

Mary Stuart



Play by Friedrich Schiller

Living in a box - our European cultural heritage

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Historical background

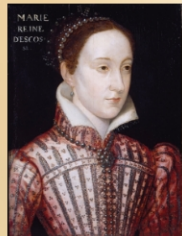


Mary's Life 1:

Mary became queen of Scotland in 1542 when she was only 6 days old and her father died. Because of the unsecure situation in Scotland she was brought to France at the age of 5. 10 years later she married Francis, the French Dauphin, who became king one year later. The marriage did not last long, since Francis died. The young widow returned to Scotland. In 1565 she married again, her cousin, Lord Henry Darnley. They got a son in 1566, but their marriage was not good. Darnley died after an explosion and Mary was held responsible for his death.

Mary's Life 11.:

When she married the murderer of her former husband, Bothwell, the Scottish nobles revolted. Mary escaped to England where she asked Elisabeth 1., Queen of England, for help. But Elisabeth arrested her. For 18 years Mary was imprisoned, before she finally was decapitated in 1587.



Elisabeth 1.:

Elisabeth, Queen of England, is the daughter of Henry VIII. and Anna Boleyn, who was executed 2 1/2 years after Elisabeth birth.

Elisabeth was declared illegitimate and it looked like she could never become queen. But in 1558 she followed her half-sister ("Bloody") Mary on the Throne. In religious questions she seems to have been quite tolerant. She never married.

Elisabeth 1.:

Mary's son James became her heir and under his reign the fighting between Scotland and England stopped at last.





The Play

Mary Stuart is imprisoned in England because of her claim to the throne of England held by Elisabeth. She is also accused of planning attacks to kill Elisabeth, conspirations with France and the Catholic church against England.

The first act refers to these actions and introduces the main character Mary. She has not lost her confidence and tries to get free with the help of Mortimer, her custodians nephew. He is supposed to bring a letter from Mary to Leicester, in which she asks for his help. But Leicester seems also to be close to Elisabeth ...

The second act concentrates on Elisabeth. She is well aware that her reign and her life are in danger as long as the catholics want Mary to become queen. Two queens are one too much ... But on the other hand she does not want to sign a death sentence and kill another queen. That could give a bad example ...

The third act is the highlight of the play, because here Mary and Elisabeth meet - something that never happened in reality.

Though it was Mary's wish to meet Elisabeth and to convince her of her innocence in order to get free, the situation escalates when Elisabeth shows her triumph over her rival to distinctly and even gets personal, talking about Mary's affairs ... Mary fires back and calls Elisabeth a bastard, who has no right to the English throne. Mary wins this verbal fight, but now Elisabeth has one reason more to sign the death warrant.

Mortimer tries to free Mary from jail by force but fails. He commits suicide. Elisabeth now signs the death sentence but does not take full responsibility. In fact she passes the signed document to her undersecretary without giving him clear instructions. Unsure what to do the undersecretary gives the document to one of Elisabeth's consultants, who has Mary executed.

The execution is not shown on stage but only reported from an "ear witness", Leicester, who is not able to watch Mary die.

**The play ends with Elisabeth blaming all the others for Mary's death.
So in the end she seems weak while Mary died as a true heroine.**

The Execution



Den xviij february werde onthalt Maria
Suaer Sebets Coninginne, te verdoen s' wonske Calste-
lyck heerdeinde gepelt, veel onus ten aen te riesten haer s' bode-
mees ten te maecten van Singelant, t' wedek haer van dy haer
of te paelcuent versagelyck werde verhoont. Dnuo. 1567.
C. Marcu. xiii. fol. xiii. cu. xiiii. v. Son



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