

The Life and Reign
of
Queen Elizabeth.

Mary E. Willard.

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Elizabeth, the second Queen Regnant of England, born at Greenwich palace, September seventh, fifteen hundred and thirty-three, was a daughter of King Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn; she was three years old when her mother met her shameful death, and Elizabeth was branded with illegitimacy, and for some time suffered neglect.

She owed the thanks for the thoughtful judicious training received in childhood, to her nurse, Lady Brian, a relative of Queen Anne Boleyn.

The first public exercise which Elizabeth attended was the Christening of her step brother, Edward, when she was four years old. Her father allowed her to keep company with Edward, and the two shared one another's studies and became very affectionate, Edward always calling Elizabeth his sweetest sister.

When Elizabeth was but sixteen years old she admired Admiral Seymore, and could he have obtained permission of the council they would probably have been married. When in fifteen hundred and forty-nine he was arrested for high treason Elizabeth as well as her servants were arrested and subjected to a severe examination by the council.

It was a severe crisis in the life of the Princess, with no maternal friend to advise her, and when she was released she labored faithfully to efface from the minds of the people the memory of her indiscretion; nor

was her labor in vain for by her assumption of a grave and sedate demeanor, her plain dress, and the special attention which she paid to theology, she established a reputation for piety and learning, and when seventeen years old, she was pointed out as a model for all young ladies at court. She was also anxious to be looked upon as the leader of the Reformed party in England, even as her sister Mary was looked upon as the leader of the Catholic party.

During the time of the last sickness of King Edward, Elizabeth and Mary were both away from him, and though Elizabeth attempted to go to him, she was prevented, and the kind loving letter which she wrote him was intercepted; in fact every thing within the range of possibility was done, to influence him to exclude his sisters from the throne, which he finally did leaving it to Lady Jane Grey.

Edward's death which occurred July sixth fifteen hundred and fifty-three, was kept secret from the sisters for several days, in the attempt to secure their persons and put them in the Tower; but this plan was foiled, and Mary took possession of her throne as soon as possible, reigning for four years.

In the beginning of Mary's reign Elizabeth offended her, by refusing to go to mass, and to

take part in any of the Catholic services, and Wrailler, a French ambassador, whose business it was to pave the way for the Queen of Scotland as a successor to Mary, did all in his power to widen the gulf between them. Elizabeth, watched and suspected by the Queen, and plotted against by Wrailler, grew alarmed at her peril, and begged to be allowed to leave court; but her enemies persuaded the Queen that Elizabeth was plotting against her, and wanted to get away from court, only to carry out her schemes, so the Queen would not allow her to go, and forbade any of the ladies to visit her without special permission.

She was watched by the council, and almost hourly reports given of her movements; traitors informed Mary that the French Ambassador was holding secret interviews with her; Elizabeth being informed of this had no trouble in proving herself innocent. The sisters then became reconciled, and Elizabeth received the long desired permission to retire to her own house at Ashridge. But even here she could not have the peace for which she longed, for both she and her servants were watched.

She was beset with offers of marriage by foreigners, but she steadily refused to marry outside of the realm of England, even when the only alternative

seemed to be a foreign marriage, or the scaffold.

Through treachery and intercepted letters, Elizabeth was commanded to return to court; but she feigned sickness, and sent a verbal message to the Queen to the effect that she was too ill to travel and begged the Queen's forbearance a few days. After several days the Queen grew impatient, and sent several gentlemen to bring Elizabeth to her should she be able to travel. The doctor sent by Mary decided Elizabeth able to travel, and the journey to London was begun carrying Elizabeth on a litter.

The day she was brought into London she dressed in white, as an emblem of her innocence, she then waited for three weeks, which were full of suspense, for all her prayers to see the Queen were denied and she was finally condemned to the Tower to await her trial. When she put her foot on the steps to enter the Tower she exclaimed: "Here lands as true a subject, being prisoner, as ever landed at these stairs; before Thee O God I speak it, having no other friend but Thee alone"! She was forbidden the use of English prayers; Protestant rites were also forbidden, and she was obliged to hear mass. Here she was watched with great vigilance but there could not be enough proof of any guilt brought

against her, to warrant her execution; Some of her enemies being alarmed at this attempted to murder her but were prevented; finally she was sent for by Mary, and they became reconciled, and once more Elizabeth took her place as second in the realm; but even in her seeming liberty she was so surrounded by spies that no one came or went without being seen, however the sisters remained friendly until the death of Mary, November seventeenth, fifteen-hundred and fifty-seven.

Even before Mary had breathed her last Elizabeth was informed of her death, but with her usual discretion she waited until she was sure of the demise of Mary before taking any steps toward her recognition.

Elizabeth became sovereign of England amid the approval of most of her subjects. She carried herself well, and was kind to all, rich and poor, realizing the truth of the poets words: "If friends however humble scorn not one". Her coronation took place on the fifteenth of January; almost immediately Philip of Spain, husband of Queen Mary, sought Elizabeth's hand in marriage; but she refused because she wished to be looked upon with confidence by the Protestants; and as Philip

was an ardent Catholic, Elizabeth was keen enough to see that she would lose ground if she consented to marry him; so she refused saying that she had bound herself in marriage to the realm. This was only one, of the many offers of marriage to the realm. This was only one of the many offers of marriage, with which this Queen was honored. The Earl of Leicester who was a great favorite of Elizabeth's from her coronation to his death, was looked upon with jealousy by the realm, for they feared that Elizabeth would marry him; but whether she ever had any such intentions or not is not known; at any rate if she had she never carried them into effect. The one who came the nearest to wedding the Virgin Queen was the Duke of Anjou; he was a son of the great Catherine de Medici, who having one son on the throne of France was ambitious to see another son on the throne of England. When the Duke was first proposed to Elizabeth as a suitable husband, he was but seventeen years old, while she was forty-one; he was a Catholic and demanded to be allowed to follow his religion unrestrained; this Elizabeth would not grant and so the negotiations ceased for a time, to be renewed seven years later.

Elizabeth really seemed to regard him with some degree of affection, and the time of their marriage was fixed, notwithstanding the objections of the English people to a Catholic King. However as the time fixed for the ceremony drew near her desire to be popular with her people got the better of Elizabeth's affections and the Duke was obliged to take his departure declaring that: "The women of England were as changeable and capricious as their own climate, or the waves that encircled their island." Thus ended the last matrimonial negotiation of Elizabeth, who from that time on, considered herself as wedded only to her realm.

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Elizabeth very early in her reign, assumed the position of Protectress of the Reformed Church throughout the whole world as well as in England. The Huguenot leaders in France were supplied with arms and money by her, at first privately, but afterwards openly. She also excited the Flemish Protestants to resist the oppression of the Spanish rulers. The Reformed party in Scotland was also under her control and subservient to her will.

Elizabeth thinking that a country when prepared for war is more sure of enjoying the blessings of peace, therefore took great pains to provide the

realm with means of defence; she ordered and encouraged the manufacture of gunpowder; caused ships of war to be built to increase the navy; and to encourage the mariners and soldiers to serve her well, she raised their wages. By strangers she has been called the "Queen of the Sea".

In fifteen-hundred and sixty-nine occurred a Catholic coalition throughout Europe in behalf of Mary Queen of Scots. Mary Queen of Scots was a cousin of Elizabeth's, but this relationship did not tend to draw them together with any degree of love, in fact it only made Elizabeth hate Mary, because there was talk among many of the people of putting Mary on the throne of England. Elizabeth could not rest content until she had Mary securely locked up in the Tower. Did she rest easy even then? No! she was continually tormented with pleas to put Mary to death by enemies of Mary, for they said Elizabeth could not be secure on the throne as long as Mary lived for there were continually occurring outbreaks among the Catholics in the effort to place Mary on the throne, but she for some time continued to declare that it was against both her honor and conscience to put Mary to death, but finally through the determined efforts of Mary's foes Elizabeth was

persuaded that her only safety lay in the death of Mary. She reduced the scant sum allowed for Mary's board to such a small amount that Mary fared badly, she kept her in damp apartments and removed her from one prison to another in the most inclement weather, until the poor Queen was tortured with various diseases, but still clinging to her life, and caught with eagerness at any chance of escape. Her only hope of escape seemed to be through Morgan, her agent in France, who thought the only chance for the Queen of Scots was in the death of Elizabeth, and began to form schemes for carrying out his intentions, paying no attention to the objections of Mary's ambassadors and kinsman. The result was that Mary in spite of her innocence was accused of treason and Elizabeth finally was prevailed upon to sign the death warrant; thus her annals are sullied by a crime, which cannot, on moral or political grounds, be justified.

Elizabeth had been reigning thirty years when England became involved in a war with Spain. That part of the country which is now Holland and Belgium, then called the Low Countries, was under the dominion of Philip of Spain; and as they were mostly Protestants, were persecuted and

tyrannized over by him, in a most cruel way.

Elizabeth had secretly aided them in rebelling against Philip and in fifteen hundred and eighty-five she was very much surprised to have the government of those countries offered to her, if she would openly protect them against Philip. Elizabeth did not feel willing to accept the sovereignty of the Countries, but she sent a fleet and an army to aid them. This act brought on a general war with Spain. It was then that Philip prepared his famous Spanish Armada, with which he proposed to destroy the government of England and make it a province of Spain. But Elizabeth, full of courage, and with her usual shrewdness, went to work to see what could be done; she took command of her forces herself, and her people regardless of their religion, whether Catholic or Protestant, rallied around their Queen, realizing that it was for her and their fair island that they must fight. It is difficult to say who might have won, had they really come to war, for although England's fleet was quite strong, the Armada was much stronger; but a terrible storm arose fought mightily for England. Many of the best Spanish ships were dashed to pieces

on the rocks, while not so much as a boat belonging to the English was lost. The Spanish began to think of nothing but how to get home the quickest way, they making their way back a shattered remnant, consisting of less than half the fleet.

From the time of the successful defeat of the Armada, until the death of the Queen, the Catholics were obliged to suffer persecution, and quite a number were put to death. In vain did the Catholic endeavor to follow his religion by withdrawing himself from the public and living in solitude, for even in his own house, with his own family, he was often molested by those, who in their fanaticism, believed themselves to be doing the will of an all merciful God, by insulting and oppressing the papists.

Elizabeth's death was hastened by the sorrow which she felt for the unjust execution of her much loved favorite, Essex, a step son of her favored Leicester, who although haughty and presuming, and with whom she had had more than one serious quarrel, was with all his faults, of a winning disposition, and Elizabeth found it difficult to be angry with him for any length of time. He understood the character of Elizabeth

almost perfectly, he knew just how to make her forgive him, and restore him to favor; but once he went too far in trying her patience, and she signed his death warrant, but intended to pardon him should he send her a ring which she had given him to send her if in any trouble; he sent her the ring, but it was intercepted, and Elizabeth allowed him to meet his doom; but when she heard the truth about the ring the subject hardly took her mind, nor did she cease to sorrow, until death released her, March twenty-fourth, sixteen-hundred and three, and James I, son of Mary Queen of Scots, who had been appointed by her as her successor, was proclaimed King of England.

Elizabeth had ruled England for forty-five years. Those who knew her well in youth said that "God who had endowed her with such rare gifts had certainly destined her to some distinguished employment in the world." And though she made many mistakes her people do and always will remember her with affection.

Her measure for restoring English currency to its sterling value was a matter which resulted in a very beneficial change, and was of such weight and importance that neither Edward VI nor Mary dared to attempt it.

Queen Elizabeth had one great fault that of being very fickle about changing her mind; she would be a long time coming to a decision, and then perhaps would change her mind in a very short time, then after much wavering she would return to her original determination. This of course was a great annoyance to her ministers, often causing a great deal of inconvenience. Her love of popularity was the ruling motive of her life, and nature had fitted her to play her part well. She studied effect with every look, word, and action; from a child she had the power of attracting others. Hargrave says; "If any person had either a gift, or style, to win the hearts of people, it was this Queen". And Elizabeth with all her faults of fickleness, and a high temper, will always be cherished in the memories of her people as their good "Queen Bess."

Mary Elizabeth Willard.