



0. THE TROUBLE WITH MARY - Story Preface

1. PRINCESS ELIZABETH

2. PHILIP II: KING CONSORT of BRITAIN

3. ELIZABETH BECOMES QUEEN

4. THE TROUBLE WITH MARY

5. THE BABINGTON PLOT

6. A QUEEN LOSES HER HEAD

7. SIR WALTER RALEIGH

8. PHILIP II and the ARMADA

9. THE ARMADA SAILS

10. NEGOTIATIONS FAIL

11. BRITISH SHIPS

12. THE FLEETS ENGAGE

13. FIRE SHIPS and the BATTLE OF GRAVELINES

14. PARMA'S NO-SHOW

15. PUSHED TO THE NORTH SEA

16. ELIZABETH'S SPEECH to her PEOPLE

17. SAILING HOME by a NORTHERN ROUTE

18. SPANISH SHIPS on IRISH ROCKS

19. MISERY IN IRELAND

20. CELEBRATING THE VICTORY

21. THE DEATH OF RALEIGH

22. THE GOLDEN AGE

Mary, Queen of Scots, was born at Linlithgow Palace in a county of Scotland formerly known as West Lothian. This image depicts the castle ruins as seen looking across Linlithgow Loch. Photo by Derek Harper; online via Wikimedia Commons. License: CC BY-SA 2.0

Extremely intelligent, Elizabeth knew that her country was going through troubled times even before she became Queen. Differences in faith (Protestant versus Catholic) divided her subjects from within, while foreign powers threatened from without.

Her advisors, of course, were all men. Thinking her weak, they clamored to have their voices heard and their will done. Although inexperienced, Elizabeth would not be bullied - even when she nearly died of smallpox (in 1562).

Then there was the question of marriage. Of her many suitors, the one which matters to this story was her brother-in-law, Philip II of Spain. He liked being King of England, but the only way he could reclaim that title was to marry Elizabeth.

She was not interested - in Philip, or anyone else. Had she married an Englishman, other nobles would have been jealous. Had she married a foreigner, whoever it was would have taken charge of Britain.

Telling her people that she was married to her country, the Queen rejected every suitor, even those in whom she had shown considerable interest. As time passed, people realized that Elizabeth would not be succeeded by her own child.

Who, then, would succeed the last of the Tudors? Elizabeth's closest heir was her Catholic cousin: Mary, Queen of Scots, granddaughter of Henry VIII's elder sister Margaret. But Mary, an attractive woman, had her own troubles. Not least of these was a series of husbands who had either died or were untrustworthy.

Beset with problems, Mary sought help from her cousin. Without first seeking the advice of her closest counselors, the twenty-six-year-old crossed the border between England and Scotland. It was the worst thing she could have done. Her many enemies included some of Elizabeth's closest advisors.

Elizabeth's privy council had justifiable concerns. Although she was the daughter of Henry VIII, many people - including most Catholics - believed Elizabeth was not the rightful heir to the throne. As the daughter of the discredited, beheaded Anne Boleyn, Elizabeth was thought to be illegitimate.

To strengthen her own claim to Britain's throne, Mary had previously married her cousin, Lord Darnley (Henry Stuart), himself an heir. That strategic alliance, however, carried a high price. Their marriage was extremely unhappy, although the couple had a son - James.

After the death of his father, and the forced abdication of his mother, the child became King of Scotland soon after his first birthday. While he was still young, Scotland was ruled by regents.

When she arrived in England, Mary asked to see her cousin, the queen. For another nineteen years Mary asked for an audience with Elizabeth. She never got one. Instead, she was confined in one English castle or another, never free to leave. Effectively imprisoned without charges, and without a trial, Mary ceased to live the life of a ruler.

And then, one day, she started to exchange letters with Antony Babington, a former page and fellow Catholic.

See [Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](#)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/THE-TROUBLE-WITH-MARY-Elizabeth-I-The-Golden-Age>

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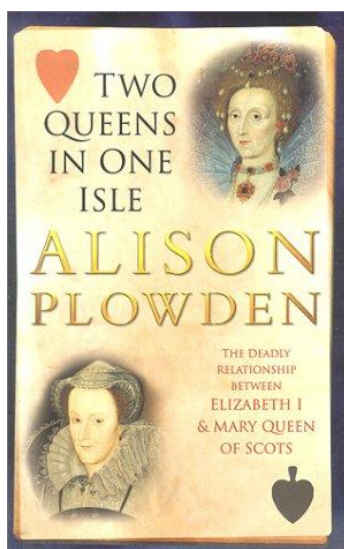


Mary, Queen of Scots - Elizabeth's Closest Heir

Image online, courtesy [elizabethan-portraits.com](http://www.elizabethan-portraits.com) website.

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Lord Darnley - Husband of Mary, Queen of Scots

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Portrait of Lord Darnley and Mary, Queen of Scots

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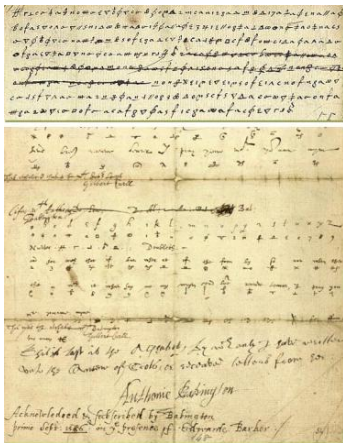


Mary, Queen of Scots - Forced to Abdicate

Image online, courtesy emilystudortalk blog site.

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Incriminating Evidence - Anthony Babington Letter

Images online, courtesy UK National Archives.

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Anthony Babington - Supporter of Mary, Queen of Scots

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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THE TROUBLE WITH MARY

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Mary Stuart - Bad Decisions and a Lost Throne

This video clip is from *A History of Britain* (released in 2000), online courtesy the BBC.

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