Christopher Haigh argues that Cecil and the others in the council in fact only wanted Elizabeth to marry so that she could have sons, not to acquire a husband whose questionable authority could only complicate matters. "They sought not a consort for the Queen but a father for her son," Haigh explains, "not a sovereign, but a stud."¹⁴

¹¹ Jordan, 427-9.

¹² In 1560, Sir Thomas Challoner gave Elizabeth a book as a New Years gift. The book, which praised Henry VIII, ended by asking Elizabeth to "bestow the bonds of [her] modesty on a husband.... For then a little Henry will play in the palace for us." Quoted in Doran, 3.

¹³ *CSP Scot*, vol. 1, 446.

¹⁴ Haigh, 11.

Traditionally, historians have argued that Elizabeth never intended to marry, that she deliberately set out to 'live and die a virgin.'¹⁵ Elizabeth's own words certainly provide plenty of evidence that would substantiate such a view. The queen constantly told those around her that she had "no wish to give up solitude" and her "lonely life;" that indeed if she were to "follow the inclination of [her] nature," she would rather be "a beggar-woman and single" than "queen and married."¹⁶ Elizabeth's biographers have looked into her past and found many reasons why the young queen would be so averse to marriage: her father's harsh – deadly in the case of Anne Boleyn and Katherine Howard – treatment of some of his wives, her sister Mary's unhappy union with Philip, her early realization of the dangers of romantic liaisons during the Seymore episode, and the great risks involved in childbearing – two of her step-mother's, Jane Seymore and Katherine Parr, died of puerperal fever shortly after giving birth.¹⁷ In addition, Elizabeth was not keen on sharing her power with a husband. The Scottish envoy James Melville summarized the argument very nicely in a conversation with Elizabeth in 1564. He remarked that if Elizabeth married, she would be queen of England only, but if she stayed single, she would be "King and Queen baith."¹⁸

More recent historians, however, wish to revise the view of Elizabeth's aversion to marriage. Susan Doran, for example, argues that although Elizabeth might have

¹⁵ In a speech given in February 1559, Elizabeth declared that "In the end, this shall be for me sufficient, that a marble stone shall declare that a Queen, having reigned such a time, lived and died a virgin." Quoted in Jones, 123.

¹⁶ Quoted in Levine, 48, and in Haigh, 13.

¹⁷ Doran, 4-5.

preferred not to marry, she realized that she might have to do so in order to have children and secure the succession. Elizabeth was thus not intent on staying single, in fact, she probably *wanted* to marry on at least two occasions (to Dudley in 1560 and to the Duke of Anjou in 1579) but circumstances simply worked against her. Furthermore, Doran asserts, Elizabeth's other marriage negotiations failed mainly due to political considerations, not because of Elizabeth's distaste for matrimony.¹⁹

Whether or not Elizabeth ever intended to marry, she nonetheless quickly realized the political value of marriage negotiations. She learned to use the many suits for her hand, as well as her subjects' frantic wishes that she marry, to her own advantage. She became an expert in keeping alive marriage negotiations that were languishing and basically hopeless for as long as it suited her purposes.²⁰

While her subjects were concerned about Elizabeth's marital status, Francis II died in December 1560, creating new problems for the English realm. Mary Queen of Scots was now available for another marriage and Elizabeth was very wary of whom the Scottish queen might take for her second husband. Unlike Elizabeth, Mary showed no signs of disliking marriage; she clearly had no intention of staying single for very long. Furthermore, Mary definitely had much to offer a prospective husband. She was a renowned beauty with a kingdom of her own. Her first husband Francis had received the

¹⁸ James Melville, *Memoirs of His Own Life, By Sir James Melville of Halhill*, ed. by T. Thompson (Edinburgh: Bannatyne Club, 1827, reprint, New York: AMS Press, 1973), 122.

¹⁹ Doran, 2-11.

²⁰ See Jones, 121; Neale, 76-77; and Levin, 48.

Scottish crown matrimonial, which meant that Mary had already set the precedent of co-rule for her future spouse. Considering Mary's rather strong claim to the English throne, many English feared disaster for Elizabeth if the Queen of Scots married one of the powerful Catholic princes on the continent. With the right backing and military support, Mary could oust Elizabeth and claim her right to the English crown. Furthermore, Catholics within England might support a Scottish royal couple, especially if they had children while Elizabeth remained single and childless. The Scottish marriage question thus came to take on almost as much importance as did Elizabeth's own.²¹

Francis' body had barely grown cold before the Guises were trying to arrange another advantageous marriage for Mary, now dowager queen of France. Their first move was to suggest that Mary should marry Charles IV, the new French king. The proposal did not sit well with the mother of the intended bridegroom, Catherine de Medici. She wanted to curb the Guisan power, and taking their niece in marriage to another of her sons was simply not acceptable. Charles was only ten years old at the time, and also Mary's brother-in-law. The marriage would have required a dispensation from the pope, which would be hard to come by if Catherine opposed it.²² Furthermore, the Spanish king Philip did not approve of such a marriage; he would never allow the French to hold a claim to the English crown, and the Queen Mother was well aware of it.²³

The Spanish Infante, Don Carlos, was the next logical candidate as a husband for Mary. Although the young man himself had few lovable qualities – he was both mentally

²¹ Read, 302; Jones, 139; MacCaffrey, *Elizabeth I*, 83-4.

²² Donaldson, 54-5; Plowden, 60; Jones, 137.

²³ *CSP Span*, 311.

and physically disabled²⁴ – Mary found the prospects of a Spanish match very attractive. If married to the son of the powerful Philip of Spain, she believed she would be able to dictate her conditions for succession to Elizabeth's throne instead of relying on the slow and uncertain process of nursing the amity with Elizabeth.²⁵ Moreover, a union with the Spanish Habsburgs would be in keeping with her dignity; Mary, royal to the fingertips, insisted that her second marriage be at least as splendid as her first.²⁶

Like the idea of a match with Charles IX, a potential Scottish marriage for Don Carlos presented many difficulties as well. Philip did not at this time wish to alienate Elizabeth, which surely he would have done if he married his son to a queen with a claim to the English throne. In addition, the Queen Mother of France caused Mary trouble again. Catherine de Medici had no desire to see her daughter Elizabeth, Philip's young Valois wife, outshone at the Spanish court by the Queen of Scots. The troublesome Guises were an issue as well: Catherine was trying to find a solution to the religious troubles in France, and having the Guises closely allied with the Spanish royal house would not help the situation.²⁷ The Scottish queen was not permanently discouraged;

²⁴ Fraser, 115. Fraser describes Don Carlos vividly: "He was physically undersized, weighing less than five and a half stone. One of his shoulders was higher than the other, he had a marked speech impediment and was also an epileptic." The Cardinal of Lorraine, reporting that the Spanish prince did not "seem very strong," did not think that Philip would allow him to marry Mary. *Papal Negotiations*, 87.

²⁵ Fraser, 211; Plowden, 60; Donaldson, 55.

²⁶ See for example *CSP Span*, 308 and *CSP Foreign*, vol. 3, 423.

²⁷ Donaldson, 55.

however difficult and improbable the match seemed at first, she continued to hope for a Spanish marriage.²⁸

Meanwhile, in Rome, the pope believed that Mary's remarriage presented an excellent opportunity to bring back the heretic Scotland to the Catholic fold. With Scotland Catholic, the 'auld alliance' between Scotland and France could be renewed, alienating England from the other Catholic powers in Western Europe. The pope might even "aid the Queen of Scots to recover the kingdom of England, which of right belongs to the said queen."²⁹ In order to bring this plan about, Mary should first be married to a good Catholic who could direct and assist her in her godly work. As early as 11 January, 1561, the pope put out feelers to Emperor Ferdinand about a Scottish match for his son, the Archduke Charles. Ferdinand was reluctant at first, as he had just concluded protracted and fruitless marriage negotiations with Elizabeth during 1560.³⁰ Nonetheless, the pope prevailed. In January 1562, the emperor officially asked for Mary's hand for his son.³¹

Mary never liked the thought of marrying Archduke Charles and neither did her subjects. Scottish Protestants naturally felt that a marriage with a Catholic Habsburg so close to the imperial throne would threaten their religious settlement. Mary was more

²⁸ Randolph, stationed in Scotland during 1562, did not think that a Spanish marriage would ever take place. He reported back to the English court that Mary's "fantasie [Don Carlos] is furthest off" and that people who "talk with me of Spain can never make it sink into my head." *CSP Scot*, vol. 1, 590, 673.

²⁹ *Papal Negotiations*, 53. The Imperial ambassador in Rome informed his master of the papal objectives in January of 1561. In July of the same year, the papal legate in France was instructed to inform Catherine de Medici of his plan and ask for her assistance and approval. *Ibid.*, 60-61.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 53. For the English negotiations with the Archduke, see *CSP Span*, 128-174.

practical. The Archduke was too poor at a time when she needed somebody who could bolster her own rather shaky finances.³² Furthermore, he was not powerful enough. He did not possess the means, political or military, to suit Mary's purposes. The Scottish queen would consider marrying Charles only if Philip of Spain would stand behind the couple and promise "great support and effectual aid" to Mary's ambitions in England."³³

While the widowed Mary – rumored to be especially virtuous and modest – was diligently searching for a new husband, the single English queen was embroiled in a scandal, juicy details of which quickly spread to courts throughout Europe. Elizabeth was giving far too much attention to her handsome – and married – Master of the Horse, Robert Dudley. The queen reportedly spent as much of her time as possible with her favorite, and the Spanish ambassador told his master that Elizabeth was visiting Dudley's chambers at all hours.³⁴ Gossip about the relationship abounded; there were several rumors going around that Elizabeth was either pregnant with or had already given birth to Dudley's child.³⁵ Katherine Ashley, one of Elizabeth's ladies, threw herself on her knees

³¹ *Papal Negotiations*, 87.

³² *CSP Span*, 340. The question of the Archduke's finances was problematic during his negotiations with Elizabeth as well. See Doran, 81. When Mary first arrived in Scotland, some of her nobles were grumbling about the queen and her entourage paying "lyttle for their meate." There were even rumors that valuables such as plate and other things which were "easy to be conveide" had disappeared in conjunction with Mary's departure! *CSP Scot*, vol. 1, 555.

³³ *CSP Span*, 308.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 57-8.

³⁵ *Burghley Papers*, vol. 1, 364-5; *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, of the Reigns of Edward VI. Mary, Elizabeth, 1547-1580*, ed. by Robert Lemon (London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans, and Roberts, 1856), 157. Hereafter *CSP Domestic*. See also Jenkins, 61-2; Jones, 126; Carol Levin, *The Heart and Stomach of a King: Elizabeth I and the Politics of Sex and Power* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), 76.

in front of the queen and begged her to remedy her behavior, because “she showed herself so affectionate to him [Dudley] that Her Majesty’s honor and dignity would be sullied.”³⁶ Likewise, Cecil found Dudley and Elizabeth’s relationship intolerable; he even hinted that he would resign from his post if the couple married, since there was nothing he could do for the realm if Elizabeth cared so little for its welfare. Clearly, Cecil confided to the Spanish ambassador, it would be better for everyone if Dudley was “in Paradise” rather than at the English court.³⁷

In September of 1560, Amy Robsart, Dudley’s wife of ten years, died mysteriously at Cumnor Place, an event that further fueled the scandal surrounding the queen. In the morning of September 8, Robsart insisted on sending her servants away to a nearby fair. When they returned that evening, they found their mistress dead with a broken neck at the bottom of a rather short staircase. Rumors immediately declared that Dudley had killed his wife in order to pave the way for a marriage with Elizabeth, some even implicating the queen in the plot. Although the investigators ruled that Robsart’s death had been an accident, the possibility that Dudley was a murderer would haunt him for the rest of his life.³⁸

After Amy Robsart’s death, it was widely believed that Elizabeth would marry Dudley. In France, Throckmorton was extremely embarrassed and humiliated by the

³⁶ Quoted in Doran, 42.

³⁷ *CSP Span*, 174-5.

³⁸ For a detailed account of Amy Robsart’s death, see Ian Aird’s “The Death of Amy Robsart: Accident, Suicide, or Murder – or Disease?” *English Historical Review* 71 (January 1956): 69-79. Aird concludes that Amy probably suffered from a disease, perhaps some form of cancer, which made her bones brittle, thus explaining the fact that such a short fall could have killed her.

derision emanating from the Valois court. "One laugheth at us, another threateneth, another revileth the Queen," the ambassador complained. "Some let not to say," he continued, "what kind of religion is this that a subject shall kill his wife, and the Prince not only bear withal but marry with him?" Mary, at the time still in France, was overheard saying with much amusement that "the Queen of English is going to marry her horsekeeper."³⁹ Indeed, the conviction that the marriage would take place was so strong that on November 20, 1560 de Quadra told Philip that Elizabeth and Dudley had secretly been joined in matrimony.⁴⁰

Elizabeth was probably sorely tempted to marry Dudley after Robsart's death, but she soon realized that the match was not politically feasible, at least for the time being. The ambitious Dudley, on the other hand, was now more hopeful than ever. Aware that the marriage was unpopular with many of the most important noblemen, especially Cecil, Dudley therefore looked for outside support. In the early months of 1561, he began to court the Spanish. He first sent his brother-in-law, Sir Henry Sidney, to de Quadra to suggest that if Philip agreed to support a Dudley marriage, the royal couple would work very hard to restore religion in England, which as Philip knew was in a very "bad state." The Spanish ambassador was at first wary of the sincerity of the offer, but when Dudley himself spoke earnestly to him about it, de Quadra told Philip that it could be a good – and cheap – way to restore religion in England. Elizabeth herself spoke to the ambassador and wondered if, perchance, the Spanish king would support a marriage between her and Dudley. In March, Philip told de Quadra to listen to Dudley's suggestion, but also

³⁹ *CSP Foreign*, vol. 3, 348, 377.

reminded his envoy to persuade Elizabeth to put any promises in writing, "as her words are so little to be depended upon."⁴¹

The Spanish project was probably Dudley's idea. Elizabeth might have toyed with the thought of using Spanish support to make a marriage to her favorite possible, but more than likely, the Spanish king was correct in suspecting that she was insincere. Moreover, Cecil set out to work against Dudley's scheming, which made the prospects of success slim. Elizabeth probably allowed Dudley to carry out his plan for two reasons. Firstly, she might have harbored some futile hope that it would actually work, but knowing how her subjects disliked the idea of a Dudley marriage, she did not want to involve herself directly in such risky business. Secondly, Elizabeth did not want to reject the project out of hand, because if Philip could be led to believe that Elizabeth would restore religion in exchange for support for a Dudley marriage, a Spanish-Scottish alliance would seem completely unnecessary. Backing Elizabeth's marriage to Dudley was surely a much easier way to bring England back to Catholicism than going the long and expensive route of having Don Carlos marry the ambitious Mary Queen of Scots.⁴²

Dudley continued to press the Spanish for their support by ensuring them that Elizabeth was of the same mind as himself, but Philip retorted that if Elizabeth wanted to prove her sincerity in the matter, she should allow the papal nuncio to come into England to deliver the papal invitation to the Council of the Church at Trent. Cecil, wanting to

⁴⁰ *CSP Span*, 178.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 178-89.

⁴² *CSP Span*, 206. Philip had already tried to remedy England's faults by asking Elizabeth to marry him in 1559, but Elizabeth politely said no. She could not, she said, especially considering her father's Spanish marriage, marry her brother-in-law. Neale, 69-71.

assure himself that no messenger of the pope should set foot in the realm, leaked 'information' about a Catholic plot to eradicate the true religion in England.⁴³ This action made it impossible for Elizabeth, had she so wanted, to allow the nuncio to come. She could no longer keep up the façade of seeking Spanish support for a Dudley match. In a conversation with de Quadra, she remarked that she "did not think that Lord Robert had ever promised [him] that religion should be restored." When the frustrated ambassador tried to refute the queen and tell her that even she herself had made statements to that effect, Elizabeth became vague and insisted that she had not made any promises, and in any case, she had only agreed that she *might* consider it under certain circumstances. De Quadra could not, no matter how hard he tried, get any further.⁴⁴

By the spring of 1561, Elizabeth had probably decided that she would not marry Dudley. Although such a marriage might have been personally satisfying, she was not about to risk her position in England and her reputation abroad.⁴⁵ Yet Elizabeth had no intention of depriving herself of the company of her 'sweet Robin.' Dudley was to remain her favorite, as the queen demonstrated by making him a member of the Privy Council in 1562 and giving him the prestigious castle of Kenilworth in 1563.⁴⁶ Elizabeth also gave him a long-awaited peerage when she created him Earl of Leicester and Baron of

⁴³ The fear of Catholic conspiracies against Protestants was very strong in the early years of the Reformation in England. Cecil especially was "convinced that the forces of Anti-Christ were allied together." See Malcolm Thorp, "Catholic Conspiracy in Early Elizabethan Policy," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 15 (1984): 431-7.

⁴⁴ *CSP Scot*, vol. 1, 201-6.

⁴⁵ Doran, 45-6.

⁴⁶ Jenkins, 97.

Denbigh in September of 1564.⁴⁷ The scandal abated, but did not disappear completely, at least during the 1560s. Dudley himself realized that his chances for a royal match had diminished, but he continued to hope that he still might be able to persuade Elizabeth to marry him.

While Elizabeth struggled with her decision whether or not she should marry Dudley, Mary unsuccessfully continued her search for an appropriate match. When in 1563 Mary was still not married, her relatives thought that it was high time to settle the issue. The cardinal of Lorraine, Mary's Guisan uncle, thus decided to reopen the negotiations with Archduke Charles, which had died out earlier, mainly because of the Scottish dislike for the match. The cardinal wrote directly to the emperor Ferdinand and suggested that the marriage between his niece and the emperor's son should take place without further delay.⁴⁸ Although the emperor seemed receptive, and the pope continued to support the marriage, the Austrian negotiations were doomed from the beginning. The cardinal had not bothered to consult Mary or her councilors before he set about negotiating for a marriage that was in any case still very unpopular in Scotland. Mary was angry when she discovered that her uncle was acting without her approval. She did not want to have anything to do with the imperial suitor and coldly replied that she could not supply an answer to the proposal until she had consulted her estates.⁴⁹

Mary's hopes were still pinned to a Spanish alliance. While her uncle was trying to give her hand to Archduke Charles, Mary sent Lethington on assignment to London.

⁴⁷ Melville, 119-20. Elizabeth almost gave Dudley his peerage in November 1560, but changed her mind at the last minute. See Doran, 46.

⁴⁸ *Papal Negotiations*, 176.

She wished to learn the sentiments in the English Parliament, where she knew the MP's were eager to settle the succession question. Mary wanted to assure herself that nothing was being done that would harm her rights in England. The Scottish queen also instructed Lethington to talk to de Quadra and learn if Philip was ready to begin formal negotiations for a marriage between her and Don Carlos. Lethington admitted to de Quadra that Mary hoped to contract a marriage so that she could "assert her rights here [in England] by force if they could not be obtained by fair means." The secretary, doing his best to sweeten the offer, also told de Quadra that if Philip would agree to the match, his son would gain not only a lovely wife, but also "a power which approached very nearly to monarchy, adding to the dominions already possessed by [Philip] two entire islands, this [Scotland and England] and Ireland."⁵⁰ When de Quadra wondered if the Scottish nobles would allow a Catholic consort for their queen, Lethington assured the inquisitive ambassador that the Protestants were "so obedient to their Queen" that they would "rejoice at her wedding a Catholic, if in all else he were beneficial to the kingdom and satisfactory to her."⁵¹

Philip was still very reluctant to open any official negotiations. In order to motivate the Spaniard, Lethington informed de Quadra that the young French king had proposed to Mary, and that she was seriously considering another French alliance. Philip, who certainly did not wish to see the French get the upper hand, finally agreed to discuss

⁴⁹ Ibid., 176.

⁵⁰ *CSP Span*, 307, 309.

⁵¹ Ibid., 309.

the marriage in June on the condition that the negotiations be kept totally secret.⁵² The secrecy surrounding the discussions of course made it easier for Philip to withdraw quickly if he so wished, which is exactly what he did in October 1563. Lethington had been bluffing. Charles had not offered Mary marriage, and as soon as Philip realized there was no threat of a French-Scottish alliance, he dropped the negotiations for a Spanish match and instead supported the candidacy of the Archduke along with the cardinal of Lorraine and the pope.⁵³

Elizabeth did not sit idly by while her cousin was negotiating with the Spanish. The English queen greatly feared a Spanish marriage for Mary, as de Quadra did not fail to report with smug satisfaction.⁵⁴ Elizabeth received reports from Scotland, where Randolph heard disturbing rumors of Don Carlos and told Cecil that he "vehemently suspected there is some practice of marriage."⁵⁵ Something clearly needed to be done before Mary would triumph at Elizabeth's expense. The solution, Elizabeth seems to have thought, was to reopen the negotiations for her own marriage with Archduke Charles. If Mary married Don Carlos, Elizabeth could offset that threatening alliance by a marriage with another Habsburg.⁵⁶ Since Elizabeth had already rejected the Archduke a few years earlier and the cardinal of Lorraine was still diligently trying to bring about a union between Mary and Charles, reopening the negotiations proved a difficult task. Cecil, who

⁵² *CSP Span*, 332-3.

⁵³ *Papal Negotiations*, lxvi, 176-8.

⁵⁴ *CSP Span*, 304.

⁵⁵ *CSP Scot*, vol. 1, 674, 686.

⁵⁶ *CSP Span*, 380; Melville, 107-8; Levin, 48. In addition, by reopening the Austrian negotiations, Elizabeth could show her subjects that she was willing to marry, as well as calm their fears that she would not wed Dudley.

earnestly wished Elizabeth to marry Charles, worked hard to make the imperial marriage a reality. Although Cecil was an ardent Protestant, he chose to see past the archduke's Catholicism. In Cecil's eyes, it was crucial that Elizabeth marry and have children; the imperial Archduke was in every way preferable to the troublesome widower favorite Dudley. When Elizabeth thus finally showed herself willing to reopen negotiations with the Archduke, Cecil set to work immediately. In mid-1563, the secretary started to chip away at the imperial resistance, and after the death of Ferdinand in July the following year, the negotiations, informally discussed for about a year, became official.⁵⁷ The talks would last more or less until 1568.

In sum, then, in the early 1560s, both Elizabeth and Mary had to grapple with the issue of marriage, which because of their gender had become so central to their reigns. Mary sought a husband powerful and wealthy enough to strengthen her claim to the English throne, while Elizabeth was doing everything in her power to prevent her from concluding such a threatening union. Elizabeth rarely relied on one method; playing courtly games with the Spanish ambassador and reopening the marriage negotiations with Archduke Charles was only one way of preventing Mary's marriage on the continent. Another way, Elizabeth seems to have concluded, was to capitalize on the Anglo-Scottish amity. Mary was her cousin; perhaps she would listen to a sisterly suggestion from Elizabeth regarding her marriage? Perhaps Elizabeth should suggest that Mary take for her husband an acceptable Englishman?

⁵⁷ Doran, 73-4.

Chapter Three:

The Proposal

Of all her nobles, Elizabeth seemed to believe that her handsome favorite and constant companion Dudley, with his treasonous lineage and questionable reputation, would be the perfect suitor for Mary's hand. In the light-hearted conversation of March 1563, the English queen thus imparted her vision of the solution to the Scottish problem to the dumbfounded and disbelieving Lethington. The idea that Mary should marry someone within the isle was not new. An English or Scottish husband for Mary, if chosen carefully, might solve the dynastic problems of both realms – perhaps even uniting them – and would also serve to protect the reformed religion from Catholic pressures from the continent. The same arguments also applied to Elizabeth's marriage, of course, although unlike the Scottish, the English found their queen very resistant and uncooperative when it came to the question of wedlock. In late 1560, a delegation of Scottish nobles officially proposed that Elizabeth should marry the earl of Arran, disputed heir to the Scottish throne, but the English queen politely informed them that she was not inclined to marry at the moment.¹ Turned down by the English queen, Arran instead focused his ambitions on the Queen of Scots. Elizabeth thought that Arran would be an acceptable choice for her cousin, but Mary herself found the earl extremely unattractive and made it clear to those around her that she would never marry him.² In addition, Arran suffered periodically

¹ *CSP Scot*, vol. 1, 495; *CSP Span*, 159, 166, 178. De Quadra believed that Elizabeth seriously considered marrying Arran when she found out that Mary was ill in June 1560. If Mary died, Arran would inherit the Scottish throne; if Elizabeth married Arran, she could thus "make herself monarch of all Britain." *CSP Span*, 159, 166.

² *CSP Span*, 305-7; *CSP Scot*, vol. 1, 574, 606.

from a mental disorder, which grew increasingly worse until any marriage for the earl was inconceivable.³

Although Arran was out of the picture, the idea of Mary marrying within the isle remained an attractive solution to Elizabeth. Since Mary seemed bent on remarriage, it was of utmost importance that the man she chose was not a threat to England in general or to Elizabeth in particular. As no Scottish candidate was fitting, the best choice seemed to be an English nobleman. Bishop de Quadra, the Spanish ambassador in England – with an apt understanding of the situation – told Lethington in early 1563 that the best thing Mary could do was to “marry a husband from this Queen’s [Elizabeth’s] hand, in which case she would be declared her successor.”⁴

Lethington, who largely agreed with de Quadra, told the Spaniard that the likelihood that Mary would accept a husband of Elizabeth’s choosing was very slim indeed. First, he explained, Elizabeth would surely suggest a Protestant, which Mary could never accept, “even if he was lord of half the world.” The Scotsman was certain of Mary’s decision, because he himself had tried to persuade her to accept a Protestant – he had even resorted to threats – without success. Secondly, Mary’s strong sense of honor had to be taken into account. There were no princes in England; Elizabeth was the last of her father’s children. Therefore, any Englishman that Elizabeth could suggest would have to be one of her subjects. The Queen of Scots would never agree to marry beneath her

³ *CSP Scot*, vol. 1, 609, 614-5, 618.

⁴ *CSP Span*, 308.

own station. Mary could simply not afford to compromise her position and perhaps lose the support of those loyal to her cause because she “had made a sorry marriage.”⁵

Ever since the death of her first husband and her decision to return to Scotland, Mary’s main ambition consisted of gaining if not the crown of England, at least the recognition of her right to the succession. While Mary was still in France, Lethington and Moray suggested a settlement, which they felt would be to the contentment of both queens: Mary would give up all claims to the English throne during Elizabeth’s lifetime and the life of her children, were she ever to have any. In exchange, Elizabeth should proclaim Mary her successor and have Parliament legalize the nomination.⁶ Mary, through Lethington, reiterated this suggestion after she had settled in Scotland. Elizabeth deferred any discussion about such a solution until the two queens could meet in person; Mary’s succession was thus supposed to be one of the topics discussed at the aborted meeting of the queens in 1562.⁷ Since the meeting never took place, Mary began to doubt that her “unfulfilled hopes” would ever be realized. She managed, however, to “continue somehow on the present footing of friendship” with Elizabeth, hoping that it would eventually yield dividend.⁸

Elizabeth was well aware of Mary’s desire for the English throne. She constantly felt threatened by it, as Mary never ceased to remind her of her powerful uncles in France who might aid their beloved niece. In the spring of 1563, for example, Lethington told Elizabeth that if Mary would not be declared successor, which was “her just right,” she

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ *CSP Scot*, vol. 1, 540-1, 558; *CSP Span*, 306.

⁷ *CSP Span*, 306.

would be forced to rescind her friendship with Elizabeth and instead turn to "such other alliances and securities as were necessary," such as the Guises or the Spanish.⁹ However, Elizabeth also learned to use Mary's ambitions to her own advantage, dangling the prospect of succession in front of Mary's nose in order to make the Scottish queen conform to her wishes. It was especially useful in regards to Mary's marriage. When Lethington returned to Scotland in June 1563, Elizabeth told him to inform Mary that if she married either Don Carlos or Archduke Charles, or any other member of the "House of Austria" for that matter, she "could not avoid being her enemy." If, on the other hand, Mary married to Elizabeth's "satisfaction," she could be assured that the succession to the English throne would be hers.¹⁰

Notwithstanding Elizabeth's warnings, Mary continued to press for a Spanish marriage during the summer of 1563. The dispatches sent from France by the English ambassadors Sir Thomas Smith and Sir Nicholas Throckmorton displayed the general belief at the French court that the Spanish-Scottish marriage would take place in a very near future. In August, for example, Smith wrote to Cecil that like Elizabeth, "the French marvelously fear a marriage to be made between the King of Spain's son and the Queen of Scotland, which the Guisans take for concluded."¹¹ Furthermore, the cardinal of Lorraine, undaunted by Mary's obvious disinterest, also continued to labor for an

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid., 316-7.

¹⁰ Ibid., 338.

¹¹ *CSP Scot*, vol. 2, 510-11. See also *ibid.*, 531, 551, 554-5.

Austrian-Scottish match.¹² It was clear that Elizabeth could no longer rely on words alone when attempting to direct Mary's marital ambitions; she needed a more direct approach. The English queen thus began marriage negotiations with Mary herself, Dudley serving as the prospective bridegroom.

On 1 September 1563, Thomas Randolph, Elizabeth's ambassador in Scotland (who briefly had been allowed to return to England during the summer to tend to his personal affairs) arrived in Edinburgh. Reiterating her earlier remark to Lethington, Elizabeth instructed Randolph to ensure that Mary understood that a marriage with any of the Catholic princes would be considered hostile to England and would jeopardize the amity between the two countries. It would also destroy any chances that Mary might have to the succession. In these first instructions, Elizabeth was generous enough to agree to a foreign marriage on the condition that the bridegroom was not a prince and not perceived as a threat to England.¹³ De Quadra reported to the Emperor that Elizabeth would also accept a foreign Protestant prince, or "any French gentleman."¹⁴ However, Elizabeth soon further restricted Mary's choice; her second instructions to Randolph on November 16 clearly stated that "no child of France, Spain, or Austria will be acceptable."¹⁵ If, in contrast, Mary were willing to marry someone to Elizabeth's liking – which meant one of Elizabeth's subjects – the English queen would of course consider acknowledging her cousin's right to the succession.

¹² In March, the cardinal traveled to the imperial court at Innsbruck to treat of the marriage. His efforts continued throughout the summer. See *CSP Foreign*, vol. 6, 207, 531; *CSP Scot*, vol. 2, 8, 11, 19, 55.

¹³ *CSP Scot*, vol. 2, 19-20.

¹⁴ *CSP Span*, 340.

Elizabeth did not at first mention Dudley's name – or any other name for that matter – when she suggested that Mary marry an Englishman. Although the English queen had spoken of her favorite to Lethington in the spring of the same year, the Scottish secretary had not taken the talk of a marriage between Dudley and Mary seriously. When he related his conversation with the queen to the Spanish ambassador, he was more upset about Elizabeth speaking of Dudley's brother Warwick than of Dudley himself. Lethington finding the idea of Warwick so disturbing suggests that while Warwick was perceived as a potential offer by Elizabeth, the secretary never took seriously the thought of Dudley. Likewise, de Quadra was surprised that Elizabeth had named Warwick, whom he “certainly thought she would never dare to mention,” but he made no further remark about Dudley in his dispatch to his king; evidence that the thought of Elizabeth's favorite married to Mary was simply preposterous.¹⁶ Elizabeth did, however, have Dudley in mind. She instructed Randolph to inform Mary that “none cold better content us” than if her cousin would choose “some person of noble byrth within our realme” for her husband. Elizabeth then added (and underlined): “*yea perchance suche as she wold hardly thinke we could agre unto.*”¹⁷

Elizabeth's nomination of Dudley is definitely one of the most puzzling aspects of the Anglo-Scottish marriage negotiations. Although it seems rather clear that Elizabeth was trying to prevent or at least put off an unwanted marriage between Mary and a Catholic prince, her tactic of offering her own favorite was unorthodox, to say the least.

¹⁵ *CSP Scot*, 27.

¹⁶ *CSP Span*, 313.

¹⁷ *CSP Scot*, vol. 2, 19.

Modern historians, as well as Elizabeth's contemporaries, share in their doubts regarding Elizabeth's sincerity. How could she expect people to believe that she really wanted Dudley to marry someone else when she hardly ever let him out of her sight? Why would she not offer Mary some other, less controversial English nobleman?

It appears as if Elizabeth at times found the idea of a Dudley-Mary marriage pleasing. By giving him to Mary, she could reward her dear "two-eyes"¹⁸ with a royal match, albeit one for which he had never expressed any desire. In addition, by having Dudley marry Mary, Elizabeth could thus secure both the English and Scottish succession, without herself having to marry. Elizabeth once told the Scottish envoy James Melville that she "suld have married [Dudley] hir self, gif euer she had bene myndit to tak a husband."¹⁹ Married to Elizabeth, Dudley would have been the father of her children, in effect siring the heirs to the English throne. Since Elizabeth did not wish to marry – at least not at the time – she offered her precious Dudley, whom she loved and thought of as her brother, to Mary, so that he could have children by her. If Elizabeth died childless, Mary and Dudley's children could then succeed her. Elizabeth once even suggested what seems to have been – at least psychologically – an ideal situation for her: she told Mary in the fall of 1564 that if she agreed to marry Dudley, Elizabeth would like for them all to live in the same household and that "she would gladly bear the charges of the famly both of the Earl of Leicester [Dudley] and hir, as shall be mete for on sister to doo for

¹⁸ Elizabeth, who found Dudley's eyes particularly enchanting, gave him the nickname "two-eyes." Dudley would sometimes even sign his letters to the queen by drawing two stylized eyes. Derek Wilson, *Sweet Robin: A Biography of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester 1533-1588* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1981), 78.

¹⁹ Melville, 119.

another.”²⁰ It is conceivable, then, that the English queen felt that if Mary insisted on marrying, a match with the loyal and favored Dudley was the most desirable and advantageous option. At the same time, readers must keep in mind that historians can only conjecture about Elizabeth’s private motives in the affair.²¹

Elizabeth’s unwillingness to supply Mary with any concrete names made Randolph’s position as a negotiator very difficult. “You have, Maister Randolphe,” Mary insisted, “some further matter to saye unto me, I am sure then thys!”²² The ambassador could only reiterate Elizabeth’s instructions and ‘veto’ the candidates that Mary and her councilors suggested. The Scottish thought Elizabeth was being neither frank nor fair and Mary argued that “Yt is thoughte reason that seinge ye tayke awaye the choyce of a cupple, at leaste you name unto her one.”²³ The ‘vagueness’ of the English queen became a constant bone of contention.²⁴

Although Elizabeth refused to furnish Mary with a name, the fact that she intended to give Dudley to her cousin appears to have been rather an open secret, at least

²⁰ *CSP Scot*, vol. 2, 81.

²¹ MacCaffrey speculates that Elizabeth, who was used to “absolute superiority and unconditional submission” in her “personal relationships,” sincerely believed that “her proposal would work.” She wanted Mary to submit to her, and marrying her to the husband she would have chosen for herself would thus ensure “her docility during Elizabeth’s lifetime.” MacCaffrey, *Shaping of the Elizabethan Regime*, 86. Doran suggests that Elizabeth, whose passionate love for Dudley had cooled by the time she offered him to Mary, wished to “test his affections or even punish him by rejecting his matrimonial suit and offering him another royal bride.” The reason, Doran argues, would be Elizabeth’s resentment of “the element of personal ambition in his feelings for her.” Doran, 64. Neale believes that by offering the man she herself wished to marry – but could not – to Mary, Elizabeth’s “affections would be vicariously satisfied” and the queen “reconciled to celibacy and a career.” Neale, 125.

²² *CSP Scot*, vol. 2, 32.

²³ *Ibid.*, 44.

among those who were closely connected to the negotiations, such as Lethington and Mary's half-brother, the Earl of Moray. In his memoirs, James Melville mentioned that Randolph told Lethington and Moray about Dudley from the very beginning, and Randolph himself revealed that "Except a very few (to whom I dare talk more safely and largely) none suspect anything is meant of my lord Robert." "The few" probably included Lethington and Moray.²⁵ That Mary knew Elizabeth's intentions is apparent in Randolph's dispatch to Cecil on February 21, 1564. Randolph, despairing of any success in his negotiations, told Cecil that Mary was not willing to marry beneath her station and that she suspected that Elizabeth was not sincere in her dealings, since it was obvious to everyone that she would not want to part with Dudley.²⁶

Although Mary knew that Elizabeth had Dudley in mind, she nonetheless wanted him officially named as a suitor. No amount of hinting on Randolph's part would do. When again pressed to "reveal his mistress mind," Randolph answered curtly that "ther was inoughe sayde to them that had wyll to understand."²⁷ In a letter to Cecil, Randolph pleaded that he might be able to furnish Mary with a name, or the negotiations would never amount to anything.²⁸ Moray, who was rather enthusiastic about the idea of an English Protestant on the Scottish throne – he certainly had no desire to offer obedience to Don Carlos – wrote to Cecil and hinted that if only the English would present Mary with a definite candidate for marriage, Moray would be able to advise her better. He

²⁴ See for example *ibid.*, 29.

²⁵ Melville, 107-8; *CSP Scot*, vol. 2, 33. Randolph also reported that he "so far as [he] safely may" had spoken to Moray, Lethington, and the earl of Argyle. *Ibid.*, 30.

²⁶ *CSP Scot*, 43.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 50.

could do nothing if Elizabeth would not declare her mind; he could not persuade his queen to marry an Englishman if he did not know *who* was intended for the honor.²⁹

Lethington also felt that Elizabeth's vagueness was detrimental to the amity between the two realms, remarking that "these general dealings ever breed suspicion."³⁰ Randolph was of the same opinion. He told Cecil that frankness was very important when dealing with Mary, especially since the Scottish queen was of such a suspicious nature.³¹

Mary was slow in responding to Elizabeth's suggestion and because the Scottish queen suffered from a stubborn illness during the winter months, Randolph was reluctant to pressure her.³² She did not give her official answer to the first overture until March of 1564 and her reply was as vague as Elizabeth's statements. Mary simply informed Elizabeth that she wanted the amity to continue, but said nothing of a marriage. She told Randolph that she "coulede but gyve as uncertayne an answer" as Randolph's "dowtefull message."³³ Randolph, irritated at the waste of time, complained to Cecil that Mary's answer "might as well have been given "the fyrste or thyrde daye," as now at the end of three months, that I have waited for it!"³⁴

²⁸ Ibid., 44, 46.

²⁹ Ibid., 22-3. See also Maurice Lee, *James Stewart, Earl of Moray: A Political Study of the Reformation in Scotland* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1953), 119-21. Stephen Alford discusses the fact that the Scottish Protestants were attracted to the idea of an English Protestant on the throne. Alford, 122-3.

³⁰ *CSP Scot*, vol. 2, 29.

³¹ Ibid., 46. Randolph told Cecil that "this of all her [Mary's] faults is greatest – that she conceives oft much evil where none is thought."

³² Ibid., 29, 31.

³³ Ibid., 50.

³⁴ Ibid., 51.

Why did Elizabeth not want to name Dudley? This hesitation seems to be a prime example of her characteristic technique of stalling and indecision. By not mentioning Dudley's name, Elizabeth extended the negotiations while putting on a show of letting Mary choose her own husband. Although Mary's first official answer was delayed partly because of her illness, Randolph reported that "some think the Queen's sickness is caused by her utterly despairing of the marriage of any of those she looked for."³⁵ Furthermore, Elizabeth might have believed that if she refrained from mentioning Dudley, Mary was not able to reject the proposal out of hand. If the Scottish queen had been told up front that Elizabeth wanted her to marry her infamous "horsekeeper," Mary probably would have considered the proposal a joke at best. However, she could not reject somebody without – officially, at least – knowing who it was! Elizabeth also preferred that Mary would mention Dudley's name herself, so that she merely had to agree to the marriage and not appear as if she was the one suggesting it and pushing Mary into a 'debasing' match with a subject.³⁶

In the middle of March 1564, realizing that the marriage negotiations would end if she did not act, Elizabeth finally allowed Randolph to mention Dudley as the English choice for Mary. Mary listened "with meetly good patience" but claimed that she needed some time to think it over and talk to her advisors before she furnished him with an answer, since his information had "surprised" her. She had expected Elizabeth to inform

³⁵ Ibid., 30.

³⁶ MacCaffrey and Read both think that Elizabeth wanted Mary to mention Dudley's name first but do not really explain *why*. Read, 304. MacCaffrey, *Elizabeth I*, 85, and *Shaping of the Elizabethan Regime*, 163. Neale, who thinks that Elizabeth really wanted

her about the progress of the peace talks between England and France, rather than “so shortly intreate agayne of such matters as these [her marriage].”³⁷ Randolph was again irritated by the slow progress and told Lethington and Moray that that he did not see why Mary could not give him an answer immediately, since “yt was no newe thyng that [he] proponed – no not unknowne to herself [Mary]! – but in speciall to their lordships.”³⁸

When Mary finally decided to discuss the matter of her marriage with Randolph, she began by politely acknowledging that she knew “by good reporte those vertues to be in the man you commende,” but, she continued, “that ys not inoughe.” If Elizabeth was really her friend and “good systar,” how could she wish that Mary should marry a subject, no matter how virtuous? And, Mary wondered, what if she agreed to the marriage and then Elizabeth herself married and had children, who would then “judge thys to be wysely done of me?” Randolph responded that there were ways of achieving honor other than marrying a great prince. If Mary agreed to marry Dudley, “greater honour there could not be, than to match herself with one by meanes of whom she maye perchance inherit suche a kingdomme as England is.” Moreover, Dudley would soon be in a better position to woo a queen, since Elizabeth intended to give him further “honours and preferments.” Mary, not overly impressed, declared that although she would not reject the offer outright, it was not sufficient as it stood. If she were to consider it further,

the marriage to take place, argues that “Elizabeth, however, was not so foolish as to make the proposal before putting out feelers.” Neale, 117.

³⁷ *CSP Scot*, vol. 2, 54.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 58.

she needed more concrete information about what Elizabeth was prepared to offer if Mary accepted Dudley as a husband.³⁹

With Dudley's name now out in the open, Randolph felt that he could speak more freely about the subject and praised the proposed bridegroom more specifically. Encouraged by both Lethington and Moray, the ambassador became more hopeful of success.⁴⁰ Nonetheless, the spring and summer of 1564 passed without any significant new development in the negotiations. This slow period was partly due to the preoccupation of the two queens elsewhere. Mary renewed her pressure for a Spanish match, although her attempts resulted in nothing. In August, Philip wrote to Guzman de Silva, the new Spanish ambassador in England who had replaced de Quadra after the latter's death in the summer of 1563. Philip explained that "the proposal to marry the said Queen [Mary] to my son Carlos must now be considered at an end."⁴¹ Elizabeth also intensified her discussions for an Austrian marriage, which – as mentioned previously – became official shortly after the death of Emperor Ferdinand in July 1564. Although her subjects were hopeful that their queen might actually be serious about marriage this time, Elizabeth, in her usual fashion, delayed sending the proposed envoy to Austria. In fact, Elizabeth never did send anybody. Instead, Maximilian II, the new Emperor, on Cecil's suggestion, sent one of his men to England to negotiate in the spring of 1565.⁴²

³⁹ Ibid., 56-8.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 59.

⁴¹ *CSP Span*, 371. Fraser believes that Philip wanted to end Mary's ambitions for a Spanish match because of the worsened state of his son. Fraser, 217.

⁴² Doran, 76-7.

Mary and Elizabeth also had a disagreement during the summer, which put a chill in the tone of the usually warm and friendly letters between the queens as well as their councilors. Elizabeth, who only recently had allowed the Lennoxes back into her favor after their meddling in the succession question, asked Mary to restore the earl to his Scottish holdings, which he had lost during the reign of Henry VIII. Mary agreed to allow Lennox into Scotland so that he could "sue his own right."⁴³ It appeared as if he would finally be successful, when Elizabeth suddenly changed her mind. She no longer wished Lennox to go to Scotland this year, she informed the Scottish queen. Mary grew angry. She had given Lennox permission to come to Scotland only because Elizabeth had so earnestly pleaded for him, not for her own satisfaction. "Having once given him liberty under her great seal to come," Lethington explained to Cecil, "it would be hard to persuade her to revoke it." Mary, unlike Elizabeth, did not change her mind once she had resolved on something, "which as she will not do so her selff, so doth she altogether mislyke in all others."⁴⁴ Mary wrote a scathing letter to Elizabeth which caused the English queen to believe "all frendship and famylarite had bene geven up" between them.⁴⁵

As the summer drew to a close, Elizabeth seemed uncertain of how to proceed in the Scottish matter. Mary had still not given her an official answer since Randolph had revealed that the English suitor was Robert Dudley. Cecil wrote to Lethington and

⁴³ *CSP Scot*, vol. 2, 63-4

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 67-8.

⁴⁵ Melville, 116.

complained of the long silence, which was so detrimental to the amity between them.⁴⁶ The Scottish, on the other hand, felt that it was *Elizabeth* who needed to give *Mary* an answer, not the other way around. Mary had declared her mind “as directly as the matter permit[ted],” Lethington explained to Cecil. If Elizabeth wanted the negotiations to progress, the initiative “resteth now upon [her] part.”⁴⁷ In late September, Elizabeth confessed to Cecil that she was “in such a labyrinth” that she “did not know how to answer the Queen of Scotland after so long a delay,” and asked for his advice, as she needed to furnish Randolph with instructions for his upcoming embassy to Scotland.⁴⁸

While Elizabeth was uncertain of how to proceed, Mary, possibly because she was not successful in Spain, wished to restore good relations with her English cousin. In September 1564, she sent Sir James Melville to England in an attempt to smooth Elizabeth’s ruffled feathers. Mary instructed Melville to explain that nothing unfriendly was meant by her harsh letter. He was also to ask Elizabeth to send some representatives to treat of the marriage with Mary’s close councilors in order to conclude the Dudley negotiations. In addition, Melville should inquire into the rumor that Elizabeth was calling Parliament. Mary wished to know the purpose of the Parliament and if – as she suspected – the MPs were to discuss the succession as they had done in the session of the spring of 1563. Melville should encourage Elizabeth not to “omitis sa gud ane occasion

⁴⁶ *CSP Scot*, vol. 2, 72.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 71-2.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, 76.

to do something for us, wherby the world may understand that she uses us and esteemes us as hir nyxt cusing and only sister."⁴⁹

Melville appears to have been rather a skillful diplomat; he cleverly argued that Mary's offending letter had been written in the "French courte langage," which "had oft tymes twa significations." Elizabeth, who had never been to the French court, must simply have misinterpreted Mary's words and meanings.⁵⁰ The queen's anger over the rash letter was soon calmed. Elizabeth then turned her attention to the marriage proposal and told Melville that he was not to leave London before he had witnessed Dudley's entrance into the peerage. The ceremony was held at Westminster on Michaelmas, and Dudley became the Earl of Leicester and Baron of Denbigh, a very honorable title usually reserved for "second sons of the kings of England."⁵¹ Melville described the event and said that Dudley behaved very commendably, "keping a gret grauite and discret behauour." Elizabeth, on the other hand, who helped Dudley with his ceremonial robes and who was in plain sight of Melville as well as the French ambassador "culd not refrain

⁴⁹ Melville, 113-5. Elizabeth never called parliament in 1564. She explained to Mary that she had cancelled the session for her dear cousin's sake, since she did not want her MP's to attempt anything detrimental to Mary's cause. To make Mary understand what a selfless act this was, Elizabeth further explained that her canceling Parliament was not only "contrary to the desire of her people," but also to her own "detriment," since she had been promised a subsidy. *CSP Scot*, vol. 2, 79.

⁵⁰ Melville, 117.

⁵¹ *CSP Span*, 382. Milton Waldman claims that the title of Earl of Leicester was "last borne by Henry V." See Waldman 109.

from putting hir hand in his nek to kittle him smylyngly.” The queen, proud of her new creation, then turned to Melville and asked him how he “lyked of hym.”⁵²

Most historians writing about Dudley’s elevation to the peerage agree that Elizabeth’s motive was to make Dudley a more acceptable suitor for Mary.⁵³ In fact, according to Melville, Elizabeth herself stated that Dudley was to become an earl so that Mary would “think the mair of him.”⁵⁴ Although this view seems the most logical and plausible, it is also clouded by Elizabeth’s careless behavior when she so openly showed her affection for Dudley during the solemn ceremony. Later on in Melville’s visit, he spoke with Elizabeth in her chamber, and the queen showed him a small painting she had of Dudley, carefully wrapped up in paper with the words “My Lord’s Picture” written on the outside. When Melville asked if he could have the picture for Mary, Elizabeth refused to part with it. Melville persisted, arguing that after all, Elizabeth had the original; Dudley was sitting at the other end of the room talking to Cecil. The queen still refused. Elizabeth’s behavior, doubtlessly reported back to Mary, would only strengthen the Scottish notion that Elizabeth could not be serious in her marriage proposal since she was obviously not willing to part with her favorite. A later incident in the spring of 1565 had the same effect: Dudley and the Duke of Norfolk became embroiled in a heated argument during a tennis-match, because Norfolk felt that Dudley was exhibiting “indecent

⁵² Melville, 120. Henceforward, Dudley is known as the Earl of Leicester in the correspondence, but for the sake of conformity, I will continue to call him Dudley throughout this essay.

⁵³ See for example MacCaffrey, *Elizabeth I*, 85; Plowden, 87; Jones, 141; Fraser, 217. Elton believed that by creating Dudley Earl of Leicester, Elizabeth proved to him that he was back in her favor after the 1563 Parliament. Elton, 363.

⁵⁴ Melville 119.

familiarity” with the Queen when he wiped his sweaty face with a napkin he had snatched from Elizabeth’s hand.⁵⁵ Such stories were of course prime material for gossip and sure to reach Mary’s ears. Elizabeth, then, had multiple reasons for the Michaelmas ceremony. By naming Dudley Earl of Leicester, she could not only make a show of good will towards Mary, however tainted it might have been, but also reward her favorite with the long coveted peerage.

When Melville returned to Scotland in October, Randolph, whom Elizabeth had sent back to represent her again at the Scottish court, accompanied him on his journey. The Dudley negotiations continued, but throughout the fall and winter, the Scottish became increasingly irritated at their slow progress and Elizabeth’s vague and noncommittal instructions. Mary accused Elizabeth of not being serious in her proposal of Dudley, and complained that she was merely wasting time and hindering Mary from marrying elsewhere.⁵⁶ The negotiations were at a standstill again.

The Scots intended to remedy the situation by the Conference at Berwick in November 1564. Mary and her councilors had long suggested that a conference between some of hers and Elizabeth’s trusted subjects be held at Berwick,⁵⁷ and in the beginning of October, Elizabeth finally agreed to allow Randolph and the Earl of Bedford represent her.⁵⁸ Elizabeth’s reluctance to a conference is another piece of evidence supporting the view that she was trying to prolong the negotiations as long as possible. Elizabeth did not want a conference, because it was simply too efficient: she did not want the negotiations

⁵⁵ Mumby, 344, 357.

⁵⁶ See for example *CSP Scot*, vol. 2, 94, 109.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 58, 67, 72.

to end quickly, because she probably preferred that Mary stay unmarried as long as possible.⁵⁹ The Scottish, on the other hand, who were very actively pushing for a formal meeting, hoped that Elizabeth would bring something new to the table which might facilitate the match.⁶⁰ Time was of the essence for Mary; she wanted to confirm if an English marriage would give her the coveted succession. If not, she wished to end the farce as quickly as possible so that she could continue to search for other means to enlarge her estate.⁶¹

In her instructions to Randolph and the Earl of Bedford regarding the conference, Elizabeth reiterated her desire that Mary marry Dudley. In a perfect world, Elizabeth mused, one of the queens would have been born a man instead, so that they could marry each other and put all troubles between them at rest. Since that solution was not possible, though, the next best course of action was for Mary to marry the person that Elizabeth “favours and honors as her brother,” namely Dudley. Elizabeth also tried to turn the negative aspects of Dudley – the fact that he was merely a subject – to his advantage. Dudley would not “bring a controversy of title with him,” which always was a great problem in “matches of princes” with kingdoms of their own. As far as wealth was concerned, Dudley was certainly not poor, and Elizabeth promised that she would not

⁵⁸ Ibid., 79-80.

⁵⁹ Lee suggests that a conference was not in Elizabeth's interest, because it would reveal that she had never been serious in her proposal of Dudley in the first place. Lee, 122. However, dislike of a conference does not necessarily mean that Elizabeth was not serious in her proposal; merely that she did not want the negotiations to end too quickly.

⁶⁰ *CSP Scot*, vol. 2, 90-2. See also Adams, “Two ‘Missing’ Lauderdale Letters: Queen Mary to Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, 5 June 1567 and Thomas Randolph and Francis Russell, Earl of Bedford to Leicester, 23 November 1564,” *Scottish Historical Review* 70 (April 1991): 57.

“deal sparyngly with him,” i. e. that she would continue to raise him “by degrees” so that Mary would find him more attractive.⁶²

To Mary’s great dismay, Elizabeth’s instructions did not allow for any promises regarding the succession. From the very beginning of the negotiations, Mary had insisted on some kind of “surety.” In other words, she wanted a firm agreement that Parliament would proclaim her Elizabeth’s successor in exchange for her marrying Dudley according to Elizabeth’s wishes. Mary wanted the much-discussed amity between the two countries to be expressed in deeds, not only in words.⁶³ Elizabeth, on the other hand, as Cecil explained in a letter to Moray and Lethington, did not want the negotiations, “full of terms of friendship and love” to be “converted to a matter of bargain or purchase.” Cecil further likened Mary’s pursuit of the English succession to the pursuit of a shadow, “which the more it is followed the furer flieth!”⁶⁴ Mary should simply follow Elizabeth’s loving and sisterly advice about whom to marry, and then, after Mary proved her love and trust, Elizabeth would of course further Mary’s cause “if it might ly in our power.”⁶⁵ Mary’s constant demand for a clear answer on the succession question led Elizabeth to think that “that in all this freindshipp, nothyng is more mynded than how to

⁶¹ *CSP Scot*, vol. 2, 75.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 80-1. It is here that Elizabeth suggests that all three of them – Mary, Dudley, and Elizabeth – should live in one household, for which Elizabeth would bear the cost.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 109.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 104-5.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 81. In addition, Cecil claims that Elizabeth cannot promise the succession to Mary because she that requires the consent of “hir iij Estates.” *Ibid.*, 104.

possess that which we have, and that is but a sorrowful song, to pretend more shortnes of our lyff than ther is cause.”⁶⁶

The conference at Berwick, held in late November, and to which the Scottish had attached so much hope, thus resolved nothing. Interestingly, the Dudley negotiations did not end there, even though the stalemate seemed to be complete: Mary wanted to be assured of the succession before she married Dudley; Elizabeth wanted Mary to marry Dudley before she would even think of naming her heir. The fact that Mary (and Lethington and Moray) continued to listen to Elizabeth’s proposal despite her stubborn refusal of formal recognition of succession shows how dedicated the Scottish queen was to gaining the throne of England.⁶⁷ Mary’s other options were disappearing: Philip would no longer speak of a Spanish marriage, the Austrian match was still unpopular and in any case, the Holy Roman Empire appeared to be more interested in Elizabeth than in Mary. In the winter of 1564-65, Mary may have seen a degrading marriage with Elizabeth’s favorite as the only way to the English throne. However, a new element, present all along but hidden in the background, entered into the Anglo-Scottish equation. His name was Henry Stewart, Lord Darnley, the young and attractive son of Margaret Lennox.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 81.

⁶⁷ Donaldson, 78.

Chapter Four:

Darnley and the Lennoxes

When Henry Stewart, the Lord Darnley, was born on 7 December 1545, his parents already had a grand future in mind for their baby-boy; like his royal ancestors, he was to be a king. One way of achieving this lofty goal was to marry him to Mary Queen of Scots, then a girl of three. The hopes of the Lennoxes were thwarted, however, when two years later Mary was shipped off to France to be brought up at the splendid court of her future parents-in-law, Henry II and Catherine de Medici. Although temporarily disappointed, the Lennoxes brought up their son with a great future in mind. Darnley was taught all the gentlemanly skills required of a young nobleman: the necessary martial sports, of course, in which Darnley earned much praise, but also the more genteel skills of elegant dancing, writing poetry, and making music. Darnley's musical instrument of choice was the lute, and he was later to entertain and enchant his future wife with his melodies. Although Darnley was no intellectual by any stretch of the imagination,¹ he still studied the most important languages such as French and Latin. (His mother added Scottish to his language *repertoire* for good measure.) Throughout his short life, the young lord was spurred on to greatness by the family motto: "*Avant Darnle' – Jamais D'Arriere.*"²

¹ According to Fraser, "whatever the veneer of education lovingly applied to his surface, it had in no sense left Darnley an intellectual." Fraser, 222. Donaldson comments that Darnley would have made Mary a good husband "if only he had had a brain to match his birth." Donaldson, 80.

² Bingham, Chapter 2; Fraser, 221-3. Translated, Darnley's motto reads "Forward Darnley – Never behind."

Darnley's father, Matthew Stewart, Earl of Lennox, was Scottish-born and bred. Since he was the great great grandson of James II, Lennox – and after him Darnley – was next in line for the Scottish succession after the earl of Arran (who was of the Hamilton family and later became duke of Chatelherault). During Henry VIII's 'Rough Wooing' of the young Queen of Scots for his son Edward in the mid-1540s, Lennox decided to ally himself with the English king. Consequently, the Scottish regent declared him a traitor in 1545 and Lennox, deprived of his Scottish holdings, was forced to stay in England as an exile. Henry promised to see to it that he was restored to his lands, but never made good on his word. The king left it to his children to carry through his promise.

Like his father, Darnley's mother, Margaret Douglas, also had royal blood in her veins. She was the daughter of Henry VIII's older sister Margaret Tudor and Archibald Douglas, the earl of Angus. Margaret Douglas thus had a claim to the English succession through her mother. Margaret Tudor had first been matched with James IV of Scotland, but married the handsome earl of Angus roughly a year after James' death in 1513.³ Margaret and Angus' relationship soured, however, shortly after the birth of their only daughter, and they eventually obtained a divorce in 1526. The young Margaret spent most of her early childhood in Scotland and France with her father, but as a teenager, she was brought to the English court. She learned early on the dangers of being connected with the succession. With the support of Anne Boleyn, Margaret was betrothed to her young admirer, Anne's uncle Thomas Howard in the mid-1530s, although he was not quite acceptable considering Margaret's royal blood. The fall of Anne Boleyn and the

annulment of her marriage with Henry meant that their daughter Elizabeth was considered illegitimate, leaving Henry without immediate heirs. Margaret, as Henry's niece, now found herself in the direct line of succession. The suspicious Henry thought that Margaret's betrothal to a Howard was an attempt to overthrow him, and he subsequently imprisoned both of the young lovers in the Tower. Margaret eventually submitted to Henry, and after the birth of Edward to the new queen Jane Seymore, she was released and restored to favor. Her young fiancé, however, died in the Tower. In 1545, Henry married Margaret to the earl of Lennox in the hope that it would cement the Scottish earl's English allegiance.⁴

Lennox would have to wait for almost twenty years before his fortunes returned. Continued wars with Scotland during the reign of Edward VI meant that a Lennox restoration was impossible. Likewise, Margaret, whose father had died in 1548, tried in vain to be recognized as heir to the Angus earldom. When Edward died and his sister Mary came to power, Margaret had great hopes for her family. Mary and Margaret, who were very close in age, had quickly become good friends when Margaret arrived in England in 1529. They remained so even through the reversals of Mary's status. To Margaret's disappointment, Mary, even as queen, could not do much to help her friends. Scottish relations remained tense and late in her reign Mary was preoccupied with the French war. In addition, Mary's Spanish husband Philip greatly disliked the French connections of the Lennox family. Although the queen wanted her dear cousin Margaret

³ James died from the wounds he received in the Battle of Flodden against the forces of Henry VIII.

– who shared her deep Catholic conviction – to succeed her to the throne instead of Elizabeth, her advisors told her that the Parliament would simply not accept it.⁵

To the Lennoxes, the death of Mary and the ascent of Elizabeth did not promise any immediate relief of their troubles. Margaret viewed Elizabeth as a usurper of the throne since in her eyes she was nothing but Henry's bastard daughter. Elizabeth did not have much love for the Lennoxes, either; she deeply mistrusted them because of their close friendship with Mary and especially the fervent and persistent Catholicism of the countess. However, the Lennoxes did not give up; in December 1559, the earl, writing to Cecil, asked for Elizabeth's help in gaining his Scottish restoration.⁶ Since they did not expect much from the new queen, the Lennoxes also wished to get in the good graces of Mary of Guise, then regent of Scotland. First, Lennox secretly sent a servant by the name of Laurence Nisbet to Mary of Guise to further the suit for a restoration. Nisbet's mission also included contacting the French ambassador in London; Lennox wanted the Frenchman to write to the Scottish regent in his favor. When the English council discovered Nisbet's actions, they resolutely threw him in the Tower. His master, the earl, was called upon to explain himself. Elizabeth found it very suspect that Lennox had secret dealings with the French and the Scottish at a time when England and France were on the brink of war over the religious and political troubles in Scotland. Unable to find anything directly incriminating in Lennox's behavior, Elizabeth and the council let him

⁴ Bingham discusses the biography of Matthew Lennox and Margaret Douglas in Chapter 1. See also Guy, 191.

⁵ Bingham, 48-64; Adams, "Release of Lord Darnley," 130; MacCaffrey, *Elizabeth*, 15; Neale, 34.

go with a stern warning. He was off the hook, at least for the moment. The earl even dared to renew his suit to Elizabeth in November 1560, but without success.⁷

The Lennox family soon faced greater troubles. At Settrington, the Lennox estate in Yorkshire, the earl and his countess felt safe to speak their minds about their disdain for the queen, especially her scandalous behavior towards Robert Dudley. Apparently, the couple found great amusement in their jester, who blurted out one crude joke after another at the expense of the queen and her favorite. The countess also made comments which questioned Elizabeth's right to the throne and stated that she herself "desired nothing but her right, which she knew God would send her one day."⁸ Little did she suspect that her words were being duly noted and reported to the council by a servant in the house, William Forbes, who also doubled as a spy on Dudley's payroll.⁹

When the Queen of Scots' young husband Francis died in December 1560, nobody could have been more pleased with the situation than Darnley's parents, who then revived their mission for a marriage between Mary and their eldest son. Margaret certainly wasted no time. In December 1561, she sent Darnley to France to offer the family's condolences to Mary and in essence to show him off to the newly widowed queen as a potential husband, although there was no formal proposal made.¹⁰ Margaret's ambitions were apparently no great secret; de Quadra reported to the king on February

⁶ *Burghley Papers*, vol. 1, 213, 215; Adams, "Release of Lord Darnley," 130; Bingham, 68-9.

⁷ *Burghley Papers*, vol. 1, 219. *CSP Scot*, vol. 1, 493-4. See also Bingham, 68-9; Adams, "Release of Lord Darnley," 130.

⁸ Quoted in Bingham, 70.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 69-70.

23, 1561 that the Lady Lennox “is trying to marry her son Lord Darnley to the queen of Scotland, and I understand that she is not without hope of succeeding.”¹¹ Margaret thought the marriage ideal, de Quadra explained, because it presented a good solution to the succession problem. Even if “the English should allege that the queen of Scots could not succeed in consequence of her being a foreigner, she would nevertheless reign over a kingdom by right of this youth, the son of Lady Margaret, if she married him, as he is an Englishman and beyond doubt the nearest heir to the crown after her.”¹² Lady Lennox, hoping to enlist the Spanish in her plans, begged Philip to aid her family in recovering “what rightly belonged to them,” i. e. the English succession.¹³

When Mary arrived in Scotland in the early fall of 1561 the Lennoxes, with renewed strength, revived their campaign for restoration. They dispatched their servant Arthur Lallart, Darnley’s schoolmaster, to Scotland under some pretenses that he was delivering a message to a nobleman in Mary’s entourage. Lallart’s real mission, however, was to see Mary and ask for a Scottish restoration for the Lennoxes. Mary answered that since she was “but newly returned into her realm,” she could make no such decisions at the present time. The Lennoxes would have to be patient; “all she might do” for them

¹⁰ Ibid., 72. Darnley had actually met Mary before, right after the death of Henry II. He was then sent to France to congratulate her on now being queen of France. Fraser, 118.

¹¹ *CSP Span*, 183. The rumors about a Darnley marriage for Mary reached Scotland as well. See *CSP Scot*, vol. 1, 597. In July 1562, de Quadra wrote to the Duchess of Parma, informing her of the fear that both the French and the English felt at the thought of a Spanish marriage for Mary. Catherine de Medici had suggested to Elizabeth that a good remedy would be a marriage between Darnley and Mary, but Elizabeth probably distrusted Lady Margaret too much to agree to such a solution. *CSP Span*, 250.

¹² *CSP Span*, 221.

¹³ Ibid., 176.

“she would do at a proper time.”¹⁴ At the family estate back in England, Lennox and his wife were glad to hear that the Scottish queen seemed favorable to their cause. They believed that their luck was finally beginning to turn around, blissfully unaware that Forbes reported all to the council and to Elizabeth.¹⁵

Elizabeth decided to strike in November of 1561. She summoned Margaret with her family to London.¹⁶ The earl and the countess were questioned closely, but it appears as if the council did not have sufficient proof to find them guilty of anything other than Lallart’s mission to Mary the previous fall. Nobody doubted, however, that the Lennoxes were guilty of plotting for a Mary-Darnley marriage. Elizabeth, who already had been forced to deal with the implications of an allegedly married and definitely pregnant Catherine Grey, did not want more complications in the succession question. Lennox soon found himself in the Tower and Lady Margaret was placed under the watchful eyes of Sir Richard Sackville at Sheen.¹⁷

The fate of the Lennoxes’ son at this time is unclear. Darnley’s biographer Caroline Bingham declares that Darnley managed to escape England for France during this troubled period for his family, but does not offer any sources for her statement. Darnley was not at court and Elizabeth was worried that he might escape the country,¹⁸ but his whereabouts seem to have been unknown. In Scotland, Randolph reported that “It is bruited that Lord Darlie is conveyed to France,” but judged that the rumor “had little

¹⁴ Quoted in Bingham, 76.

¹⁵ Bingham, 75-6; Adams, “Release of Lord Darnley,” 130.

¹⁶ *CSP Span*, 220.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 230-1. Adams, “Release of Lord Darnley,” 130-1.

¹⁸ *CSP Span*, 228.

appearance of verity.” The Spanish ambassador, on the other hand, claimed that Darnley was “in safe hands” at York, but that some of Lennoxes’ friends had asked him if Philip was willing to let the young lord “take refuge” in Flanders.¹⁹

Lady Margaret’s protestations that she was only advising Mary – who was after all her niece – to marry where she thought “would be best for her,” i. e. her son Darnley, did nothing to abate Elizabeth’s anger. Instead, the English queen set about to lessen the threat presented by her ambitious cousin; she began an investigation, the purpose of which was to discover if Margaret was of illegitimate birth. In Scotland, Randolph began searching for the evidence required, although he found it “hard to come by.”²⁰ In the dispatch Randolph sent on April 7, 1562, he was finally able to report success in obtaining what appeared to be evidence of Margaret’s illegitimacy. When her parents divorced in 1526, one of the reasons cited for the break-up of the union was the existence of a pre-contract between Angus and Janet Stewart of Trequair before the marriage of Angus to Margaret Tudor.²¹ Even though Elizabeth had enough evidence in hand to proceed, she eventually dropped the question of Margaret’s illegitimacy; Bingham suggests that the queen might not have wanted to give her subjects grounds to discuss the questionable legal status of her own birth.²²

¹⁹ *CSP Scot*, vol. 1, 616; *CSP Span*, 235, 231.

²⁰ *CSP Scot*, vol. 1, 609. See also *ibid.*, 602, 605, 612.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 614, 690.

²² Bingham, 77. Elizabeth was not the first to look into the legitimacy of Margaret Douglas. Henry VIII, while Margaret was in the Tower for her presumptuous affair with Thomas Howard, declared her a bastard. The king restored her position when she married Lennox. Bingham, 24, 35-6.

The unfortunate Margaret and her earl could not count on any help from Scotland. At the time, Mary was preoccupied with establishing the friendship between her and Elizabeth; she certainly did not wish to alienate the English queen. Upon hearing of the fate of the Lennoxes, she hurriedly assured Elizabeth that she would not consider a Lennox restoration in Scotland until the English queen expressed her consent thereto.²³

During the following spring and summer, Lady Margaret constantly wrote to Cecil and begged for the release of her husband from the Tower. His health was poor, she complained, and she was not even allowed to visit him.²⁴ Even when Lennox made his submission to Elizabeth in August, the queen "thought it slight amends" and he remained incarcerated.²⁵ Finally, after another slew of Margaret's pitiful letters, Lennox was released from the Tower in November and allowed to join his wife at Sheen where they both remained under house arrest until February 1563, when Elizabeth decided to end their captivity.²⁶

In the summer of 1563, the Lennoxes appeared to have been fully restored to Elizabeth's favor. In June, Elizabeth even wrote to Mary and asked her to consider the restoration of the earl to his Scottish holdings.²⁷ De Quadra reported that both Margaret and her son were at Elizabeth's "palace" and in such high favor that the countess dared to

²³ *CSP Scot*, vol. 1, 584, 589, 592.

²⁴ *CSP Domestic*, 200-3.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 204.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 205-16. De Quadra believed that Elizabeth released Lennox "to hinder Lady Catherine by providing a competitor" and "to give a little satisfaction to the catholics who are desperate at Lady Margaret's misery." In addition, de Quadra reported, by favoring the Lennoxes, the Catholic within England may "cool somewhat towards the queen of Scots." *CSP Span*, 273.

²⁷ *CSP Scot*, vol. 2, 14; *CSP Foreign*, vol. 6, 415.

hope that her dear son might be able to marry Mary "with the queen of England's consent." Such an arrangement did not seem impossible, the Spaniard concluded, since Elizabeth was obviously treating the Lennox family so well.²⁸

Although Elizabeth suggested the Lennox restoration in 1563, nothing furthering the matter occurred until about a year later, in the summer of 1564. The Lennoxes remained prominent at Elizabeth's court; in July, Lady Margaret, together with the queen, posed as god-mother at the christening of Cecil's newborn baby girl.²⁹ Sometime before that, Mary finally gave the earl permission to come to Scotland so that he could present his suit to her. Suddenly, on July 5, Elizabeth changed her mind; she no longer wanted Lennox to go to Scotland.³⁰ Cecil explained to Lethington that Elizabeth did not wish to create factions at the Scottish court, as she had heard that many of the nobles did not want Lennox there. Therefore, a Lennox restoration was simply "not expedient" at the time. Elizabeth's change of heart made Mary and her councilors extremely upset. Mary, as always mindful of her honor, pointed out that as she had already promised Lennox that he could come, she was not about to break her word. Furthermore, she was merely carrying out Elizabeth's wishes; she would never have considered the Lennox matter if Elizabeth had not asked her to do so, and for Elizabeth now to ask her to withdraw her license was simply too much. She fired off an angry letter to Elizabeth, which was to cause a considerable chill in the communications of the two queens. Cecil received his share of Scottish displeasure as well. On July 13 (which must have been almost immediately after

²⁸ *CSP Span*, 336-7, 339.

²⁹ *Burghley Papers*, vol. 2, 756.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 757.

they had received Elizabeth's letter of July 5), both Moray and Lethington ensured the secretary that there was no resistance to the coming of Lennox. Even if there were, the Scots continued with considerable sarcasm, "oure fundatioun is not sa waik" and "factions are not so easily suscitat here as some think."³¹

The real reason for Elizabeth's hesitation, guessed de Silva reporting to Philip in the beginning of August, was that Lennox had planned to bring his wife with him and that they asked Elizabeth if Darnley could accompany them. Frightened that perhaps the Lennoxes were still trying to marry the "amiable youth" to Mary, Elizabeth revoked their license. However, she soon changed her mind again, but insisted that Lennox go to Scotland by himself. His wife and son were to remain in England. Lennox finally set out on his northward journey in August.³²

He arrived at the Scottish court in late September. The earl was well received by both Mary and her nobles, except for the duke of Chatelherault of the house of Arran. The duke's resistance was understandable since the lands that had been confiscated when Lennox was exiled had from that time been in the possession of his family.³³ Nonetheless, Mary quickly decided that Lennox should be fully restored, able to "enjoy the privilegis of a subject, the liberteis of his native cuntre, and his auld title." The Scottish queen informed Elizabeth of her decision in a letter dated September 28, 1564.³⁴

³¹ *CSP Scot*, vol. 2, 67-8.

³² *CSP Span*, 374.

³³ Mary acted as a mediator between the two parties, ensuring them that if they kept fighting with each other, they would incur Mary's "uter displesour and indignatioun." *CSP Scot*, vol. 2, 88; *Register of Privy Council of Scotland*, 290.

³⁴ *CSP Scot*, vol. 2, 78.

Mary officially proclaimed the restoration in early October, and it was confirmed by Parliament in December in the same year.³⁵

Well in Scotland, Lennox wrote to Elizabeth and asked her to allow his wife to join him.³⁶ More importantly, as de Silva reported, he also wanted to know if his son could come, since his lawyers and advisers told him that to ensure that the regained property stayed within the family, Darnley should be present and “take joint possession with him.” Elizabeth, at first very accommodating and understanding, granted a license to Darnley. The day after, however, she called Margaret to appear before her and railed against her and her husband for their attempt to trick her into allowing Darnley to go to Scotland. The queen had discovered that the ‘legal reasons’ had simply been a pretext. If Lennox had been honest with her from the beginning, she would have given Darnley the license immediately; as matters now stood, she refused to let him go. Margaret managed to calm the queen and present the request in a more favorable light. Elizabeth vacillated once again and told the pleased countess that she would indeed give Darnley the license. Never known for her ability to make resolute decisions, after the conversation with Margaret, Elizabeth renegaded. Young Darnley was to stay in England.³⁷

³⁵ Ibid., 83, 95. Lennox finally got his restoration, but apparently, it did not come cheaply: de Silva said that the earl had spent “a good deal of money” to achieve his goal, and Randolph estimated that Lennox would “never thryve by the bargayne,” since he was spending more money than he could ever get back from the lands he was recovering. *CSP Span*, 374; *CSP Scot*, vol. 2, 90.

³⁶ *CSP Scot*, vol. 2, 78.

³⁷ *CSP Span*, 391. De Silva found Elizabeth’s indecision exasperating. After describing the ordeal with the Darnley license to his king, he exclaimed: “this is the way with everything – absolutely no certainty.”

Throughout the year of 1564, rumors of an intended marriage between Mary and Darnley became more and more prevalent in the correspondence. Scottish noblemen, who were not privy to Elizabeth's intentions in the beginning of her negotiations in the fall of 1563, had already guessed that the Englishman Elizabeth had in mind was indeed Lord Darnley.³⁸ Even after Dudley's name had been divulged in March 1564, many still believed that Elizabeth would readily agree to Darnley rather than give up her favorite.³⁹ After Lennox arrived in Scotland, the noblemen of that realm expected his son soon to follow, and Randolph reported that he "found marvelous good liking of the young lord, and many desire to have him here," although few thought the prospect of Lady Margaret in Scotland desirable, probably because of her strong Catholicism.⁴⁰ That Darnley had well-doers in Scotland was apparent; in September, Kirkaldy of Grange, a Scottish nobleman, wrote to Randolph and declared that Dudley would not do as a husband for Mary, but "gyf ye will earnystlye pres it, ye may caus us tak the Lord Derleye [Darnley] – utherwayis it will not be."⁴¹ Randolph had even expected the Scottish to mention Darnley as an English candidate at the conference at Berwick, so frequently did he hear him mentioned. In England, de Silva – incorrectly – informed Philip that Elizabeth had

³⁸ *CSP Scot*, vol. 2, 33, 45.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 59. A Scottish friend of Randolph's, playing the oracle, proclaimed that Mary's ship would probably land in England [i. e. Mary would marry an Englishman], "thoughe perchance not in that port, haven, or roode, that you wyshe she sholde [Mary would not marry Dudley, but some other Englishman such as Darnley]."

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 98.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 75.

given Mary a choice of *three* men during the discussions at the border town: Dudley, Norfolk, and Darnley.⁴²

Randolph did not want Darnley to come to Scotland, as he was convinced that nothing but trouble could ensue from such an undertaking. The ambassador was wary of Darnley's Catholic mother (although the young Lord himself appeared to be nominally Protestant) and warned Elizabeth that Scots now favorable to England would be devastated if she allowed Darnley to come. Surely, Randolph said, Elizabeth did not mean to send "as greate a plague unto this country."⁴³ Although Lennox had been overheard telling his friends that his son would marry the Scottish queen, Randolph did not see much to worry about. Scottish noblemen might talk about a Darnley marriage for their queen, but Mary herself did not express any desire to marry her young cousin; quite on the contrary. Randolph had heard her say that "yt [a marriage between her and Darnley] shall never take effecte."⁴⁴

According to historians John Neale and Maurice Lee, Randolph was wrong when he pronounced that he could detect no intentions in Mary to marry Darnley. Neale and Lee argue for what Simon Adams has termed a 'Marian conspiracy.'⁴⁵ According to this theory, Mary deceived Randolph – and indirectly Elizabeth – into believing that she was

⁴² Ibid., 89; *CSP Span*, 399. In December, Cecil wrote to Smith, acknowledging that Lennox's "friends wish that the Lord of Darnley might marry with the Scottish Queen, and I see some device to bring the Queen's Majesty not only to allow thereof, but also to move it to the Queen her sister. But I see no disposition thereto in her Majesty." Elizabeth still wanted Mary to marry Dudley and that is what she had told Randolph and Bedford to relate to Lethington and Moray at Berwick. See Mumby, 331.

⁴³ *CSP Scot*, vol. 2, 95, 99.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Adams, "Release of Lord Darnley," 125.

not interested in Darnley. Meanwhile, she was working behind the scenes to bring Darnley to Scotland so that she could marry him. When Mary realized that her first choice, Don Carlos, would not work out, she immediately turned her attentions to Darnley. She had never seriously considered the Dudley marriage, since Elizabeth did not seem willing to assure her of the succession. Although she preferred to marry Darnley with Elizabeth's consent – in effect just substituting Darnley for Dudley in the negotiations – Mary realized that Elizabeth probably would not agree to the match. In that case, Mary needed Catholic support, both from the continent and from English Catholics still loyal to Lady Margaret's cause. Since Elizabeth herself had written and asked Mary to consider a Lennox restoration a year earlier, Mary grasped the opportunity it provided in the summer of 1564. Lennox was to come to Scotland, and even though Elizabeth, who now saw some danger in the prospect, tried to hinder his going, she could not do so without jeopardizing the Anglo-Scottish amity. Elizabeth was forced to let him go. With Lennox in Scotland, it was easy and logical to request that his son should be allowed to join him without causing any offense.⁴⁶

Melville's embassy to England was part of Mary's plan; indeed, Lee terms it her "most elaborate attempt to throw dust in the eyes of Elizabeth."⁴⁷ Melville was to smooth out any wrinkles in the relationship of the queens so that Elizabeth would not suspect what Mary was up to. Neale, on the other hand, gives Elizabeth more credit. At the Michaelmas ceremony where Dudley was created earl of Leicester during Melville's stay in London, Elizabeth asked the Scot what he thought about her new creation. When

⁴⁶ Lee, 123-30; Neale, 129-31.

Melville dutifully praised the newly made earl and Elizabeth's commendable ability to reward such a "worthy subiect," the queen slyly remarked "Yet ye lyk better of yonder long lad," pointing towards Darnley, present at the ceremony. Although Melville assured Elizabeth that "na woman of sprit" would choose such a "berdles and lady facit" man, Elizabeth's remark signaled to Mary that she was aware of her schemes.⁴⁸

The Marian conspiracy theory presents some problems. First, Mary supposedly used the Lennox restoration as a pretext to get the earl and eventually his son to Scotland, which meant that she would have decided on a Darnley marriage sometime *before* she gave Lennox permission to come to Scotland. However, during the summer of 1564, Mary was still hopeful of a marriage with Don Carlos. Philip did not decide to close down the negotiations until August, which probably meant that Mary did not find out about it until some time in September, long after she had agreed to the Lennox restoration.⁴⁹

Secondly, Melville's embassy to England warrants a closer examination. Melville wrote in his memoirs that Mary had given him verbal instructions to "deall with" not only the queen of England, but also with the Spanish ambassador and Lady Margaret.⁵⁰ After describing the Leicester ceremony and the conversation about Darnley, Melville again reminded his readers about his "secret charge" to speak with Margaret. Although Mary's instructions at first might appear sinister, they do not seem to be part of an elaborate

⁴⁷ Lee, 127.

⁴⁸ Melville, 120; Neale, 131.

⁴⁹ Adams, "Release of Lord Darnley," 125. Adams presents a detailed timeline of the correspondence and states that de Silva in fact did not refer to Philip's new instructions about closing down the negotiations until November 27.

'conspiracy.' Melville, who wrote his memoirs later in his life and thus knew that Mary eventually married Darnley, did not mention any plans of such a union at this point in his story. Indeed, Melville stated that the reason Darnley should go to Scotland was simply so that he "mycht se the contre, and convoy the Erle his father bak again to England."⁵¹ Likewise, Melville's discussion with the Spanish ambassador revolved around Don Carlos, not Darnley. The Scottish envoy reported that the young prince was "for the tym in some suspition with his father," which made marriage impossible for the time being.⁵² Adams points out that whatever the subject bruited between the two ambassadors, it probably was not of great importance, since de Silva in his dispatch of October 9 "refers to him [Melville] only in passing."⁵³

Although Mary cannot have been unaware of the rumors declaring Darnley her future husband, she was probably not purposely planning and scheming to bring such a marriage about in the summer and fall of 1564. It was after all *Mary* who pressed for the conference at Berwick; she continued to wish for an agreeable solution with Elizabeth's approval and the promise of succession. Elizabeth had made it clear that the person Mary would have to marry to reach that goal was none other than Robert Dudley. Yet, even if Mary had no immediate plans to marry Darnley, the presence of Lennox at the Scottish court – and the high favors Mary showed him – coupled with Elizabeth's constant refusal

⁵⁰ Melville, 111.

⁵¹ Ibid., 120

⁵² Ibid., 128-9. Neale suggests that Melville was supposed to "make a last – but, as it turned out, a futile – attempt to liven up the Spanish marriage project," because Mary wanted to assure herself that there was absolutely no hope of a Spanish match before she continued her 'Darnley-plan.' Neale, 129-30.

⁵³ Adams, "Release of Darnley," 126.

to assure Mary of the succession created a volatile situation. Elizabeth's delaying tactics could not be successful much longer.

The winter of 1554-55 was hard. The temperature dropped to below freezing, causing the Thames to be frozen so that Londoners could walk on it "as if it were the street."¹ The cold was "very trying for the king." As John reported to Philip, and as John Bland told the Queen, which meant it was almost too early to begin.² Elizabeth had caught a cold in a fever before Christmas, and she began the new year very sick bed. Although some figures, such as the physician, watched Elizabeth's illness with hopeful anticipation of her death, the queen eventually recovered from what appears to have been a bad case of the flu in January and was ready to face the challenges of Edward's minority politics again. Elizabeth would lead off the strength she could muster up for the spring and summer of 1555 would prove to be a difficult time for the English queen.

The resolution of the conflict in Bercelay and the passage of London in December 1554-55, the English king's health was still not well. In fact, the discussion started to be proceeding home that year. Mary was ready to marry. One of her main motivations, however, was to give the succession to the English throne. Although Mary was getting very tired of Elizabeth's slow dealings, the Spanish queen was up to a position to force Elizabeth's hand, she had to rely on the strong nation of the English queen, and proceed with the marriage accordingly.

Chapter Five:

The End of the Negotiations

The winter of 1564-65 was hard. The temperature plunged far below freezing, causing the Thames to ice over so that Londoners could walk on it “as they do the streets.”¹ The cold was “very trying for the weak,” de Silva reported to Philip, and it “has found out the Queen, whose constitution cannot be very strong.”² Elizabeth had caught a stubborn fever before Christmas, and she began the new year in a sick bed. Although some figures, such as the Lennoxes, watched Elizabeth’s illness with hopeful anticipation of her death, the queen eventually recuperated from what appears to have been a bad case of the flu in January and was ready to face the challenges of sixteenth century politics again. Elizabeth would need all the strength she could muster up, because the spring and summer of 1565 would prove to be a difficult time for the English queen.

The stalemate at the conference at Berwick and the presence of Lennox in Scotland notwithstanding, in January 1565, the Dudley negotiations were still alive and well. In fact, the discussions seemed to be proceeding better than ever. Mary was ready to remarry. One of her main motivations, however, was to gain the succession to the English throne. Although Mary was getting very tired of Elizabeth’s slow dealings, the Scottish queen was not in a position to force Elizabeth’s hand; she had to rely on the elusive tactics of the English queen, and proceed with the marriage negotiations.

¹ *CSP Span*, 401.

² *Ibid.*

Lethington and Moray, doing their best to win a concession from Elizabeth during December and January, informed Cecil that Mary had other offers and if the English queen wished Mary to marry Dudley, she would have to move quickly.³ In order to further 'motivate' Elizabeth, Mary played the French card again, intimating to her English cousin that if she did not declare her successor, Mary would have to turn to her dear old friends in France for aid.⁴ She hurriedly sent a dispatch to James Beaton, archbishop of Glasgow and Mary's ambassador in France, in which she told him to act as if her letter was of great importance. He was to seek an audience with the Queen Mother, Catherine de Medici, and detain her for as long as possible, so as to make the other ambassadors (especially the English) think that they were discussing some great matter. In addition, Beaton should quickly send off a letter to the cardinal of Lorraine to complete the trickery.⁵ Mary also made sure that Randolph found out that she planned to send Lethington to France in an urgent matter; she hoped that such reports would cause Elizabeth to act in her favor.⁶

Randolph was not overly worried about Mary's French "blind;" indeed, he was pleased with the discussions he had with the Scottish queen on the subject of marriage with Dudley. In early February, the ambassador initially had some difficulty to get Mary to talk about anything of importance as she was preoccupied with her "past-times." She was pretending to be a townswoman; the queen and some of her ladies and servants were spending a few days in a merchants house in St. Andrews, and did not wish to be

³ Ibid., 111, 113, 123.

⁴ Ibid., 402.

⁵ Mumby, 335.

interrupted by discussions of "greate and grave matters." After three whole days of "merrie-making," however, the ambassador managed to turn her mind to business. When Randolph asked how she "liked the suit for the lord of Leicester," Mary at first answered rather cryptically that her "mynde towards him is suche as it ought to be of a verie noble man." Elaborating on her point, Mary added that "such as the Quene your mestres my good systar dothe so well lyke to be her howsbonde, yf he were not her subjecte, ought not to mislyke me to be myne." Mary gave Randolph further cause for joy when she told him that her actions in regards to marriage "lyeth in your mestres will, whoe shall whollie guide and rule me."⁷ In mid-January, Lethington wrote to Cecil with the same sentiment of Mary's willingness to agree to the Dudley match. The Scottish secretary urged his English counterpart to push Elizabeth to some action in the succession question, since "otherwise the great opportunity will be lost."⁸

At this critical juncture in the Dudley negotiations, Elizabeth suddenly gave Darnley license to join his father in Scotland. The young man arrived in Edinburgh on February 13, and as he had traveled faster than the stately horses he brought with him, Randolph graciously lent Darnley some from his own stable so that he could go and see Queen Mary in proper style. Mary received the young lord on February 17 and Randolph, although not present, heard that Darnley "was welcomed and honourably used."⁹ The unusually tall, boyishly handsome and courtly nineteen-year old made a good impression

⁶ *CSP Scot*, vol. 2, 117. Lethington did not actually go to France, however.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 120-2.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 115.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 125-6.

on Mary; according to Melville, the Scottish queen remarked that Darnley was “the lustiest and best proportioned lang man sche had sean.”¹⁰

Lennox was of course overjoyed to see his son and wrote a gracious thank-you letter to Elizabeth for allowing his journey.¹¹ Randolph, on the other hand, was not happy at all. He could not understand why Darnley had been allowed to come. His presence, the ambassador argued, would jeopardize everything he had worked for over the past year and a half. Randolph could obviously not prevent Darnley’s coming, as he was forced to obey the orders of his queen, but since he had so clearly warned both Cecil and Elizabeth about the rumors surrounding Darnley and his pretentious parents, he could not understand why they would release him. The confused Randolph asked Cecil for advice, because the situation was such that he did not know “what to thynke or howe to behave [him] self.” Some Scots, especially the Hamiltons, were convinced that Elizabeth had sent Darnley with the intention of stirring up trouble, and that if Mary married him, it would be their “utter overthrowe and subversion of them and their howses.”¹²

Why indeed would Elizabeth allow Darnley to go to Scotland at this time? Lennox was in high favor at the Scottish court, and rumors of a possible marriage between Darnley and Mary were rife. At the same time, Mary actually appeared receptive to the idea of a Dudley marriage.¹³ It is no wonder one historian has termed the release of

¹⁰ Melville, 134.

¹¹ *CSP Scot*, vol. 2, 127.

¹² *Ibid.*, 124-6.

¹³ Randolph told Cecil that he “hartelye” wished that it were Dudley who had undertaken the journey to Scotland in Darnley’s place. *Ibid.*, 126.

Darnley a “mystery.”¹⁴ The event might not appear quite so enigmatic if Cecil’s letter to Randolph, dated February 5, had survived. The secretary must have enumerated the reasons for releasing Darnley: on February 12, Randolph, referring to Cecil’s letter of February 5, assured the secretary that his “consyderations here in [the matter of releasing Darnley] is enough to satisfie me.”¹⁵ Randolph’s February 12 letter to Cecil also informs the curious reader that both Cecil and Dudley were actively involved in the decision to give Darnley the coveted license to travel to Scotland. Dudley wrote especially to Randolph in Darnley’s favor, and the troubled but dutiful ambassador replied that he “had and will do [Darnley] all the honour and service that lyeth in my power.”¹⁶

When discussing Darnley’s release in his *Memoirs*, James Melville argued that Elizabeth sent Darnley to Scotland because she was afraid that Mary would actually agree to marry Dudley. As Melville was convinced that the English queen did not wish to part from her favorite – and that she therefore had been insincere throughout the entire marriage negotiations – the Scot concluded that Elizabeth sent Darnley into Scotland to confuse Mary and keep her unmarried for as long as possible. Cecil, Melville continued, believed that once in Scotland, Darnley and his father could be controlled and recalled to England if necessary, since Elizabeth could threaten to confiscate their English lands if they did not obey her orders. Also, Lady Margaret and her younger son Charles remained in England under Elizabeth’s watchful eyes.¹⁷

¹⁴ Plowden, 92. Wormald claims that the reasons behind the release have “never yet been adequately understood.” Wormald, 148.

¹⁵ *CSP Scot*, vol. 2, 124. Adams, “Release of Lord Darnley,” 124.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 125.

¹⁷ Melville, 130.

Melville's account is problematic. He exaggerated Elizabeth's fear of loosing her favorite and underestimated her resilience in the Dudley negotiations. Indeed, the English queen reiterated her wish for a Dudley-Mary marriage long after Darnley's arrival in Scotland.¹⁸ The release of Darnley has perhaps a simpler explanation, put forth by Simon Adams, who has studied the episode in great detail. Instead of looking at the release of Darnley as a separate incident, Adams argues that it should be viewed in the context of Elizabeth's decision in the summer of 1563 to favor Lennox's Scottish cause. Considering the questionable loyalty of the Scottish earl and his wife in the past, Elizabeth had proceeded with great caution when giving Lennox license to go to Scotland in the summer of 1564. During the fall and winter of 1564-65 both the earl and his wife had tried to convince Elizabeth to let Darnley travel, and Melville was charged to do so as well. As was the case when Elizabeth licensed Lennox, Elizabeth vacillated considerably before she finally made the decision to allow Darnley to go to Scotland. Darnley's release can then be viewed as a continuation of the queen's favor towards the Lennoxes.¹⁹ Elizabeth herself explained later the same year that she had allowed Darnley to go because his "parents and friends" had asked her to do so, citing the reason to be "for the furtherance of his father in Scotland." Elizabeth had read Randolph's reports; she was not unaware of the rumors. However, the queen explained, she "would not give place or credit thereto."²⁰

¹⁸ Some historians consider the release of Darnley as the effectual end of the Dudley negotiations, but that is a premature judgement. See Dawson, 7, Lee, 130, Neale, 132. Elizabeth continued the Dudley negotiations after Darnley's arrival in Scotland.

¹⁹ Adams, "Release of Lord Darnley," 129-33.

²⁰ Quoted in *ibid.*, 134.

Although his information is not always completely reliable, Melville was probably correct in his judgement that Cecil and Elizabeth believed that they could control Lennox and Darnley while they were in Scotland. Although aware of the rumors about Darnley, Elizabeth might not have been overly concerned about such a marriage actually taking place. As Randolph had stated several times, Mary herself had showed no great interest in the young lord.²¹ Some historians in contrast argue that Elizabeth was familiar with Darnley's degenerative nature, which later also became painfully obvious to Mary and her subjects. According to this view, the English queen deliberately sent Darnley to Scotland so that Mary would enter into a destructive marriage, which would create factions at the Scottish court. This theory gives Elizabeth too much credit for forward thinking.²² Such an argument probably stems from evaluating the episode relying on hindsight. Ironically, if Elizabeth's later reactions – her great dislike for Mary's decision to marry Darnley and her efforts to hinder the marriage – are taken into consideration, the conclusion must be that Elizabeth did *not* plan on sending Darnley to Scotland in order to marry Mary.

As Randolph's letter of February 12 shows, Cecil and Dudley aided the Lennoxes in their campaign for Darnley's release.²³ Other than the missing February 5 letter from Cecil, apparently no other evidence exists pointing to the secretary's motives in the Darnley-matter. Conyers Read suggests that Cecil "in promoting it [Darnley's release]

²¹ Ibid., 132.

²² See for example Waldman, 111; Chamberlin, 168.

²³ In addition to Randolph's letter, there is the evidence of a letter Darnley wrote to Dudley once in Scotland. Darnley thanked Dudley for the "great goodness and good nature" he had showed him in "sundry ways." Mumby, 346.

may simply have acted as her [Elizabeth's] agent in the matter."²⁴ The sources simply do not allow for anything other than conjecture about Cecil's reasons for supporting the release of Darnley. Luckily, in the matter of Dudley, some sources do survive. The motives for Dudley's actions are also more interesting, since he was personally involved in the Scottish question, figuring as the intended bridegroom for Mary.

Dudley never did anything to promote the marriage which Elizabeth proposed to her Scottish cousin. Randolph often complained about Dudley's lack of interest since he thought it was injurious to his cause; to no avail, he tried to convince Dudley that he ought to be present at the Conference at Berwick.²⁵ As Randolph was working hard for the Dudley match to become reality, it is certainly understandable that he found Dudley's disinterest irritating. Complaining to Sir Henry Sidney, Dudley's brother-in-law, Randolph wrote:

he whom I go about to make as happy as ever was any, to put him in possession of a kingdom, to make him prince of a mighty people, to lay in his naked arms a most fair and worthy lady, either nothing regardeth the good that shall ensue unto him thereby, the honour that shall be to his name and race, the profit that shall redound unto his country, -- but so uncertainly dealeth that I know not where to find him, nor what to speak or promise, that I shall not be forced to alter or call back again.²⁶

Randolph did his duty well, however, trying to make up for Dudley's silence and passivity by speaking for him at Mary's hand. He told Dudley that he had "said so much

²⁴ Read, 314.

²⁵ *CSP Scot*, vol. 2, 98.

²⁶ Mumby, 356. Randolph also complained to Cecil and directly to Dudley. See *CSP Scot*, vol. 2, 114, 117.

that if half were but true, your Lordship I am sure is half consumed in love for her [Mary's] sake."²⁷

Dudley was not only disinterested, but evidence suggests that he took some initiative to work actively against the marriage. Melville described how Dudley spoke to him and asked him to forward his excuses to Mary since he did not want her to believe that he was so pretentious as to think that he was worthy "to mary sa gret a Quen." The whole business of the marriage proposal, he explained to the attentive Scot, was the doing of Cecil, Dudley's "secret ennemy."²⁸ Dudley gave Melville a letter to take to Moray, so that he could explain the matter to Mary. Melville also recorded Dudley's insightful observation that no matter how he felt it was impossible for him to show any interest in Mary. If he told Elizabeth that he was willing to marry Mary, the English queen would undoubtedly be jealous. If Mary thought he wished to marry her, the Scottish queen would be angry at his pretensions. Thus, Dudley could not appear willing to marry Mary without loosing the favors of both queens.²⁹

Dudley did indeed want to marry the queen, but it was the English queen he had in mind, not her Scottish cousin. The newly made earl was certainly not stricken by any inferiority complex at the thought of making the majestic Elizabeth Tudor his wife. In fact, during the spring of 1565, Dudley made a new attempt to win the queen with Spanish support. Sometime between April 27 and May 5, de Silva went to visit Dudley,

²⁷ Mumby, 341.

²⁸ Melville, 126-7. Allegedly, Mary herself attested that Dudley had warned her of Elizabeth's insincerity by writing secretly to her through Randolph. The document containing Mary's statement is not considered very reliable, though. Chamberlin, 162-3.

²⁹ Melville, 126-7.

ostensibly a simple courtesy visit, since Dudley had fallen with his horse while hunting and hurt his leg. De Silva used the opportunity to discuss Dudley's marriage prospects. At first, the ambassador reported, Dudley had seemed very gloomy: Elizabeth would not marry him, he said, because she had "made up her mind to wed some great Prince." When de Silva made some dismissive comments about Archduke Charles of Austria's prospects with Elizabeth and assured Dudley of Philip's "affection" for him, Dudley's mood changed. Upon closer examination, Dudley realized, his chances were better now than they had been in a long time, because, he explained, "the reason for the delay in accepting my advances was, as I believe, principally caused by the Queen having been told that the Queen of Scotland was going to marry a powerful Prince, and this alarmed her." By the end of April, when it was clear that Mary was going to marry Darnley, Dudley thought "his business" could be "more easily arranged."³⁰ De Silva promised to assist Dudley in his ambitions, although throughout the summer of 1565, the skillful Spanish ambassador managed to support both Dudley and the Archduke Charles simultaneously, to ensure that whatever the outcome of Elizabeth's matrimonial prospects, the Spanish would appear in a good light.³¹

Although de Silva does not appear to mention Spanish support for a Dudley-Elizabeth marriage in any earlier dispatch than that of 5 May 1565, the language he used suggests that he had had similar discussions with Dudley before, and even that he had already spoken to Elizabeth in Dudley's favor: "At all events," de Silva said, "you can never complain that I have not advised you to the best of my power and urged your suit

³⁰ *CSP Span*, 429-30.

with the Queen, as she has told you.”³² Dudley might then have had serious plans for a marriage with Elizabeth in the back of his mind while urging her to send Darnley northward. Moreover, Dudley probably thought that a marriage between Darnley and Mary could work to his advantage. As early as 1562, de Quadra reported that Dudley was in favor of the suggestion of Catherine de Medici that Darnley marry Mary so as to prevent a Spanish marriage for the Scottish queen. Such a marriage – a marriage between a queen and a subject – would set a much-needed precedent for Elizabeth and Dudley. The fact that Dudley was a mere subject was always his greatest disadvantage in his enthusiastic and prolonged suit for Elizabeth’s hand.³³

In addition to Dudley’s Spanish connections, the ambitious favorite also courted the French. Susan Doran mentions how during the spring of 1565, Dudley “secretly encouraged the French ambassador to put forward their young king Charles IX as a rival candidate” to sabotage the ongoing negotiations between Elizabeth and Archduke Charles. When it became obvious that Elizabeth would not marry Charles, Paul de Foix, the French ambassador in England, instead joined de Silva in supporting a Dudley marriage for Elizabeth.³⁴

Although Dudley clearly did not wish to marry Mary, no evidence exists that he was involved in any kind of conspiracy with the specific goal of marrying Darnley to

³¹ Ibid., 434, 447, 454.

³² Ibid., 429.

³³ Ibid., 250.

³⁴ Doran, 65-6. *CSP Span*, 435-6.

Mary.³⁵ Dudley's reasons for pushing for Darnley's release appear to have been purely selfish; he still entertained some hope of marrying Elizabeth and was therefore unwilling to marry Mary. Perhaps Dudley believed that Darnley's presence in Scotland would at least alleviate the immediate pressure on himself.

Whatever Dudley's intentions in favoring Darnley's release, the negotiations for a Dudley-match for Mary continued. In early March, Randolph reported that the Cardinal of Lorraine was working for a marriage between Mary and the Duke of Orleans, but that Mary "misliked" it; the Scottish queen wanted an English marriage in accordance with Elizabeth's will. "I hope now better of her than ever," Randolph wrote with great satisfaction.³⁶ Now was the time for Elizabeth to act, the ambassador informed Cecil, because Mary was "daily" asking him how soon the English queen would make a decision on the succession. If the matter was not settled in the near future, Mary would again begin to "mistrust of these long delays."³⁷

Elizabeth wrote her response on March 5. Randolph received the letter on March 14 and spent the following day in preparation for his upcoming audience with Mary, bracing himself for the storm that was sure to follow. Elizabeth had resolved that she would make no decision regarding the succession to her throne until "she be married

³⁵ Dawson points to a postscript in a letter from Randolph to Throckmorton on March 31 as evidence for Throckmorton's involvement in the release of Darnley. The reference to Darnley is very vague, however, and does not imply that Throckmorton actually had something to do with the release. All that can be ascertained from Randolph's letter is that the former ambassador to France had shown somebody, possibly Darnley, some favor. *CSP Scot*, vol. 2, 140.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 130-3.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 135.

hiaself [sic], or shall determyn not to marry.”³⁸ When Randolph reported the contents of his mistress’ letter to Mary, he did his utmost to sugarcoat the unwelcome message. His labor was to no avail; Mary was deeply disappointed and hurt. “So long tyme to keape me in dowte and now to answer me with nothyng I fynde greate fawlte,” Mary complained, and added that she would never be able to trust her cousin again. Mary would “contente” herself with her “smaler portion [Scotland];” when God would grace her with “better [England],” she would gratefully accept it from Him alone, although she had always wished to offer such thanks to Elizabeth instead.³⁹

Moray, who had always greatly favored a Dudley match and tried his best to push Mary in that direction, was almost “starke madde” at the news of Elizabeth’s letter. “The Devil comber [seize] you,” he snarled at Randolph, “our Queen dothe nothyng but greeete and wryte.” Moray believed that Elizabeth’s decision would lead to a breakdown in the friendly alliance between Scotland and England and to his own misfortune, since he was one of the supporters of the Anglo-Scottish amity. The situation did not look good, Moray judged, and cursed Randolph again since he could “guyde a Queen no better when [he] had her in [his] will.”⁴⁰ Lethington, taking the news more calmly, simply stated that he could no longer advise Mary “to make longer stay or drive more time.” In other words,

³⁸ Elizabeth’s actual letter is lost, but Cecil referred to its contents in his “Notes of Queen Elizabeth’s Reign” in *Burghley Papers*, vol. 2, 758. Elizabeth’s instructions to Throckmorton, issued in late April, referred to the contents of her letter as well. See *CSP Scot*, vol. 2, 145.

³⁹ Kathryn Frescoln, ed., “A Letter from Thomas Randolph to the Earl of Leicester,” *Huntington Library Quarterly* 37 (1973-1974): 84-8.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

Lethington thought Mary would now definitely look elsewhere for a husband.⁴¹

Randolph, believing his presence no longer necessary in Scotland, simply asked to go home.⁴²

Like the release of Darnley, Elizabeth's March 5 letter presents problems to the student of the Dudley negotiations. When Elizabeth was so close to success, if by success is meant a Dudley marriage for Mary, why did she issue such a decisive statement on the succession question? Some argue that Elizabeth's message is proof that the English queen never really meant to give her favorite to Mary, that all she intended was to waste time and keep Mary from marrying.⁴³ Jane Dawson finds that by her declaration on the succession, Elizabeth reversed her earlier policy towards Mary. She had previously hinted that she would declare Mary second person if she married Dudley, but now Elizabeth wished to "remove the question of the succession from Anglo-Scottish relations." The English queen simply did not realize the profound impact such a message would have on the other side of the border. When she realized she had made a mistake, Elizabeth tried to repair the situation by renewing her promises of succession with a Dudley-marriage, but to no avail.⁴⁴ Adams, on the other hand, states that Elizabeth in fact only reaffirmed the stance she had on the succession all along. Elizabeth had never made any concrete promises; she had in fact always refused to declare a successor. Instead, it

⁴¹ *CSP Scot*, vol. 2, 137.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ Bingham, 98, Plowden, 94.

⁴⁴ Dawson, 8-9.

was Mary who had interpreted Elizabeth's vague messages as meaning that succession would follow a Dudley marriage.⁴⁵

By 1565, it was obvious to most people that Elizabeth would not decide on her own marriage anytime soon. Thus, when Elizabeth announced that she would not make any decision regarding the succession until she had married herself or definitely decided not to marry, contemporaries must have regarded her statement as in effect putting off the decision of succession indefinitely. Mary certainly interpreted Elizabeth's message in that way, as did Randolph, Moray, and Lethington. Indeed, after receiving Elizabeth's letter, Mary appears to have lost all interest in a Dudley-match, although Randolph tried his best to remain positive. Abandoning the Dudley marriage did not automatically mean that Mary would marry Darnley, but after the prospect of gaining the succession through a Dudley marriage was gone, Darnley's Catholic connections and his claim to the succession must have appeared attractive in Mary's eyes. Ostensible, the young lord could also fulfill Elizabeth's requirement that Mary marry an Englishman. It is difficult to assess exactly what Elizabeth hoped to gain by her March 5 message – perhaps she was simply reacting to the increased pressure of a declaration on the succession from Mary during the early months of 1565 – but it is clear that the timing of her declaration on the succession was unfortunate. Mary did not wish to put off her marriage any longer; counseled by neither Elizabeth nor the Guises, she decided to go her own way.

Elizabeth no doubt realized her mistake in mid-April. Rumors about Mary and Darnley marriage had died down in the beginning of March. On March 15, Randolph

⁴⁵ Adams, "Release of Darnley," 142.

reported to Cecil that Mary was not showing any particularly "great goodwill" towards Darnley; the queen was simply of a "courteous nature."⁴⁶ Around April 7, Darnley fell ill; he had contracted the measles.⁴⁷ Randolph slowly began to show some unease over Mary's "great favor" towards him; the ailing Darnley received delectable food from the royal table. On April 15, Randolph had grounds to believe what he had heard about a possible marriage between Mary and Darnley, and three days later, the ambassador stated that he could now "boldier confirm" the disturbing rumors.⁴⁸

That Mary became enamoured with Darnley is clear. During the young lord's illness, the queen spent much time by his bedside, and even refused to undertake her planned trip to St. Johnston since Darnley was not well enough to travel.⁴⁹ It appears as if Mary's love grew stronger as time went on; on May 21, Randolph reported the queen's "lamentable state" to Cecil and Dudley. Mary, Randolph claimed, was exhibiting "ferventer passion than is comelye for anye mean personage."⁵⁰ By the beginning of June, the ambassador wrote that Mary was like a completely different person from the queen he had learned to like and respect. She was so much in love that "shame [was] layde asyde." Indeed, it was bruited that the Scottish queen was "bewitched."⁵¹

⁴⁶ *CSP Scot*, vol. 2, 136.

⁴⁷ Bingham suggests that Darnley might have suffered from the early stages of syphilis, not measles. Bingham, 101.

⁴⁸ *CSP Scot*, vol. 2, 142-4. Cecil noted April 15 as the date when it was "playnlye discovered, that the Queen will have the lord Darly." *Burghley Papers*, vol. 2, 758.

⁴⁹ *CSP Scot*, vol. 2, 145, 148. Elizabeth repeated the scandalous rumors she had heard that not even measles, which was an "infectuous disease," could keep the Scottish queen from her Darnley. Indeed, Mary "attended uppon hym with as much dilligence and care as any cold!" *Ibid.*, 146.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 166, 168.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 171-2.

The marriage between Darnley and Mary has often read as a passionate love-story; the tale of a beautiful, vibrant young Scottish queen who fell head over heels in love with an equally young and handsome lord. Throwing all caution aside, Mary risked everything to get the man she wanted.⁵² Yet, although the sources agree that Mary certainly appeared to love Darnley with a passion, they also show that her decision to marry him was neither hasty nor rash.

Even though Philip had closed down the negotiations for a match between Mary and Don Carlos the previous August, Mary was not completely deterred. Her first choice had always been a Spanish marriage, and even as late as the spring of 1565, she had not yet given up hope.⁵³ In the end of March, de Silva received a messenger from Mary. His queen had received words from the cardinal of Lorraine in France, the messenger explained, to the effect that the Spanish ambassador had orders to "discuss a certain business of hers which had already been broached between your Majesty and her." If such were the case, Mary would like to dispatch Lethington to London so that he could talk to de Silva about it.⁵⁴ De Silva was unsure of how to handle the situation, since his instructions stated that he should only discuss the matter of a Scottish match for Don Carlos if "it was introduced" to him, but he was not supposed to discuss it on his "own

⁵² See for example Fraser, 224-5; Chamberlin, 165-6; Plowden, 93-5; Waldman, 109-10.

⁵³ Mary's optimism was not unfounded; Philip had closed the negotiations before (August 1563) and yet continued to listen to Mary's suit in the summer of 1564. *Papal Negotiations*, lxvi, 176-8; *CSP Span*, 371.

⁵⁴ Mary's messenger also informed de Silva that he was in England ostensible to ask for a safe-conduct for Lethington to go to France, but the secretary was in fact only going to come to England to discuss the prospects of a Spanish marriage for his mistress. *CSP Span*, 410-1. On March 17, Randolph reported from Scotland that Lorraine and Granvelle

accord.” Cleverly, he answered the messenger in an extremely vague manner, intent on luring the Scottish secretary to England to see what he had to say.⁵⁵

Lethington arrived in London around April 18, and about a week later the Scottish secretary secretly came to visit the Spanish ambassador. Lethington informed de Silva that Mary still wished to marry Don Carlos. Granted, “the pressures from her subjects, her own age, and the inconvenience of a young queen remaining unmarried,” had forced Mary to consider a marriage to Darnley. The son of the Earl and Lady Lennox was an Englishman, which was what Elizabeth required. Mary wanted to make sure that Elizabeth was “satisfied,” since she wanted the succession. However, Mary would turn away from Darnley immediately if de Silva “gave her any hope of the negotiations with his Highness’s proceeding.”⁵⁶ Even after de Silva had rather decisively said that Don Carlos was not available for marriage and instead recommended that Mary marry either Darnley or Archduke Charles, Lethington still tried to get the Spaniard to continue to discuss a match between Mary and Don Carlos. The Darnley match was a good alternative, Lethington explained, but since it was probable that Elizabeth would dislike it, it would not do Mary any good unless Philip promised to support the couple and take Mary “and her affairs under his protection.”⁵⁷

In addition to Mary’s last effort for a Spanish match, Melville’s description of Darnley’s courtship does not point to a queen who let her emotions rule her. According to

had advised Mary “not to be over hasty to conclude in any matter with England.” *CSP Scot*, vol. 2, 136.

⁵⁵ *CSP Span*, 412.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 421.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 422.

Melville, Mary had liked Darnley when he first came to court, but that was the extent of her feelings towards him. When Darnley proposed to Mary (Melville does not give a date for this first proposal), the queen took it "in ane euill part" and refused to accept the ring he tried to give her as a token of his affection. Melville, taking credit for Mary's change of heart, claims to have persuaded the queen of the advantages of such a match: together, their claims to the English throne would be even stronger. Mary began to see Darnley in a better light after that conversation, and "at length determinit to mary him."⁵⁸

Mary's decision to marry Darnley was thus not based on love alone; love-matches were rather unusual in the sixteenth century, especially when regarding royal marriages. After Elizabeth's disappointing message of March 5, Mary had very little choice in the matter of her marriage. Without the promise of succession, Dudley was no longer a contender. Archduke Charles had never been a good alternative, neither Catherine de Medici nor Philip would agree to a match with Charles IX of France, and after the last disappointment in the Spanish negotiations, it was clear that Don Carlos would never be Mary's husband. At a time when all other options were closed down, Darnley, already present in Scotland and working his charms on the young queen, appeared to be the natural choice for Mary. A marriage with Darnley presented some problems, of course, if Elizabeth would not agree to it, but that could perhaps be remedied by acquiring the support of Spain and France.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Melville, 134.

⁵⁹ Wormald, 149. Plowden argues that Darnley had "been brought to [Mary's] notice at a time of mounting frustration and disappointment." Plowden, 94.

The official purpose of Lethington's embassy to England was to discuss Mary's marriage with Elizabeth. Lethington cautiously asked the English queen what she thought about a marriage between Darnley and Mary. Not unexpectedly, Elizabeth disapproved. Lady Margaret, who had kept the de Silva informed of her son's progress in Scotland and had asked for Philip's support in her quest for a crown for her son, soon felt the repercussions of Elizabeth's anger. On April 26, under house arrest in her apartments, she was charged with receiving letters from Mary without permission.⁶⁰ Darnley's continued fortunes led to further sufferings for Lady Lennox: on June 9, she was deprived of the comforts of her own apartments and sent to the Tower for the third time in her life.⁶¹

Elizabeth quickly decided to send Throckmorton, now back from France, to Scotland. The queen issued her first instructions on April 24, which ordered Throckmorton to attempt to obstruct the marriage and to let Mary know that the only way she would ever be declared Elizabeth's successor was through a marriage with Dudley.⁶² Before Throckmorton left, the Privy Council met on May 1 to discuss the developments in Scotland. The findings of the council were clear: Mary's marriage with Darnley was detrimental to the Anglo-Scottish amity and Elizabeth should not agree to such a match. Elizabeth issued a second set of instructions to Throckmorton on May 2: he was to tell Mary that Elizabeth "simply disliked" the marriage with Darnley "as a matter dangerous to the common amity." Elizabeth did not see fit to inform Mary exactly why she found the marriage so objectionable. Furthermore, Throckmorton should tell Mary that Elizabeth

⁶⁰ *CSP Span*, 413, 419-20.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 435-6.

was ready to agree to any other marriage "with more or less good will," but that a declaration of the succession would only follow a Dudley marriage.⁶³ Throckmorton, accompanied by Lethington, left London on May 7.

While Elizabeth and her councilors were deliberating in England, Mary, by now definitely intent on marrying Darnley, worked hard to get the assent of her nobles before Lethington and Throckmorton arrived with Elizabeth's answer. Moray, probably the most vocal of the Scottish nobles, thought the Darnley marriage would spell disaster for Scotland. Darnley and Mary tried to win him over with fair words, but he stubbornly refused and left the court in protest. By giving up her old claims to the earldom of Angus, Lady Margaret managed to win a few more nobles to Mary's side. The quickest way to create a friendly faction, however, was to tie people to young Darnley with bonds of gratitude. Darnley was to be made an earl, and as such he could create knights who would be obliged to follow him.⁶⁴

Lethington and Throckmorton arrived in Berwick on May 11, far too soon in Mary's eyes. The Scottish queen sent a messenger to Lethington, commissioning him to

⁶² *CSP Scot*, vol. 2, 145-6. Elizabeth said that Dudley was like a brother to her, although "not inheritable to our crown, as it might be a brothar on our mothers syde."

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 150-1. See also *Burghley Papers*, vol. 2, 758. De Silva thought that Elizabeth was waiting too long to send Throckmorton to Scotland if she earnestly wanted to stop the marriage. *CSP Span*, 427. In Scotland, Randolph was also confused; by April 29, he had received letters from Elizabeth which ordered Darnley and Lennox home, but Randolph was not allowed to deliver them yet. In her usual fashion, Elizabeth probably wanted to consider the problem at some length before she acted. In Throckmorton's second instructions, Elizabeth made a point of letting Mary know that she had not acted rashly (hinting that Mary's decision to marry Darnley was too rash), but that she had taken time to discuss the problem with her council and her nobility. *CSP Scot*, vol. 2, 150.

⁶⁴ *CSP Scot*, vol. 2, 152-7.

hinder Throckmorton's journey, and then turn around and go back to England to deliver a letter to Elizabeth from Mary. Mary expected Elizabeth's answer to be negative and did not want her nobles to use Elizabeth's dislike for the marriage as an argument against it. Mary wished him to tell Elizabeth that she was tired of Elizabeth's delays and "fayre speche." From now on she would choose her own husband rather than be "fed with Yea of Naye" from Elizabeth. Lethington was then to go to France to secure the support of Charles IX. Lethington, shocked at Mary's tactless behavior, refused to obey the orders and instead, muttering that he wished the Englishman had instructions to threaten Mary with war, hurried with Throckmorton towards Scotland.⁶⁵

Randolph had informed Mary of Throckmorton's expected arrival and asked the queen not to raise Darnley to the peerage until she had heard Elizabeth's answer.⁶⁶ Mary had no such intentions. Again, she ordered Lethington to detain Throckmorton, and again, Lethington refused to obey. Throckmorton demanded audience with Mary on May 15, as he had heard that she planned to hold Darnley's ceremony that afternoon. Although at first he was refused, at length the ambassador finally spoke to Mary and relayed Elizabeth's message. Elizabeth's dislike did nothing to deter Mary; Throckmorton judged that the only way to stop the marriage now was through use of violence. Mary agreed to only one concession, namely, she would wait three months before she married. The very

⁶⁵ Ibid., 158-60.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 169.

same evening, the Scottish queen made Darnley Earl of Ross, and he in turn created fourteen knights.⁶⁷

The English Privy Council met again on June 4 to discuss the matter of the Darnley marriage. The councilors resolved that Darnley and Lennox should be recalled to England, Lady Margaret should no longer be allowed to correspond with France and Spain, and Darnley's younger brother Charles in York should be kept under strict watch. Furthermore, Elizabeth would be well advised to show "some remission" of the queen's "displeasure" towards Catherine Grey and the earl of Hertford, in order to give Mary something to think about in regards to the English succession. Elizabeth should also not delay her own marriage any longer.⁶⁸

Throughout June and July, Mary worked to get Elizabeth's approval for the Darnley match. She sent John Haye to England in an attempt to appease her cousin's anger. Haye's embassy was unsuccessful; Elizabeth "flew into a rage" as soon as Haye mentioned the subject of Mary's marriage to Darnley. Elizabeth also refused to read the letter the ambassador brought from Lennox on the grounds that she was about to proclaim both the ungrateful earl and his disobedient son traitors.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Ibid., 162-3. In his reports back to Cecil, Throckmorton spoke in favor of Randolph, who wanted to be discharged from his duties in Scotland. The ambassador is far in debt, Throckmorton explained, and "could be contented to put his heade in a hoole, synce the frutes of his servyce worke hym so smalle advauntage." Ibid., 165.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 175. The Council also suggested that "broad and uncomely speeches" in the royal household should be "restrained." At a time when Elizabeth was questioning and criticizing the morals of Mary's behavior, the councilors wanted to ensure that no untimely scandals or rumors would surround the English court.

⁶⁹ *CSP Span*, 441-2. *CSP Scot*, vol. 2, 175, 177-9.

Mary was not relying on Elizabeth alone, however. She also sought – and received – the support of the Catholic continental powers. On June 6, Philip wrote to de Silva and explained that he had decided to support Mary and Darnley. He thought the marriage good, since both parties had a claim to the English throne in addition to the fact that they were both Catholic. (Philip was somewhat misinformed about Darnley's religious commitments; while in England, Darnley had at least outwardly been a Protestant.)⁷⁰ Philip warned de Silva to tell English Catholics to be careful that they did not offend Elizabeth, since such provocation might cause the English queen to proclaim either Catherine Grey or the earl of Huntingdon her successor. Both of these candidates were much too “heretical” to fit Philip's taste. De Silva received the letter just in time to pass the information on to Hayes, who was of course happy to have at least some good news to bring back to his mistress.⁷¹

In France, Charles IX soon followed Philip's example. Charles wrote to Elizabeth on June 30 that he had heard of Mary's intended marriage with Darnley. He “approves” of the match, he informed her, “and hopes that she does the same.”⁷² De Foix, the French ambassador in England, renewed Charles' request that Elizabeth accept the Darnley marriage at the end of July. The ambassador also added that Elizabeth should release

⁷⁰ Bingham, 57-8

⁷¹ *CSP Span*, 432-4, 441-2.

⁷² *CSP Foreign*, vol. 8, 399. De Silva spoke to the French ambassador in the beginning of July, and the Frenchman informed him that Charles had initially been against the marriage, but that he had changed his mind. If Elizabeth decided to use violence against Mary, Charles had vowed to help his sister-in-law against England. *CSP Span*, 444. Don Frances de Alava, Spanish ambassador in France, reported to Philip that the French were happy about the Darnley marriage since it alleviated their “fears of Don Carlos [marrying Mary].” *Papal Negotiations*, 468.

Lady Margaret from the Tower.⁷³ Elizabeth merely replied that the French king would react the same way as she did had he been treated so unfairly by his own kin and subjects.⁷⁴

Mary also needed the consent of the pope since Darnley was her first cousin and marriage within such a close degree of consanguinity required a papal dispensation. Like Philip, Pope Pius IV had heard of Lady Margaret's resilient Catholicism and assumed that the son was of the same strong religious conviction. Darnley was thus a good choice for Mary, as the couple "promise to be defenders of the Catholic faith."⁷⁵ The wheels of the papal bureaucracy turned slowly, however; the pope did not grant the dispensation until late September, almost two full months after Mary and Darnley's marriage at the end of July.⁷⁶ Mary, confident that the reports and rumors from Rome and Paris meant that Pius supported a Darnley-match and that the dispensation would arrive in due time, thus married without official approval from the Church.⁷⁷

One reason for the rather hurried vows of Darnley and Mary was the increasingly troublesome state of parts of the Scottish nobility.⁷⁸ Some Scottish Protestants, primarily led by Moray and the earl of Argyll, were patently against the Darnley marriage. In early July, Mary tried to appease her Protestant subjects by reassuring them that she would

⁷³ *CSP Span*, 458.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 464.

⁷⁵ *Papal Negotiations*, 210-11.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 216-20.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, xciv-xcv. Mary had received a papal brief prior to the marriage to Darnley. People around her believed that it was the actual dispensation, and Pollen suggests that the Scottish queen did nothing to correct these rumors. *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, lxxviii.

keep to the original religious settlement.⁷⁹ Yet, Moray and Argyll could not be won over. Instead, they asked Elizabeth for help against Mary. At first, Elizabeth promised to help the Scottish nobles if Mary threatened the Protestant religion. Not surprisingly, the queen's reluctance to wage expensive and questionable wars (supporting nobles against their rightful sovereign was definitely risky business) soon made her change her mind. The fact that Mary had the support of both Spain and France probably caused Elizabeth to be especially cautious in her actions towards Mary as well. Instead of offering military support to the rebellious Scottish nobles, Elizabeth simply asked Mary to reconcile with Moray and to take care to diminish the factions at her court.⁸⁰

Mary's upcoming marriage caused Elizabeth's subjects to put even more pressure on their queen to marry. If Elizabeth died unmarried and childless, Mary – being married and perhaps even having children – would have an even stronger claim to the throne. The logic was not lost on Elizabeth; she gave a warm welcome to the imperial ambassador, Adam Smycoritz, on June 2. Negotiations for a marriage between Elizabeth and Archduke Charles continued throughout the summer. The ever perceptive de Silva noted that although it appeared as if Elizabeth was actually serious about marriage this time, it was probably only “for fear of Scotland.”⁸¹ By threatening Mary with an imperial match

⁷⁹ *Register of Privy Council of Scotland*, 338.

⁸⁰ *CSP Scot*, vol. 2, 183, 175, 185.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 440, 464. Throughout the spring of 1565, Elizabeth was also engaged in marriage negotiations between herself and the young French king. Elizabeth never really took these negotiations seriously, however, because the age difference was so great between them. In 1565, Charles was around fifteen years old and Elizabeth was thirty-two. Jokingly, Elizabeth told de Silva that it would have been a good marriage except that “people might say she had married her grandson.” *CSP Span*, 448.

for herself, Elizabeth could regain some of the power of negotiation she had lost temporarily when Mary announced she would marry Darnley.

In the evening of July 28, after considerable pressure from her future husband, Mary proclaimed Darnley king of Scotland. She had preferred to wait until it could be discussed and agreed upon by the members of Parliament, or at least until Darnley was twenty-one (he was merely nineteen in the spring of 1565). Darnley would not wait, however, and Mary, who had "given over unto him her whole will," let him have his way. It was as King of Scotland, then, that Darnley married Mary early in the morning of July 29. Mary wore mourning-dress during the Catholic ceremony, but changed afterwards to signify that she now would "cast off her care" and "give herself to a pleasanter life." In order to silence the prolific rumors surrounding their courtship, the newly-weds did not immediately go to bed after the wedding ceremony. Instead, they spent the rest of the day in the cheerful company of the lords and ladies attending the festivities to prove that "it was no lust that moved them to marry, but only the necessity of her country."⁸² The following day, Mary again proclaimed Darnley king before the stubbornly silent Scottish lords. One single voice was heard, that of the earl of Lennox who, finally seeing his dreams for his son come true, loudly shouted "God save his Grace!"⁸³

Although it had been a certainty for more than three months, Mary's marriage to Darnley put the final nail in the coffin for Elizabeth's pet project of marrying her favorite

⁸² Randolph described the wedding and Darnley being proclaimed king in a letter to Dudley on July 31, 1565. Mumby, 385-9.

⁸³ Ibid. The proclamations are in the *Register of the Privy Council of Scotland*, 345.

to her Scottish cousin. After July 29 1565, Elizabeth could no longer use marriage negotiations to control Mary's desire for the English succession; she would have to come up with new ways to handle the troublesome ambitions of her Scottish cousin.

And on a few nights after the triumphal Christmas Mass both sets of guests were
October, when Mary and her Darnley fathered the rebellious Mary, to the contrary, the
power of the Scottish queen appeared to be at its apex. The beautiful young couple
by most magnificent, when juxtaposing and juxtaposing their weapons as heralds. Mary
after the initial triumph, however, began to stand out of Mary's control. The
rich tape, simply put, was a disaster. The day, whose golden threads and youthful spirit had
initially attracted Mary, turned out to be an exceedingly bad night. According to
Hakluyt's reports, he had already begun to show his true self behind the marriage,¹ but
his proud and wild personality really came to light after he had been made King of
Scotland. Mary had believed that a Darnley was now King, but of what significance
required to make a royal document official.² The young King, however, was more
interested in hunting, women, and excessive drinking than in the affairs of the
realm. Darnley's conduct resulted in a terrible backlog of paperwork requiring his
signature. To remedy the situation of the King, Mary was forced to have a dry-stone of
the kingdom's affairs.³

¹ Davidson, 42-4.

² Davidson, 42-4. The writer about Darnley's "astounding pride" and his refusal to "bend his
head down" he eventually, the Ambassador explained that Darnley "spared no man in
front of himself, to be sure, but he knows they will be taken." C. G. Davidson,
vol. 2, 121.

³ *Register of the Privy Council of Scotland*, 341.

⁴ *Register*, 156-7.

Conclusion

Although Mary had successfully defied Elizabeth and married Darnley with the support from the great Catholic powers, her triumph did not last for very long. During – and for a few months after – the triumphant Chaseabout Raid from late August to early October, when Mary and her Darnley forced the rebellious Moray to flee the country, the power of the Scottish queen appeared to be at its apex. The beautiful young couple looked magnificent when inspecting and encouraging their troops on horseback.¹ Shortly after the initial triumph, however, events began to spiral out of Mary's control. The marriage, simply put, was a disaster. Darnley, whose good looks and youthful spirit had initially attracted Mary, turned out to be an exceedingly bad apple. According to Randolph's reports, he had already begun to show his true self before the marriage,² but his proud and weak personality really came to light after he had been made king of Scotland. Mary had declared that as Darnley was now king, both of their signatures were required to make a royal document official.³ The young king, however, was more interested in hunting, womanizing, and excessive drinking-bouts than in the affairs of the realm. Darnley's neglect resulted in a terrible backlog of paperwork requiring his signature. To remedy the disinterest of the king, Mary was forced to have a dry-stamp of his signature made.⁴

¹ Donaldson, 82-4.

² Randolph often wrote about Darnley's "intollerable pryde" and his outbursts of "passion and furies." Sarcastically, the ambassador explained that Darnley "spare[d] not also in tokens of manhood, to let some blows fly where he knows they will be taken." *CSP Scot*, vol. 2, 171.

³ *Register of the Privy Council of Scotland*, 345.

⁴ Fraser, 238-9.

Although Darnley was king of Scotland by Mary's proclamation, he had not received the crown matrimonial. The young king tried to pressure Mary into this last concession, which would mean that he would continue to be king even if Mary died, i. e. he would be king in his own right instead of merely being a creature of the queen's favor. Mary, by now realizing that Darnley was not the able ruler she had always hoped to marry, was reluctant to give her husband the power connected with the crown matrimonial. Mary's reluctance, coupled with her increasing reliance on her servant David Riccio made Darnley jealous and suspicious.⁵ Riccio was an Italian musician who ostensible was responsible only for Mary's French correspondence, but indeed had come to be Mary's most trusted advisor in all royal matters.⁶ Darnley even accused the Italian of being the father to the child Mary was carrying.⁷

Riccio, who undoubtedly had risen in power and importance through his closeness with the Scottish queen, had to pay dearly for his recent fortunes. On March 9, Darnley and an assortment of disgruntled Scottish nobles burst in on an intimate supper party held in Mary's private apartments. Mary soon realized that the intent of the noblemen was to get rid of her "most special servant." Riccio, who also judged the situation correctly, desperately clung to Mary's skirts while pleading for his life. The noblemen were in no mood for mercy; they pried Riccio loose from Mary, dragged him out of the chamber and stabbed him to death. According to Mary's later account, her very own life – and that of

⁵ Ibid., 239–46.

⁶ On June 2, 1565, Randolph reported to Dudley that "David [Riccio] is he that now works all." *CSP Scot*, vol. 2, 171.

⁷ Mary became pregnant sometime in late September or early October of 1565. Fraser, 240.

her unborn child – was threatened as well, as one of the noblemen held a pistol to her belly.⁸ Riccio's murder was not a surprise to contemporaries; indeed, Randolph had predicted it in a letter to Cecil in mid-February.⁹

According to Randolph's reports Mary deeply regretted her marriage to Darnley by the beginning of 1566,¹⁰ and after the murder of Riccio, she most definitely had no tender feelings left for her husband. Riccio's assassination also implicitly put Mary's sovereign power in question, since the coalition of nobles, together with Darnley, had acted violently against the queen without any great repercussions. Her position was temporarily strengthened, however, when she gave birth to Prince James in June of 1566. Finally, Scotland had a male heir. As a mother to a healthy boy, many, especially English Catholics, suddenly found Mary even more attractive as a successor to – or perhaps a replacement for – Elizabeth.¹¹ When the English queen received the news of her cousin's safe delivery, her first reaction was to lament that "the Quen of Scotlandis was leichter of a faire sonne" while she herself "was bot a barren stok."¹² Elizabeth doubtless realized that Mary's marriage and the birth of James made her English subjects even more anxious to see their own sovereign safely matched.

⁸ Ibid., 247-54.

⁹ On February 14, 1566, Randolph wrote to Dudley: "I knowe that yf that take effecte which is intended David with the consent of the kynge shall have his throte cutte within these x dayes." W. Park, ed., "Letter of Thomas Randolph to the Earl of Leicester, 14 February, 1566," *Scottish Historical Review* 34 (1955): 137. Randolph only missed the date by about nine days.

¹⁰ Ibid. Randolph claimed to know "for certayne that this Q. repentethe her mariage that she hateth hym and all his kyne."

¹¹ Fraser, 266-9.

¹² Melville, 158-9.

After the relatively peaceful fall of 1566 had passed, the pace of the destructive events quickened in Scotland. In February 1567, Darnley was murdered at Kirk o'Field. The events surrounding the murder are shrouded in mystery. It is not clear whether Mary was involved in her husband's death, but it is certainly neither implausible nor impossible considering how embarrassing and unprofitable her marriage had become. Only three months after Darnley's death, Mary married the Earl of Bothwell, who almost certainly had been involved in the murder. Bothwell and Mary did not have much support among the Scottish nobility; in fact, the majority was decidedly against them and ready to act. In addition, Mary lost the support of Philip and the pope when she married the Protestant Bothwell. On June 15, the opposition among Mary's nobles defeated her and her new husband at Carberry Hill, and on July 24 she was forced to abdicate in favor of her one-year-old son James. Moray was appointed regent for the young king. Mary made a last attempt at defeating her rebellious nobles when she escaped imprisonment and repudiated her abdication in May of 1568, but she was once again defeated, this time at Langside. Mary managed to escape, however, and fled to the country of her cousin queen. She was to stay in England, an unwelcome prisoner, until her execution in 1587.¹³

Elizabeth did not get involved in the internal fighting in Scotland, however much Moray and his allies tried to convince her of the righteousness of their cause. She initially gave some financial support to the Protestant rebels, but that was the extent of her aid. Elizabeth strongly disliked rebellious behavior towards legitimate rulers, and there could be no doubt that Mary indeed was the rightful Queen of Scots and that Moray's party

¹³ Donaldson, 91-139.

were violating their sovereign when they held her captive and forced her to abdicate. Although privately Elizabeth stood on the side of the queen against Moray and his followers, she eventually had to face the reality of the situation: Moray's regency was very strong and promised stability as well as future Scottish reliance on England, whereas a Marian restoration would cause nothing but trouble since she had so little support in Scotland and abroad.¹⁴

Mary's presence in England continued to be a threat to Elizabeth. The Scottish queen was the center of a number of plots to place her on the throne of England, the last of which – the infamous Babington plot – finally convinced the reluctant Elizabeth to sign the warrant for Mary's execution in 1587. However, as a prisoner in England, Mary did not present the same danger to Elizabeth as she had done in the early 1560s, when she sat on the throne of her kingdom and searched the continent for a powerful husband who could help her gain her ultimate goal: the crown of England.

After studying Anglo-Scottish relations during the 1560s and thus placing the Dudley negotiations in their proper context, the purpose of Elizabeth's curious proposal for Mary becomes clearer. By embroiling Mary in English marriage negotiations – at a time when the Anglo-Scottish amity was rather popular in both countries – Elizabeth sought to prevent an unwanted and threatening union between Mary and a powerful and potentially dangerous Catholic prince. This conclusion does not, of course, exclude any

¹⁴ MacCaffrey, *Elizabeth I*, 104-10.

other motives that Elizabeth might have had, but it seems to be the overriding factor on which both modern historians as well as Elizabethan contemporaries agree.

If Elizabeth's prime objective was merely to prevent a foreign match for Mary, then why did she not simply tell Mary that a foreign match would be considered a breach of the amity and leave it at that? Elizabeth's tactics of using marriage negotiations to prevent Mary from contracting a continental alliance had several advantages. It provided Elizabeth with an opportunity to make a show of sisterly amity towards Mary while advising her in the important issue of marriage. When Elizabeth offered Mary a husband, it was left to the Scottish queen to reject or accept him. If rejected, Elizabeth could indignantly blame Mary for neglecting the amity. Furthermore, Mary clearly intended to remarry, so what better way to attempt to control the outcome than to suggest a marriage advantageous to Elizabeth?

The question of whether or not Elizabeth was serious in her offer of Dudley is more difficult to answer. Elizabeth's contemporaries certainly found the idea difficult to accept. That Mary would actually stoop so low as to accept a man of Dudley's reputation and status seemed rather unlikely as well. Having said that, I still have to contend that Elizabeth was indeed serious about wanting the marriage to take place. She probably preferred to see Mary remain unmarried, but since the Scottish queen seemed bent on getting another husband, a Dudley match was the only marriage with which Elizabeth could be content. Any other marriage would bring with it uncountable problems. Don Carlos, Archduke Charles, and Charles IX of France were all much too Catholic and much too powerful (in the case of Archduke Charles, it was his powerful relatives and

close connection to the Holy Roman Emperor and the papacy that were threatening). Elizabeth had no desire to be boxed in by a Scotland that acted as a satellite of Spain or France. With Mary married to Dudley, on the other hand, Elizabeth would have a trusted servant on the throne beyond her northern borders who could make sure that Mary remained friendly to England. The marriage might also present Elizabeth with an attractive solution to the succession question. She thought that Mary had the best right to the English throne, and she often stated that she considered Dudley as her brother. Elizabeth would probably have been delighted for the children of her cousin and her favorite to succeed her on the throne.

Even if Elizabeth sincerely wanted Mary to marry Dudley, her wish was not realistic, because she only wanted the marriage on *her own terms*. She would make no concessions. The English queen consistently refused to agree to the only condition that could have convinced Mary to marry the favorite: Elizabeth's declaration of Mary as her successor. Cecil recognized Elizabeth's dilemma in a letter to Thomas Smith in December of 1564: "I see the Queens Majesty very desirous to have my Lord of Leicester placed in this high degree to be the Scottish Queen's husband; but when it cometh to the conditions which are demanded, I see her then remiss of her earnestness."¹⁵ Even when in the spring of 1565 Mary was ready to accept Dudley if Elizabeth only assured her of the succession, the English queen refused to budge. Elizabeth's refusal has sometimes been viewed as evidence of her insincerity.¹⁶ However, part of the attraction of a Dudley marriage for Mary was that it would *curb and control* Mary's ambitions to the English

¹⁵Mumby, 331.

succession while Elizabeth was still alive. It would be no great advantage for Elizabeth, then, to agree to give the succession simply in order to bring about a marriage that was supposed to protect her from the pressure of having to declare a successor in the first place.

The changing relationship between Dudley and Elizabeth also presents a difficulty in assessing Elizabeth's sincerity. Sometimes, the queen's behavior towards her favorite appeared to be inappropriate if she indeed wished her cousin to believe that she was in earnest about her proposal. Her affectionate gesture during the ceremony when Dudley was created earl of Leicester comes to mind, as well as her refusal to part with Dudley's portrait despite Melville's clever comments. Was she really willing to let Dudley go? It is impossible to know exactly what Elizabeth's feelings were, but it is likely that, indeed, she was ready to give her precious Dudley to Mary. By 1563, the time for the beginning of the negotiations, Elizabeth had realized that her own marriage to Dudley was not possible and perhaps not even desirable. Susan Doran suggests that "it is not unreasonable to speculate that the passionate element in her relationship with Dudley had either waned with time or been extinguished by necessity, so that she felt herself to love but no longer to be 'in love' with her favourite."¹⁷ During 1564 and 1565, Elizabeth often described Dudley as her brother;¹⁸ she probably viewed their relationship as purely platonic at the time she offered him to Mary. Elizabeth was no longer willing to risk her

¹⁶ See for example Fraser, 220; Plowden, 93; Lee, 132; Waldman, 111.

¹⁷ Doran, 64.

¹⁸ See for example *CSP Scot*, vol. 2, 80-1, 145-6.

own position by a marriage to a subject.¹⁹ The fact that she herself did not wish to marry Dudley did not mean that Elizabeth did not think him worthy of matching with royalty.²⁰ The queen even thought that Warwick, Dudley's brother, was certainly "worthy of being the husband of any great princess."²¹ As an interesting side note, Elizabeth fully supported Dudley when in 1577 he proposed to the Swedish princess Cecilia. Elizabeth even wrote a kind letter to Cecilia, whom she (and Dudley) had met when she visited England during her brother Erik of Sweden's courtship of the English queen. Elizabeth urged the princess to consider Dudley's suit, but after asking her brother for advice, Cecilia declined the offer.²² Elizabeth Jenkins, who also mentions the episode, finds that Elizabeth's willingness to sponsor Dudley's royal marriage-plans in 1577 "suggests that she had once been seriously prepared to see him married to Mary Queen of Scots."²³

Elizabeth often amused herself with conjuring up ideal and psychologically pleasing but unrealistic scenarios. She wished, for example, that one of the two sister queens had been born a man, so that they could marry each other and thus unify the

¹⁹ As early as 1562, Elizabeth exclaimed to Katherine Ashley, her long trusted lady-in-waiting: "Dost thou think me so unlike myself, and so unmindful of my Royal Majesty, that I prefer my servant, whom I myself have raised, before the greatest princes of Christendom, in choosing of an husband." Quoted in Levin, 73.

²⁰ Elizabeth told Mary that she thought Dudley "meet for the company of kings and princes." *CSP Scot*, vol. 2, 80.

²¹ *CSP Span*, 313.

²² Cecilia's brother thought that the fact that Dudley had not written the letter himself, but instead had a secretary write it and then send it together with Elizabeth's letter was evidence of a weak character. Furthermore, Cecilia's last visit to England had ended badly; she racked up some incredible debts and as she was unable to pay them, she had been forced to flee the country (and her creditors) in all haste. Her brother reminded her of her previous experience, which probably did nothing to further Dudley's suit. Herman Lindqvist, *Historien om Sverige: Historien om Gustav Vasa och hans söner och döttrar* (Stockholm: Norstedts Förlag, 1993), 466.

realms and put all questions of succession to rest.²⁴ In March of 1563, when she first broached the possibility of a marriage between Dudley and Mary, she also told the stunned Lethington that she wished that the earl of Warwick were more like his brother, so that Elizabeth and Mary could both marry a Dudley.²⁵ Equally absurd was the idea that Elizabeth suggested in October 1564, when she wanted Mary, Dudley, and herself to live in the same household. Naturally, the thought of having Mary safely married to Dudley while not actually having to part with her favorite was definitely pleasing to Elizabeth. Likewise, Mary willingly marrying Dudley without a declaration of the succession was an ideal situation for Elizabeth, but it was not realistic. However, the idea of a marriage between Mary and Dudley differed from the other "ideal" situations, because Elizabeth actually acted on it. Pursuing the dream of controlling Mary through Dudley served a purpose in itself; it could prevent Mary from contracting an unwanted marriage.

Some of Elizabeth's actions during the Dudley negotiations, such as her emphatic message of March 5, 1565 that she would not declare a successor until she had either married or decided not to marry, and the ill-timed release of Darnley, are very puzzling. They do not "fit" very well with Elizabeth's agenda of preventing Mary's marriage. Even after much study and many attempts at explanations, the full meaning and purpose of Elizabeth's actions escapes us. Modern writers often struggle with the need for consistency when they attempt to analyze historical figures, perhaps forgetting that people certainly do not always act rationally and logically all the time. Moreover, it is

²³ Jenkins, 223.

²⁴ *CSP Scot*, vol. 2, 80.

²⁵ *CSP Span*, 313.

important to realize that Elizabeth most probably did not have a long-range plan regarding the prevention of Mary's would-be marriage. Throughout her reign, Elizabeth was notoriously slow in making up her mind about important policy. She would constantly reverse decisions and thus make the life of her advisors very difficult. She usually waited so long that others were forced to desperate measures, which then required Elizabeth to respond to the new developments. In the Dudley negotiations, Elizabeth tried to go as long as possible without making any concessions. When the situation threatened to come to a complete standstill and deadlock, she finally made the smallest concession possible so that the discussions could continue. For example, it took Elizabeth six months before she would let Randolph tell Mary that it was Dudley she wanted her to marry. Likewise, Elizabeth resisted the Conference of Berwick until she realized that Mary might abandon the English marriage project if there was no progress or at least an appearance of progress. In the Dudley marriage negotiations, then, Elizabeth acted as the situation required of her, not necessarily according to a planned and well thought out agenda.

Was Elizabeth successful in her negotiations? The answer must be both yes and no. Through her stubborn and persistent Dudley marriage negotiations, she did indeed manage to prevent Mary from marrying a Catholic prince. However, the Darnley marriage initially caused Elizabeth and her councilors much anxiety; they did not quite know how to respond to Mary's unexpected show of decisiveness and independence. Although the Darnley match eventually spelled the ruin of Mary, Elizabeth did not know what the future had in store in the summer of 1565. It was the actions of others, not those

of Elizabeth, which eventually brought Mary to England. Elizabeth watched the occurrences in Scotland from a distance, and luckily, her inactivity led others to make mistakes from which she could profit.²⁶

²⁶ Jane Dawson argues that Elizabeth was merely lucky that the outcome of Mary's marriage turned out to be in her favor; the English queen had not been successful in her Scottish policy during 1565. "It is too easy to forget," Dawson reminds her readers, "that at the beginning of 1566 it seemed more likely that within the next eighteen months it would be Elizabeth and not Mary who would lose her throne." Dawson, 23-4.

Annotated Bibliography

Primary Sources:

Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, of the Reigns of Edward VI., Mary, Elizabeth, 1547-1580. Ed. by Robert Lemon. London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans, and Roberts, 1856.

Entries are rather short in this calendar, but the information is useful nonetheless, especially concerning the imprisonment of Catherine Grey, the earl of Hertford, and the Lennoxes.

Calendar of State Papers, Foreign Series, of the Reign of Elizabeth, 1558-1582. Ed. by Joseph Stevenson. Vol. 3-8. London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts and Green, 1863-1909.

Primarily useful for its reports on French affairs during Mary's time on the continent, but the calendar also contains important information needed to assess how the Dudley negotiations were perceived abroad.

Calendar of State Papers Relating to Scotland and Mary, Queen of Scots, 1547-1603. Vol. 1-2. Ed. by Joseph Bain. Edinburgh: General Register House, 1900.

The Scottish calendar consists mostly of the reports of the English ambassador in Scotland, Thomas Randolph. These reports were sent to Cecil and Elizabeth. The calendar also contains some letters of the English queen to Mary in Scotland, as well as letters of Cecil, Lethington, and Moray. The Scottish calendar is the *central* source for the Dudley negotiations, as it was Randolph who conducted the marriage negotiations in Scotland on Elizabeth's behalf.

Calendar of State Papers Relating to English Affairs, Preserved Principally in the Archives of Simancas, (Spanish) Vol. 1. Ed. by Martin A. S. Hume. Public Record Office, 1892. Reprint, London: Kraus Reprint, 1971.

After the Scottish calendar, the Spanish calendar is the most important source for this essay. The Spanish ambassadors in England in the early 1560s, the bishop de Quadra and Guzman de Silva, unscrupulously reported everything they heard at the English court in long dispatches to their king, Philip, and to the duchess of Parma in the Netherlands. The information need to be treated with some caution, since de Quadra and de Silva often reported of rumors which contained little truth. However, their sense of detail is unmatched in the other calendars.

Calvin, John. *Selected Works of John Calvin: Tracts and Letters.* Vol. 4. Ed by Henry Beveridge and Jules Bonnet. Reprint. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1983.

This source is used only briefly in this study in the discussion on gender and marriage in Chapter Two.

A Collection of State Papers Relating to Affairs in the Reigns of King Henry VIII, King Edward VI, Queen Mary, and Queen Elizabeth, From the Year 1542 to 1570 Transcribed from Original Letters and Other Authentick Memorials, Never before Published, Left by William Cecil Lord Burghley. 2 vols. Ed. by Samuel Haynes and William Murdin. London: William Bowyer, 1740.

The second volume of Cecil's papers contains a valuable "diary," in which Cecil has listed what he considered important events in Elizabeth's reign in chronological order. The diary helps confirm dates and events described in other sources and is also an excellent way to get a quick overview of any given period in Elizabeth's reign. The first volume contains some information about the succession question; it is especially detailed on the fateful Hales-book.

Knox, John. *The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women*. 1558. Reprint, New York: Da Capo Press, 1972.

Knox's treatise is an important source – albeit only one of many – for any discussion on the perception of gender-roles in the sixteenth century. Knox presents the rather strict and settled view of how God has organized the earthly society.

Melville, Sir James. *Memoirs of His Own Life, By Sir James Melville of Halhill*. Ed. by T. Thomson. Edinburgh: Bannatyne Club, 1827. Reprint, New York: AMS Press, 1973.

Melville's *Memoirs* are essential when studying the Dudley negotiations, because they contain some information not found in any other sources. Melville describes his embassy to England and his meetings with Elizabeth in the fall of 1564 in minute detail; the complexity of the relationship between Dudley and Elizabeth becomes clearer after consulting Melville. On the other hand, the *Memoirs* contain very few dates and Melville is not always accurate in his information. As the Scotsman was in the habit of making himself appear in the best possible light, some caution is needed when reading his work.

Peck, D. C., ed. *Leicester's Commonwealth: The Copy of a Letter Written by a Master of Art of Cambridge (1584) and Related Documents*. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1985.

A contemporary attack on Dudley's character, which points to his rather damaged reputation and the persistent rumors surrounding the favorite.

Pollen, John Hungerford, ed. *Papal Negotiations with Mary Queen of Scots during her Reign in Scotland, 1561-1567*. Edinburgh: University Press, 1901.

Contains information about how the relationship between Elizabeth and Mary was perceived in the papacy and the Holy Roman Empire as well as evidence for the papal support of a marriage between Mary and Archduke Charles of Austria. Also gives detailed information and chronology about the papal dispensation required for the marriage between Mary and Darnley.

Register of the Privy Council of Scotland. Vol. 1, 1545-1569. Ed. by John Hill Burton. Edinburgh: H. M. General Register House, 1877.

The Register includes Mary's proclamations declaring Darnley king as well as proclamations concerning the Scottish queen's live-and-let-live Scottish religious policy. Information about the Lennox restoration is also available in this source.

Secondary Sources:

Adams, Simon. "The Lauderdale Papers 1561-1570: The Maitland of Lethington State Papers and the Leicester Correspondence." *The Scottish Historical Review* 67 (April 1988): 28-55.

Helpful guide to locate Dudley's widely dispersed papers.

_____. "The Release of Lord Darnley and the Failure of the Amity." *Innes Review* 38 (1987): 123-53.

Important study which looks into the motives behind the release of Darnley in early 1565.

_____. "Two 'Missing' Lauderdale Letters: Queen Mary to Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, 5 June 1567 and Thomas Randolph and Francis Russell, Earl of Bedford to Leicester, 23 November 1564." *The Scottish Historical Review* 70 (April 1991): 55-7.

Simon has located a couple of letters that are not printed in the *CSP*, one of which contains information on the Conference at Berwick.

Aird, Ian. "The Death of Amy Robsart: Accident, Suicide, or Murder – or Disease?" *English Historical Review* 71 (January 1956): 69-79.

Interesting article which examines the death of Dudley's first wife in great detail.

Alford, Stephen. *The Early Elizabethan Polity: William Cecil and the British Succession Crisis, 1558-1569*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

The latest study on the difficult succession question and the early years of Elizabeth's reign.

Bingham, Caroline. *Darnley: A Life of Henry Stuart, Lord Darnley, Consort of Mary Queen of Scots*. London: Constable, 1995.

The only biography of Darnley that this author was able to find.

Chamberlin, Frederick. *Elizabeth and Leicester*. New York: Dodd, Mead & Co, 1939.

Chamberlin claims to be the first to tell "the whole story" of the Dudley negotiations. Mentions a few letters not available in the CSP.

Clifford, Esther. "Marriage of True Minds." *Sixteenth Century Journal* 15 (1984): 37-46.

Presents common sense argument attempting to restore Dudley's reputation; Elizabeth would never have favored Dudley for so long if he was nothing but a murderous scoundrel from a treasonous family.

Dawson, Jane E. A. "Mary Queen of Scots, Lord Darnley, and Anglo-Scottish Relations in 1565." *International History Review* 8 (February 1986): 1-24.

Argues that the important events of 1565 (such as the Darnley-marriage and the unsuccessful revolt of Moray) have been overshadowed by the dramatic events of 1566-68.

Donaldson, Gordon. *Mary Queen of Scots*. London: English University Press, 1974.

Short but accurate biography on the Scottish queen.

Doran, Susan. *Monarchy and Matrimony: The Courtships of Elizabeth I*. New York: Routledge, 1996.

Interesting and informative study on Elizabeth's courtships. Especially detailed on the relationship between Elizabeth and Dudley.

Elton, Geoffrey R. *The Parliament of England 1559-1581*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986.

Elton mentions the Dudley negotiations only briefly, but is nonetheless important for an understanding of Elizabeth's relationship with her Parliaments.

Fraser, Antonia. *Mary Queen of Scots*. New York: Delacorte Press, 1970.

Exhaustively detailed biography of Mary, although Fraser leans towards a very romantic interpretation of the queen.

Frescoln, Katharine. "A Letter from Thomas Randolph to the Earl of Leicester." *The Huntington Library Quarterly* 37 (1973-1974): 83-8.

An important letter regarding Elizabeth's statement on the succession on March 5, 1565. The letter is not printed in the *CSP*.

Guy, John. *Tudor England*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988.

An excellent work for a comprehensive view of England in the sixteenth century.

Haigh, Christopher. *Elizabeth I*. New York: Longman, 1988.

A short work that is not really a biography, but instead deals with Elizabeth's reign in succinct topics. Chapter 1, "The Queen and the Throne," is especially helpful when studying Elizabethan marriage politics and the succession.

Holt, Mack P. *The French Wars of Religion, 1562-1629*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

Very useful and well-written book which gives easy access to detailed information about the religious factions in sixteenth century France.

Jenkins, Elizabeth. *Elizabeth and Leicester*. New York: Coward-McCann, 1961.

Detailed book about the relationship between Dudley and Elizabeth, although it sometimes tends to be anecdotal.

Jones, Norman. *The Birth of the Elizabethan Age: England in the 1560s*. Cambridge: Blackwell, 1993.

Paints a good and convincing picture of the uncertainty and difficulties that the English people were faced with in the first decade of Elizabeth's reign.

Jordan, Constance. "Woman's Rule in Sixteenth-Century British Political Thought." *Renaissance Quarterly* 40 (1987): 421-51.

Points to the theoretical difficulties presented by female rulers in the sixteenth century.

Lee, Maurice. *James Stewart, Earl of Moray: A Political Study of the Reformation in Scotland*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1953.

Gives a rather negative view of Mary as a conspirator.

Levin, Carol. *The Heart and Stomach of a King: Elizabeth I and the Politics of Sex and Power*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994.

Interesting work that examines how Elizabeth dealt with the difficulties of being a female ruler.

Levine, Mortimer, ed. *Tudor Dynastic Problems, 1460-1571*. New York: Barnes and Nobles, 1973.

An essential book when studying the Elizabethan succession question.

MacCaffrey, Wallace. *Elizabeth I*. New York: Edward Arnold, 1993.

Essential for any study of Elizabeth.

_____. *The Shaping of the Elizabethan Regime*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968.

Essential for any study of Elizabeth's early reign.

Mumby, Frank Arthur. *Elizabeth and Mary Stuart: The Beginning of the Feud*. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1914.

An early interpretation of the relationship between Mary and Elizabeth, which consists mostly of primary sources with the author's explanations and commentaries inserted. Presents a rather detailed account of the Dudley negotiations. In this study, Mumby has been used primarily for the printed sources rather than the interpretation. Some of the letters are not available in the CSP.

Neale, John. *Queen Elizabeth I.* (1934). Reprint, New York: Anchor Books, 1957.

Like MacCaffrey, Neale's biography on Elizabeth is essential for any study of the Virgin Queen.

Park, W. "Letter of Thomas Randolph to the earl of Leicester, 14 Feb., 1566." *Scottish Historical Review* 34 (1955): 135-9.

Another letter which cannot be found in *CSP*. Important when assessing the deteriorating relationship between Mary and Darnley in 1566.

Peck, D. C. "The Letter of Estate: An Elizabethan Libel." *Notes and Queries* 28 (February 1981): 21-35.

Another version of *Leicester's Commonwealth*.

Plowden, Allison. *Elizabeth Tudor and Mary Stewart: Two Queens in One Isle*. Totowa: Barnes and Noble Books, 1984.

An interesting but not very detailed book about the relationship between the two queens.

Read, Conyers. *Mr. Secretary Cecil and Queen Elizabeth*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1961.

Essential for any study of Elizabeth.

Roelke, Nancy L. "The Role of Noblewomen in the French Reformation." *Archive for Reformation History* 63 (1972): 168-94.

A convincing argument for the importance of women in the reformation movement in France.

Thorp, Malcolm R. "Catholic Conspiracy in Early Elizabethan Foreign Policy." *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 15 (1984): 431-48.

Interesting article which argues that – even when no real danger existed – many English Protestants were convinced that the pope and the Catholic powers were involved in wide-spread conspiracies to overthrow the Reformation.

Waldman, Milton. *Elizabeth and Leicester*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1945.

Good but somewhat anecdotal study of Dudley and Elizabeth.

Wiesner, Merry. *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

Excellent overview or introduction into the problems of gender in early modern Europe.

Wilson, Derek. *Sweet Robin: A Biography of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, 1533-1588*. London: Hamish Hamilton, 1981.

One of the few biographies of Dudley. Contains very little information on the Dudley negotiations; the main focus is on Dudley's later career, especially in the Netherlands.

Wormald, Jenny. *Mary Queen of Scots: A Study in Failure*. London: George Philip, 1988.

A refreshing study of Mary that tries to remove the legends and romance that has shrouded the story of the Scottish queen. Wormald assesses Mary's reign and finds that she did not accomplish anything of great importance and that in fact she failed in most of her endeavors.

A refreshing study of Mary that tries to remove the legends and romance
 that has shrouded the story of the Dutchess queen. Wrenn tells Mary's story
 and finds that she did not accomplish anything of great importance and that in fact
 she failed in most of her undertakings.

Wrenn, Mary. *Mary Queen of Scots: A Study in Failure*. London: George
 Philip, 1938.

One of the biographies of Elizabeth. Contains very little information on
 the Dutchess negotiations, the main focus is on Elizabeth's later career, especially in
 the Netherlands.

Wrenn, Mary. *Mary Queen of Scots: A Study in Failure*. London: George
 Philip, 1938.

Excellent overview of introduction into the problems of England in early
 modern Europe.

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