

Dissertation on the Marriage of Queen Mary with the Earl of Bothwell.

IN the defence of the unfortunate Mary, the most arduous point to be surmounted is her marriage with the Earl of Bothwell. This I shall now briefly consider.

The leading steps in it, to wit, the trial of Bothwell, his acquittal ratified in Parliament, and the bond of the nobles, addressing the Queen to be joined in marriage with him; all devised, matured, and perfected by the most artful and flagitious contrivance of Murray and his associates, have been fully exposed to view. I here proceed to show the subsequent steps taken by Bothwell for compelling the Queen into that fatal marriage.

In treating this affair, the later writers, Dr Stuart and Mr Whitaker, have penetrated the obscure cloud, and have furnished us with that clue that leads to a clear and thorough detection of facts so daringly flagitious, as scarce to be paralleled in history. These we now proceed to lay open, together with the grounds and evidence on which they rest.

The bond of the nobles was signed on the 19th, or early on the morning of the 20th of April.

This affair of the bond, the Queen declares, was kept secret from her until exhibited by Bothwell on the following occasion.

Bothwell having obtained the bond of the nobles, as has been before particularly set forth, without the Queen's knowledge, (we shall

shall take the recital in the words of the Queen herself), ' he began afar off to discover his intention to us, and to assay if by humble sute he might purchas our good will ; but, finding our answer nothing corresponding to his desire, he resolved quickly to prosecute his deliberation : He suffered not the matter to fall asleep ; but, within four days after, finding opportunity, he reason we were passit secretly towards Stirling, to visit the Prince our son, in our returning he awaited us be the way, accompanied with a great force *, and led us with all diligence to Dunbar †.'

Let us stop a little to consider.—The Queen's previous knowledge of the bond, and her acquiescence in the seizure of her person by Bothwell, are two facts that apparently seem to have the strongest opposition to each other. Had the Queen acted in concert with Bothwell, in obtaining the bond from the nobles, nothing remained, but, under the sanction of their unanimous address, to have directly proceeded to the marriage. Instead of which, can we suppose her so weak as to reject that address, and rather choose that Bothwell should attempt to seize and carry her off by violence? an attempt which many accidents might frustrate, and which, at all events, could not fail to render him, or both of them, odious to the whole nation. Common sense, then, as well as candour, must induce us to believe that the scheme of seizing the Queen was solely the contrivance of Bothwell and of his associates, who prompted him to it on her rejecting his suit.

That we may omit nothing that serves to throw light on this affair, although Sir James Melvill stands confessed the partizan of Murray and his associates against the Queen ; yet, as being on the spot, let us take his account of the Queen's seizure:

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* A thousand horsemen in arms.—*Robertson*, vol. 1. p. 417.

† The Queen's instruction to the Bishop of Dumblane, her minister in France, to be communicated to the King and Queen.—*Keith*, p. 389.

' Shortly after her Majesty went to Stirling, and in her returning, between Linlithgow and Edinburgh, the Earl of Bothwell rencountered her with a great company, and took her Majesty's horse by the bridle. His men took the Earl of Huntly, the Secretary Lethington, and me, and carried us captives to Dunbar : All the rest were permitted to go free. There the Earl of Bothwell boasted he would marry the Queen, who would, or would not, yea, *whether she would herself or not*. Captain Blackater, who had taken me, alledged that it was with the Queen's own consent.' Thus Melvill. It was also reported, that the Queen made no resistance. The Queen being thus seized and carried to Dunbar Castle, of which Bothwell had the command, Huntly, Lethington, and the other attendants on the Queen, were dismissed the next morning. As to Blackater's saying that this seizure was with the Queen's consent, it is most likely that Bothwell would so give out; otherwise how could he think to prevail with his men to join him in so daring and treasonable an attempt? With regard to the Queen's making resistance or clamour, Melvill says not a word. In her situation, it is hard to say how she must have been affected. The suddenness of so audacious an attack from one who had, on every other occasion, shown such uniform loyal attachment to her, must have so confounded her, as to have prevented any resistance against such force ; a resistance which, after all, must have been ineffectual, and probably attended with bloodshed. On the other hand, had the enterprize been concerted previously, and with her consent, it is probable, that, to save appearance, she would have affected a great show of resistance. Without, however, resting this matter altogether upon the Queen's own testimony, genuine and unaffected as it appears to be, we shall proceed to more unexceptionable evidence, no less than the testimonies of the rebel associates against her, at the time when the affair was recent, and while apologizing for their conduct in imprisoning her in Lochleven Castle, where they compelled her to resign

resign the government in their own favour. 'Bothwell,' say they, 'having got into credit with the Queen, enterprised to *ravish her person*, and kept her a prisoner at Dunbar until he accomplished a sudden marriage with her.' Several of our writers, from an overstrained delicacy, construe this as applicable only to Bothwell's seizure of the Queen, and carrying her by force to Dunbar Castle. The fact, however, is most certain, and literally true, that having her in his power in that Castle, he actually committed a rape on her person. The evidence of this is most explicit and clear. In the above answer * given by the rebel associates to Sir Nicolas Throgmorton, the envoy from Queen Elizabeth, sent down to the rebels to inquire into the facts, and their reasons for imprisoning the Queen, they, in the following most remarkable words, declare, 'How shamefully the Queen was led captive by Bothwell, and by force, fear, and (as by many conjectures may well be suspected) by other extraordinary and more unlawful means compelled to become his bed-fellow.'

The testimony of Sir James Melvill to the same most atrocious act puts it beyond all doubt. 'The Queen,' says he, 'could not but marry him, (Bothwell) seeing he had ravished her, and lain with her against her will †.'

What those extraordinary unlawful means, above alluded to, were, we are left to conjecture ‡.

We shall now see how far the account which the Queen gives of Bothwell's

* 11th July 1567; Keith, p. 418.

† Melvill; Glasgow edit. p. 156.

‡ Dr Stuart thinks it might have been by medicine, or what are called *love powders*. But that is not agreeable to Sir James Melvill, or the above words of the rebel answer to Throgmorton. Mr Whitaker, with more probability, conjectures it to have been a strong opiate, or stupifying dose.

Bothwell's procedure in the Castle of Dunbar agrees with the preceding testimonies.

'Being thair, (at Dunbar) we reprochit him,' says the Queen, 'with the favour we had always schawin him, his ingratitude, with all uthir remonstrances which might serve to redd us out of his handis; albeit we fand his doings rude, yet were his anser and words bot gentill, that he wald honour and serve us. He askit pardon of the bauldness he had tane, to convoy us to ane of our awin housis, whareinto he was driven be force, as well as constrained be love, the vehemencie of which had maid him set apart the reverence which naturally, as our subject, he bore to us, as also for safety of his awn life. He began to make discourse to us of his haille lyfe; the malice of his enemies; that he could find no security without he were assurit of our favour without alteration, and uthir assurance thairof, he could not lippin (trust) in, without it would pleis us to do him that honour, to tak him to husband; protesting always, that he wald seik na uthir sovereignty, but as of before, to serve and obey us all the days of our lyfe. When he saw us like to reject all his sute and offeris, in the end he shewed us how far he had procedit with our haille nobilitie and principallis of our estates, and what they had promised him under thair hands. Giff we had cause then to be astonished, we remit us to the judgement of the King and Queen, and other friends. Seeing ourself in his puissance, sequestrate from the cumpany of all our servants, and others of whom we might ask council; yea, seeing them upon whose council and fidelitie we before depended, whose force ought and maun maintain our authoritie, without whom we are nathing, (for what is a prince without a peopill), before hand already yieldit to his appetite, and we left alane, as it were a prey to him, never a man in Scotland *'

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* Murray, Morton, and their partisans, had the administration of government in their

'making any mint to procure our deliverance, it appearing by thair
'silence and thair hand writes that he had won thame all.' In this
helpless situation the Queen seems quite confounded, and astonished
to find herself entirely under the power of a daring, desperate man.
She finds it necessary to soften her tone. 'After he had by this
'means,' says she, 'brought us agaitward (seemingly favourable) to
'his intent, he partlie extorted, and partlie obtained our promise to
'take him to our husband.' She insists for a delay until she should
communicate the same to her friends, the King and Queen of
France. He penetrated her design. 'Fearing evir some alteration,
'he wald not be satisfied with the just reasons for a delay; but as,
'by a bravade in the beginning, he had win the first point, so ceased
'he not till be persuasion and importune sute, *accompanied with*
'*force*, he has driven us to end the work, as he thought might best
'serve his turn.'

To this miserable situation had the severe fate of the unfortunate
Mary now reduced her. One of the most bitter circumstances in
her case, too, was, that, in her justification of the fatal marriage
which degraded her in the eye of the world, and to which she was
compelled by the most flagitious act of violence committed on her
person, she was restrained by modesty from speaking out the whole
truth. In her detail, when approaching to the shocking catastrophe,
we evidently see the struggle between the earnest desire of a modest
woman to vindicate herself from a most injurious suspicion, and fe-
male delicacy, which restrains her from speaking out the whole cir-
cumstances.

their hands; and as, in procuring the bond of the nobles, they had insinuated the
Queen's knowledge of it; so they now spread the report of her being carried to Dun-
bar with her own consent, which prevented any attempt to rescue her by her loyal
subjects. The rebels, in their proclamation 12th June 1567, when they rose in arms
against the Queen, on pretence of rescuing her from Bothwell, acknowledged to the
public, that, after Bothwell's seizing her, 'she was *left destitute of all counsaile and ser-*
'*vants*.'—And. vol. 1. p. 131.

circumstances. She attempts to conceal that truth which unwillingly
breaks out from her; and, with the same breath, she wishes to
throw a veil over it.

Thus we apprehend, that nothing can be more clear and explicit
than the evidence of the seizure and rape committed on the person
of the Queen, proved by the united testimonies of the associated
conspirators themselves with Bothwell against her.

As they must have been well informed as to every circumstance
relating to the horrid scene acted by their confederate Bothwell in
the Castle of Dunbar; accordingly the sonnets, or scandalous love
verses fabricated by them in the name of the Queen, let us into the
following particulars that happened there:

That Bothwell, after committing the rape, stung with remorse on
witnessing the frantic distress, grief, and lamentation of the Queen,
and the bitter reproaches levelled against himself, made an attempt
on his own life, and gave himself a desperate wound with his sword
in her presence, which was followed by a great effusion of blood*.
This, in express terms, is mentioned in the sonnets. We shall re-
cite from the beginning of the ninth stanza.

Pour lui aussi j'ay jetté mainte larme
Premier qu'il fut de ce corps possesseur,
Duquel alors il n'avoit pas le coeur.
Puis il me donnoit un autre dur alarme
Quant il versa de song sang, mainte dragme
D'ont de grief me vint laisser douleur,
Qui m'en pensa oster la vie †.

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* We owe the discovery of this incident to the penetration of Mr Whitaker.

† For him I poured out many tears,
First when he made himself possessor of this body,

What a scene of horror is here displayed, and what agony of distress must the unfortunate Mary have suffered, when awakened to the full sense of her dreadful situation! What conflict of passions must have taken place within her breast*! In the frenzy of rage which first must have possessed her, she naturally, amidst the most bitter reproaches, pours threats of vengeance upon the head of the ravisher. As rage subsides, settled grief succeeds, and she dissolves into a flood of tears.

Let the most severe of her sex now judge and say, what course, in the irretrievable situation of her affairs, was left for her to have followed? Her first and most urgent concern was to regain her liberty, to free herself from the hands of the infamous ravisher. That probably she attained by promising to be directed by the advice of her council. There Bothwell had nothing to fear: There the influence of his associates Murray and Morton, he was well assured, would be strained, to the utmost exertion, in urging on the marriage with the Queen, as the consummation of their whole preconcerted plan. To leave nothing to conjecture, we shall take the authorities of two well informed writers then on the spot, Bishop Leslie and Sir James Melvill. The Bishop, then in council, thus says, in his vindication of the Queen: ‘Some who are now the vehement reprovers and blamers of the marriage, were then the principal inventors, persuaders, and compassers of the same. They procured a great part of the nobility to solicit the Queen to couple herself

Of which he then had not the heart.

*After, he did give me an uther hard alarm,
When he sshed his blude an great quantitie,
Throu sorrow of which came to me that dolour
That almaiſt carried away my life.*

* Imo in corde pudor, mixtoque insania luxu
—— Et conficia virtus.

‘herself in marriage with the said Earl*.’ Let us now see how this tallies with Sir James Melvill’s account of this matter, which is as follows: ‘Afterwards the court came to Edinburgh, and there a number of noblemen were drawn together in a chamber within the palace, where they all subscribed a paper, declaring that they judged it was much for the Queen’s interest to marry Bothwell, he having many friends in Lothian and upon the borders, which would cause good order to be kept †.’

Melvill adds the stronger reason, mentioned before, and which was then well known, viz. ‘That the Queen could not but marry him, seeing he had ravished her, and lain with her against her will ‡.’

Thus was this unfortunate Princess, by a train of most artful designs and contrivances, drawn into the net fabricated for her destruction by a set of men, if they can be called by that name, the most daring and unprincipled that ever disgraced the annals of any age or country, and from whom it was next to impossible that she, or the most innocent of her sex, could have escaped. The only resource now left for her was that measure for which her conduct has been most reproached, to marry her infamous ravisher. ‘After remaining eight days || under the power of a daring profligate,’ says Lord Hailes, ‘few foreign Princes would have solicited her hand §.’

The reluctance with which Mary submitted to this fatal marriage is

* Leslie’s Defence.—Anderson, vol. 2. p. 26. † We are not to confound this paper with the bond of the nobles signed at Bothwell’s entertainment 19th April.

‡ Melvill; Glasgow edit. p. 156. || Viz. from 24th April to 3d of May; And. Good, vol. 2. p. 250. § Lord Hailes’s Remarks, p. 204.

is manifested by her behaviour from that period until her final separation from her detested spouse. That interval was a short one, a month only*. The dignified mind of Mary, conscious of her degradation by that marriage into which her hard fate had impelled her, sunk under her distress; every moment was embittered by reflection; and the brutal behaviour of Bothwell drove her almost to despair. Melvill, then attending at court, says, that Bothwell used her with such reproachful language, that she threatened to put an end to her life. 'He was so beastly,' says Melvill, 'that he suffered her not to pass a day without shedding tears. His own company believed that the Queen would fain have been quit of him, but thought shame to be the doer thereof directly herself †.'

Thus stand proved, in the clearest manner, by the explicit testimony of the conspirators themselves, the forcible seizure of the Queen by Bothwell; his carrying her off to the Castle of Dunbar; the brutal rape committed on her person there *by force*, and other *extraordinary means*, in consequence of which, no other resource appearing, she was drawn and impelled into the fatal marriage, the long wished for event by the conspirators, and the object of all their dark and deep laid plots. This event completed the designs that were formed for her destruction, as it was the immediate cause of all
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The great Theorist of Moral Sentiments, on this head, thus expresses himself: 'The violation of chastity in the fair sex is a virtue of which we are excessively jealous. Breach of chastity dishonours irretrievably; no circumstance, no sollicitation can excuse it; no repentance atone for it. We are so nice, that even a rape dishonours; and the ignorance of the mind cannot, in our imagination, wash out the stain of the body.'—*Smith's Moral Sent.* 8vo edit. vol. 2. part 7. § 4.

* The marriage was on the 15th of May, and the Queen's final parting with Bothwell at Carberry-hill was on the 15th of June following.—*Anderson.—Good.* vol. 2. p. 250. *Journal.* † *Melvill,* p. 153. 160. 161.

the misery and misfortunes to which the future days of Mary were now reserved:

*Ille dies, primus leti, primusque malorum
Causa fuit.*

As, by giving way to her unhappy situation, and with reluctance; she had yielded to the marriage, every moment, during the short space of its continuance, she passed, as we have seen, in bitter reflection, tears, and despair.