

FROM THE AMERICAN MONTHLY MAGAZINE.
 PASSAGES FROM THE LIFE OF MARY STEWART.
 BOTHWELL.

THE summer sun was pouring down a flood of lustre over wood and moorland, tangled glen, and heathery fells, with the broad and blue expanse of the German Ocean sparkling in ten thousand ripples, far away in the distance. But the radiance of high noon fell not upon the forest and the plain in their solitary loveliness, but on the marshalled multitudes of two vast hosts, arrayed in all the pomp and circumstances of antique warfare; glittering with helm and accoutrements, harquebuss and pike, and waving with a thousand banners, of every brilliant hue and proud device. On a gentle eminence, the very eminence on which a few short years before, the English Somerset had posted his gallant forces, lay the army of the Queen—its long front bristling with row upon row of the formidable Scottish spear—its wings protected by chosen corps of cavalry, the firm and true adherents of the house of Stuart, or the daring, though licentious, vassals of the Duke of Orkney—and the royal banner, with its rich embroidery, floating in proud supremacy. Yet, gay and glorious as it showed upon its ground of vantage, and gallantly as it might have contested that field against even superior numbers, that array was but in name an army. Thousands were there; who, though they had flocked, with bow and banner, to the call of their sovereign, felt not distaste alone, but actual disgust, to the services on which they were about to be employed; and not a few were among them, who knew too well how little was the probability, that they, a raw, tumultuous force, led on by men of gallantry indeed, but not of that well proved experience, which, to a leader, is more than the truncheon of his command, should come off with victory, or even without defeat, from an encounter with veteran troops, retainers of the most warlike lords in Scotland, marshalled by soldiers, with whose fame the air in every European kingdom was already rife—soldiers such as Lyndesay of the Byres, Kirkaldy of the Grange, Murray of Tollibardin, and a hundred others of reputation, if second, second to none but these. Nor was this all. Voices were not wanting, even in the army of the Queen, to exclaim, that, if the Royal Banner were displayed, its purity was sullied by the presence of a murderer, and that success could never be hoped for, so long as Bothwell rode by the right hand of Mary. One exception there was, however, to this general feeling of dissatisfaction, if not of despair. A band of determined men, whose scar-seamed visages, and stern demeanor, no less than the splendid accuracy of their equipments, and the admirable discipline with which they maintained their post, far in advance of the main body, and exposed to inevitable destruction on the advance of the confederated forces, should they be suffered, as it appeared too probable that they would, to remain unsupported against such desperate odds. But these were men to whom the most deadly conflict was but a game of chance; injured from their youth upwards, to deeds of blood and danger; lawless and licentious in time of peace, even as they were cruel, brave, and fearless, in the fight; the picked retainers, the desperate confederates, of the Duke of Orkney. Dark glances of contempt, if not of hatred, were shot ever and anon, from beneath the scowling brows of these wild desperadoes, towards the wavering ranks of the main army, as unrestrained by the exhortations or menaces of their officers—unmoved by the eloquent beauty of Mary herself, who rode among the trembling ranks, praying them, as they loved their country, as they valued honor, as they would not see their wives, their mothers, and their daughters, delivered to the malice of unrelenting foemen—to strike one blow for Scotland's crown—to give once—once only—their voices to the exulting clamor, "God and the Queen,"—troop after troop broke away from the rear, and scattering themselves, singly, or in parties of two or three, over the open country, sought for that safety in mean and dastard flight, which they should have asked from their own bold hearts, and strong right hands.

It was at this moment, that the heads of the confederated columns were seen advancing, in dark and dense masses, at three different points, against the front, which was still preserved in Mary's army, by the strenuous exertions of the leaders rather than by any soldiery feelings on the part of the common herd. So nearly had they advanced to the royal lines, that the stern and solemn countenances of the leaders, as they rode in complete steel, but with their vizors raised, each at the head of his own troops, were visible, feature for feature. The matches of the harquebusses might be clearly distinguished, blown already into a bright flame, while the pieces themselves were evidently grasped by ready and impatient hands, and the long spears of the van-guard were already lowered,—but not a movement of eagerness,—not a murmur or a shout,—was heard throughout the thousands, whose approach was ushered to the ears alone by the incessant trampling sound, borne steadily onward, like the flow of some great river, occasionally broken by the shrill neighing of a charger, or the jingling clash of armor.

The Borderers of Bothwell, on the contrary, as they noted the advance, raised, from time to time, the wild and fearful yells, with which it was their custom to engage, brandishing their long lances, and giving the spur to their horses, till they sprang and bolted like hunted deer; and it required all the influence of their hereditary chiefs, to restrain these savage moostroopers from rushing headlong, with their handful of men, against the unbroken line of the confederate pikes, which swept onward, sullen and steady as the tide, when it comes in six feet abreast. The effect of such a movement would have been at once, to annihilate the only chance of safety, which remained to themselves or to their wretched mistress. It was too evident, that for a wavering, coward multitude, like that arrayed beneath the banner of the Queen, there could be no hope in fight against men such as those, who were marching, in determined resolution up that gentle eminence: and all that now remained was an attempt at negotiation.

It was at this moment, when the advanced guards of the two armies were scarcely ten spears' length asunder, when the determination or wavering of every individual might be read by the opposite party in his features, as clearly as in the pages of a book, that a single trumpet from the centre of the Queen's army, broke the silence with a wild and prolonged flourish. It was no note of war, however, that issued from its brazen mouth,—no martial appeal to the spirits and courage of either host—but the prelude to a pacific parley;—and straightway, the banners throughout the host were lowered, and a white flag was waved aloft in place of Scotland's blazonry. The ranks were slowly opened, and from their centre, with trampet, and pursuivant, and king-at-arms, rode forth Le Croc, the French Ambassador. This movement, as it seemed, was wholly unexpected by the confederate Lords; at least the ranks continued their deliberate advance, unchecked by the symbols of peace that glittered above the weapons of the rival host—till suddenly a foaming horse and panting rider furiously galloped from the rear. A single word was uttered in a low, impressive whisper: it passed from mouth to mouth like an electric spark—and, as though it were but a single man, that mighty column halted on the instant. There was no confusion in the manœuvre—no hurry, no apparent effort—the long line of lances, so beautifully regular in their advance, sank as regularly to their rest; and, but for the fluttering of their plumage in the summer air, those beings, strangely composed of every vehement and stirring passion, might have passed for images of molten steel. But a few seconds had elapsed, and the flourish of the peaceful trumpets was yet ringing in the ears of all, when a dozen horsemen proceeded slowly forward, to meet the royal cavalcade.

It was a singular and most impressive spectacle, that meeting. It was, as it were, the fearful pause between life and death—the moment of breathless silence, that precedes the first crash of the thunder storm. Every eye was riveted, in either army, on those two groups, every heart beat thick, and every ear tingled with excitement. And even independent of the appalling interest of the crisis, there was much to mark, much to admire, in the handful that had come together, to speak the doom of thousands, to decide whether hundreds, and tens of hundreds, of those living creatures, who stood around them now, so glorious in the pride, the beauty, and the strength of manhood, should, ere the sun might sink, be as the clouds of the valley; to decree, with their ephemeral breath, whether the soft west wind that wafted now the perfumes of a thousand hills to their invigorated senses, should, ere the morrow, be tainted, like the vapor from some foul charnel-house. On the one side, on his light and graceful Arab, champing its gilded bits, and shaking its velvet housings, sat the gay and gallant Frenchman, his long dark locks uncovered, and his fair proportions displayed to the best advantage, in his rich garb of peace. No weapon did he bear—not even the rapier, without which no gentleman of that period ever went abroad—but which, the more fully to manifest the candor and sincerity of his intentions, a handsome page held by his master's stirrup. Behind him, with pale visages, and anxious mien, Marchmont, and Bute, and Islay, and the Lion King, awaited the result of this, their last resource. On the other hand—distinguished from their followers only by the beauty of their powerful chargers, and their own knightly bearing,—halted the rebel lords. Plain, almost to meanness, in his attire, with his armor stained and rusty, and his embroidered baldric frayed and rent, Lord Lyndesay of the Byres, was foremost of the group. Morton was there, and Murray, all steel, from crest to spur; and the best warrior, where all were good, the noblest spirit, the most upright man, Kirkaldy of the Grange.

"Nobles and Knights of Scotland!"—said the proud envoy, in a tone so calm and yet so clear that every accent could not be noted far and wide—"I come to you—a gentleman of France—the servant of a mighty monarch, unbought by friendship, and unprejudiced by favor. For myself or for my royal master it recks us little whether or no ye choose to turn those swords, which should be the bulwarks of your country, against her vitals. Yet should it not be said that Scottish men, like ill trained dogs of chase, prefer to turn their fangs against each other, than to chase a nobler quarry. Ye are in arms against your Queen—nay, interrupt me not, my lords—against your Queen, I say! Or, as perchance ye word it, against her counsellors—"That ye complain of grievances, I know, and, for aught I know, justly complain!—Yet pause, brave gentlemen, pause and reflect which is the greater grievance; a country torn with civil factions, internal war with all its dread accompaniments of massacre and conflagration; or those ills which now have stung you to exchange your loyalty for rebel arms. Behold ye that in such a cause as this it matters not who wins; to vanquish countrymen and brothers is but a worse and deadlier evil than defeat by foreign foemen. Think ye, this fatal field of Pinkie,—whereon ye are arrayed,—had not already drunk enough of Scottish blood, that ye would deluge it again; or that its name is not yet terrible enough to Scottish ears, that ye would now bestow a deeper blazonry of sin and shame!—Brave warriors, noble gentlemen, forbear! Let the sword of civil discord, I beseech ye, enter its scabbard, for once, bloodless; let amicable parley gain the terms, which bloodshed never purchased!—Strive ye for your country's glory!—Lo, it calls on you to pause!—For your own peculiar fame?—It bids ye halt while there is yet the time, lest neither birth, nor rank, nor valor, nor high deeds, nor naughty virtues preserve ye from the blot which lies even yet, though ages have elapsed, upon the false Menteith, and ail who, following his example, have warred against their country. Is it terms, fair terms, for which ye crowd in arms around you awful banner?"—pointing to the colours of the rebel lords, emblazoned with the murdered corpse of Darnley and his orphan infant praying for judgment and revenge,—“Lo! terms are here! Peace, then, my lords, give peace then, my lords, give peace to Scotland and eternal credit

to yourselves. Her majesty bears not the wonted temper, the stern resentment of offended kings; even now she offers peace and amity, pardon for all offences, aye, and the hand of friendship to all who will at once retire from this sacrilegious field. Subjects, your queen commands you, nobles and knights, a lady, the fairest lady of her sex, appeals to your chivalry and honor. Hear! and be forgiven!"

"Forgiven!" shouted Glencairn in tones of deep feeling, and yet deeper scorn.—“Forgiven! we come not here to ask for pardon—but for vengeance!—and vengeance will we have! The blood of Darnley craves for punishment upon his murderers. We are come to punish—not to sue for pardon, not to return in peace, until our end is gained, and Scotland's slaughtered king avenged!"

"Fair Sir," cried Morton, calmer, and for that very reason, more to be dreaded, than his impetuous comrades—"Fair Sir!—we rear no banner, we lift no blade against her grace of Scotland!—Against her husband's murderer we have marched, nor will we turn a face, or draw a bridle, till that murderer lies in his blood, or flies for ever from the land he has polluted by his unnatural homicide! Thou hast thine answer, Sir—yet thus much for our ancient friendship, and to testify our high esteem for the noble monarch whom thou services here represent—here will we pass an hour; that passed—our word is—Forward—forward—and may the God of Battles judge between us!—Brothers in arms, and leaders of our host, say, have I spoken fairly?"

"Fairly hast thou spoken, noble Morton, and as thou hast spoken, we will it so to be. An hour we pause, and then forward!"—The voices of the barons, as they replied, gave no signs of hesitation, there was no faltering in their tones, no wavering in their fixed and steady glances. At once the gallant mediator saw that he had failed in his appeal, and that all further words were needless. Slowly and disconsolately he bent his way back to the royal armament, where the miserable Mary awaited in an agony of shame and anguish, the doom, for such in truth it was, of her rebellious subjects.

On the summit of a little knoll she sat, girt by the few dauntless spirits who clung to the last to Mary's cause, and who were ready at her least word to perish, if by perishing they might preserve her! Lovely as she had showed in the gay halls of Holyrood, her brow beaming with rapture, innocence, majesty, far lovelier was she now in pale and hopeless sorrow. In the vain hope of inspiring ardor to her dispirited and coward forces, she had girt her slender form in glittering steel. A light polished baginet reflected the bright sunshine over her auburn tresses, and a cuirass of inlaid and jewelled metal flashed on her bosom. Not a warrior in either host sat firmer or more gracefully upon his destrier, than Mary upon Rosabelle; a demipique of steel and loaded petronels, with the butts of which her fingers played in thoughtless nervousness, had replaced the rich housings of that favourite jennet; but though arrayed in all the pride and pomp of war, there was neither pride nor pomp in the expression of that pallid cheek and quivering lip.

"Noble Le Croc," she cried, breathless with eagerness as he approached her presence—"what tidings from our misguided subjects, will they depart in peace? Speak out—speak fully, this is no time for well turned sentences, or courteous etiquette, say is it peace or war?"

With deep feeling painted on his dark lineaments, the Frenchman answered: "War, your grace, war to the knife, or peace on terms such as I dare not name to you."

"Then be it war!"—cried she, the eloquent blood mantling to her cheeks in glorious indignation, her eyes flashing, and her bosom heaving with emotion—"then be it war! we have stooped low enough in suing thus for peace from those whom we are born to govern, and we will stoop no longer—Better to die—to fall as our gallant father fell, leading his faithful countrymen, devoted subjects, against enemies not half so fierce as these, who should be brothers. Sound trumpets, advance our guards—Seyton—Fleming—Huntley to your leadings, and advance—Ourselves will see the tourney." "Your Grace forgets," replied the experienced leader to whom she first addressed herself—"Your Grace forgets, that not one dastard of this fair army, as it shows upon this ground of vantage, will advance one lance's length against the foe. Some scores there are, in truth, followers oft tried and ever faithful of mine own, and if I mistake not, of the Earl of Orkney, who will fight while ashen shaft and steel point hold together—but 'twere but butchery to lead the ragged vassals upon certain death, for what are scores to thousands such as stand thirsting for the battle yonder, thousands led on too by the first martialists of Europe? Nevertheless, say but the word and it is done, Seyton hath ever lived for Stewart, it rests but now to die." He paused, but in an instant taking his cue from Mary's extended nostril and still flashing eye, he shouted in a voice of thunder—"Mount, mount and make ready,—A Seyton, a Seyton for the Stewart." Already had he dashed the rowels into his steed and another instant would have precipitated his little band upon the inevitable destruction that awaited them in the crowded ranks, which, at the well known sound of that wild slogan, that brought their lances to the charge, and waited but a word to bear down all opposition.

Happily so miserable a condemnation was warded off—the Earl of Orkney, who had stood silent and thunder-stricken by the stirrup of his lovely bride, sprang forward, and grasping with impetuous vehemence the bridle-rein of Seyton—

"Not so!" he hissed through his teeth—"Not so! brave baron, this is my quarrel now, mine only, and dost think that I will veil my crest to mortal man, or that there lives the knight whom Bothwell dares not meet with. Against me only have these haughty rebels drawn their weapons, and against me only shall they wield them. What ho there, heralds! Take pursuivant and trumpet, and bear my gauntlet, the Earl of Orkney's gauntlet, to yonder misprovid catfish—say that Bothwell