

**MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS AND
HER MARRIAGE WITH BOTHWELL.
SEVEN LETTERS TO "THE TABLET,"
REVISED, WITH A PREFACE &
NOTES AND A SUPPLEMENT**

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Mary Queen of Scots and Her Marriage with Bothwell. Seven Letters to "The Tablet," Revised, with a Preface & Notes and a Supplement by Colin Lindsay

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COLIN LINDSAY

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SEVEN LETTERS TO "THE TABLET,"

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AND A SUPPLEMENT.

BY

THE HON. COLIN LINDSAY.

Magna est veritas et praevalabit.

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1884

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PREFACE.

THE Rev. Father Stevenson has sent me, I am most happy to say, the following most ample retraction of the allegations made in the Preface to his late work, *The History of Mary Stewart*, by Claude Nau, and which has been published in *The Month* for November, 1883, p. 448:—

“MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS AND HER MARRIAGE WITH BOTHWELL.

“In my Preface to *The History of Mary Stewart*, by Claude Nau, occur two passages which I regret that I have written, and which I now desire to retract. I have there said that ‘Mary seems to have thought that the necessities of her condition compelled her to accept the terms offered by her council, while she knew that any so-called marriage with Bothwell would be illegal, invalid, and immoral’ (p. clv.), and in a note I added, ‘I am unable to explain, still less to vindicate, all the circumstances connected with Mary’s union with Bothwell, whom she knew to be a married man when she took him for her husband.’

“This assertion of mine has been examined, with great learning and acuteness, by the Hon. Colin Lindsay, in seven letters addressed to the *Tablet*, and which have just appeared in a separate pamphlet. I admit, willingly and gladly, that Mr. Lindsay has in these letters adduced facts and arguments which compel me to retract the statement

“ which I had previously made. This public recognition of my error is due to Mr. Lindsay, together with my thanks for the courtesy everywhere conspicuous in his letters.

“ JOSEPH STEVENSON.”

I am sure that all Catholics in Europe and in the Far West, but especially those in Scotland, as well as every good woman in Christendom, will from their hearts rejoice that one of the most formidable opponents of Queen Mary, after a long and careful reconsideration of her whole case, has now admitted to the full the groundlessness of all the charges that have been alleged against her moral character, and especially in regard to her relationship with the infamous Bothwell. I say *formidable*, (1) because Father Stevenson had been employed by the British Government to seek out and copy such documents as he might find in the secret archives of the Vatican, referring primarily to the period of King Henry VIII.; (2) because, during his investigations at Rome, he discovered “several documents of great value” concerning Queen Mary, of which he has given translations, now published for the first time in his late valuable work; and (3) because he has on his own account brought to light from among the Cottonian MSS. various papers of transcendent interest, chief among which is the manuscript of Claude Nau, which he after great labour (for hitherto it had been regarded as utterly unintelligible) deciphered, and rendered into our language. I mention these facts to show that Father Stevenson is an antiquarian of profound erudition, and on this account a most formidable foe to any cause against which he might have cogent reasons for opposition.

Father Stevenson is, too, a just and charitable man,—a

Catholic, a Priest, and a Scotchman,—who would most unwillingly assert any evil against the Queen, except from the most conscientious motives, and from an overwhelming conviction of the credibility of the evidence he believed he had found in the records and traditions connected with Scotland, and which he regarded as conclusive in their testimony against her Majesty. I feel certain that when he wrote the words he has now retracted, he did so with great pain and with evident reluctance. Indeed, under the belief of the Queen's misconduct, he endeavoured to show that there were extenuating circumstances, which, though they could not exempt her from the verdict of "guilty," nor even from that of "non-proven," yet would excite in the breasts of an indulgent public a unanimous commiseration for her, on the ground that her supposed crime was the result of the terrible outrage said to have been inflicted upon her (but which has never been conclusively proved to have been the case) by Bothwell while at Dunbar Castle.

But now Father Stevenson has seen his way to retract, to the full, every word he has written against the moral character of the Queen. He says, in regard to the passages he quotes from his Preface to *The History of Mary Stewart*, by Claude Nau, that he "regrets that he had written" them; and that "he admits, willingly and gladly," that in the Letters lately published in *The Tablet* on this subject, there have been "adduced facts and arguments which *compel* (the italics are mine) him to retract the statement which he had previously made." This retraction, then, thank God, is thorough and complete, and Queen Mary is now proved by the strongest evidence, and by testimony which none of her bitterest enemies can gainsay, to have been through

her whole life a good and virtuous woman, whose purity of conduct had never been blemished by any act and deed of her own.

Queen Mary has had in late years many friends who strove to vindicate her character; the most conspicuous of them are, in France, M. Petit, whose valuable work has been translated into English by M. de Flandre; in Scotland, Miss Strickland, whose charming life of our Queen has won the hearts of many to her cause; then followed the volumes of Mr. Hosack, who, as an acute lawyer, scattered to the winds all the foul charges, without exception, against her Majesty; and about the same time, in America, there appeared an excellent treatise by Col. Maline (very lately brought into this country), who has criticised with admirable success the allegations of Mr. Froude, proving at the same time the innocence of the Queen. These four great writers had, up to their time, carried and destroyed every stronghold of the enemy against the illustrious victim of the "Reformation" era.

But after these valuable works had been published, it fell to the lot of Dr. Stuart, of the General Register House in Edinburgh, and Secretary of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, to discover the long-lost Dispensation, which had been granted by the Primate of Scotland and Legate of the Holy See, in favour of the marriage between Bothwell and his first wife, Lady Jean Gordon. It had been supposed that no such dispensation had ever been granted, and upon this ground it was believed that this marriage had been nullified, the parties being within the prohibited degrees of consanguinity. Queen Mary's relationship with Bothwell was by this discovery completely changed; for if the Dis-

pensation was a genuine one, and had been acted upon, it followed that Bothwell and Jean Gordon having been both legally and validly married (in which case their marriage was indissoluble), her marriage with this man was *ab initio* null and void. The whole aspect of the case was entirely altered, and all the charges against the morality of the Queen were re-opened.

Dr. Stuart, who had been aforetime, as I had been informed, an ardent admirer of this Queen, arrived at the reluctant conclusion that she had married Bothwell, knowing at the time that he was validly married to his first wife, then still living. For she herself had promoted this alliance; she had presided over the festivities, and could not have been ignorant, as was alleged, that a Dispensation had been asked for and obtained. Such, apparently, was the position of the Queen on this discovery. Mr. Hosack, though evidently puzzled, did not desert her cause. He stood nobly at the breach, and raised the question—fatal, I think, to her enemies—that the Dispensation, if it had been really obtained, had effectually been concealed from the Queen, and from the Tribunal of the Primate and Legate, who declared that no Dispensation had been obtained before the marriage of Bothwell and Jean Gordon took place. The Queen's character was saved, notwithstanding her marriage with Bothwell was rendered illegal and invalid.

But the question remained to be considered, viz., had the Dispensation any operative effect? After a careful examination of this Dispensation and of all the circumstances surrounding it, it was found (1) that its terms had not been complied with; (2) that it had been surreptitiously obtained; and (3) that it had never been acted upon, and consequently