mission to France, Elizabeth announced that a marriage of Mary with a Spanish, Imperial or French prince would mean war, while she still hinted at the Leicester marriage, or perhaps at a union with young Henry Darnley, son of Lennox. Elizabeth’s real intention was merely “ to drive time,” to distract Scotland and to leave her rival isolated. The idea of a Spanish marriage excited the wrath of Knox, whose interviews with Mary did nothing but irritate both parties and alienate the politicians from the more enthusiastic Protestants. The negotiations for the Leicester marriage were prolonged till March 1565, when Elizabeth had let slip on Mary Henry Darnley (the young son of Lennox, who himself had been allowed to return to Scotland), and at the same time made it clear that she had never been honest in offering Leicester.

Till the spring of 1565, Mary, despite the insults to her religion and the provocations to herself, had remained attached to “ the English course ” and to the counsels of Moray and Lethington. Her naturally high temper, wearied of treacheries and brow-beatings, now at last overcame her. Darnley was esteemed handsome, though his portraits give an opposite impression; his native qualities of cowardice, perfidy, profligacy and overweening arrogance were at first concealed, and in mid April 1565 Lethington was sent to London, not to renew the negotiations with Leicester (as had been designed till the 31st of March), but to announce Mary’s intended wedding with her cousin. Thus the cunning of Eliza- beth and Cecil had its reward. Darnley being a Catholic, as far as he was anything, the jealous fears of the Brethren under Knox reached a passionate height. The Hamiltons saw their Stuart enemies in power and favour. Murray knew that his day of influence was over, and encouraged by the promises of Elizabeth, who was remonstrating violently against the match into which she had partly beguiled and partly forced Mary, he assumed a hostile attitude and was outlawed (6th of August 1565). A week earlier Mary, without waiting for the necessary papal dispensation (Pollen, *Papal Negotiations with Mary Stuart),* had publicly married Darnley, who bore the title of king, but

never received the crown matrimonial.

Mary now promised restoration to Huntly’s son, Lord George ; she recalled Bothwell, who had a considerable military reputa­tion, from exile in France; and she pursued Murray with his allies through the south of Scotland to Dumfries, whence she drove him over the English border in October. Here Elizabeth rebuked and disavowed him, and Mary’s triumph seemed complete. Her valour, energy and victory over Elizabeth were undeniable, but she was now in the worst of hands, and her career took its fatal ply. Lethington had not left her, hut he was overlooked; Lennox and the impracticable Darnley were neglected; and the dangerous carl of Morton, a Douglas, had to tremble for his lands and office as chancellor, while Mary rested on her foreign secretary, the upstart David Riccio; on Sir James Balfour, noted for falseness even in that age; and on Bothwell.

As early as September 1565 gossips were busy over the indiscretion of Riccio's favour: Darnley had forfeited the good opinion of his wife; was angry because the Hamiltons were not wholly sacrificed to the ancient feud of Lennox and his clan; and Knox’s party looked forward with horror to the parliament of March 1566, when Mary certainly meant “ to do something tending to some good anent restoring the ancient religion.” She was also supposed to have signed a Catholic league, which only existed in devout imaginations, but in February 1560 she sent the bishop of Dunblane to crave a large subsidy from the pope. Quite ignorant as to the real state of affairs, he raised the money and sent a nuncio, who never risked himself in Scot­land, but made the extraordinary proposal later, that Mary should execute or at least “ discourt ” her chief advisers.

Meanwhile the clouds of hatred gathered over the queen. Lethington (5th of February 1566), wrote to Cecil saying that “ we must chop at the very root,” and Randolph, Elizabeth’s ambassador, heard that measures against Mary's own person were being taken. Randolph was dismissed for supplying Murray with English gold; from Berwick he and Bedford

reported to Cecil the progress of the conspiracy. While Alary was arranging a marriage between Bothwell and the late Huntly’s daughter, Lady Jane Gordon, Darnley intrigued with Lord Ruthven and George Douglas, a bastard kinsman of Morton, for the murder of Riccio, and for his own acquisition of the crown matrimonial. Morton and Lindsay were brought into the plot, while Murray, in England, also signed. He was to return to Edinburgh as soon as the deed of slaughter was done, and before parliament could proceed to his forfeiture.

Mary, according to Ruthven’s published account, had herself unconstitutionally named the executive committee of parlia- ment, the Lords of the Articles, who were usually elected in various ways by the Estates themselves.

While Mary was at supper, on the 9th of March,

Darnley, with Ruthven, George Douglas and others, entered the boudoir in Holyrood, by his private stair, while Morton and his accomplices, mainly Douglases, burst in by way of the great staircase. There had been an intention of holding some mock trial of Riccio, but the fury of the crowd overcame them: Riccio was dragged from Mary’s table and fell under more than fifty dagger wounds. While Mary, Darnley and Ruthven exchanged threats and taunts, Bothwell and Huntly escaped from the palace, but next day, Mary contrived to send letters to them and Atholl. On the following evening Murray arrived, and now even Murray was welcome to his sister. Darnley had taken on him (his one act of kingly power) to dismiss the parlia- ment, but he now found himself the mere tool of his accomplices. He denied—he never ceased to deny—his share in the guilt, and Mary worked on his vanity and his fears, and moulded his “ heart of wax" to her will. On his assurances the lords, expecting an amnesty, withdrew their guards from the palace and next day found that the bird had flown to the strong castle of Dunbar. Hence Mary summoned the forces of the country, under Bothwell and Huntly; she forgave Murray; the murderers had no aid from the Protestants of Edinburgh, who as before failed them in their need. Knox himself fled to Kyle, though there is no evidence that he was privy to a deed which he calls "worthy of all praise,” and Morton and Ruthven spurred to Berwick, while Lethington skulked in Athofl. His possessions were handed over to Bothwell. Darnley betrayed some obscure accomplices. He was now equally detested by Murray, by the new exiles and by the queen, while she reconciled Murray and Bothwell. She tried to assuage all feuds; in an inventory of her jewels she left many of them to Darnley, in case she and her child did not survive its birth. The infant, James, was born in the castle on the 19th of June.

On Mary’s recovery, her aversion to Darnley, and her confidence in Bothwell, were unconcealed; and, early in September, she admitted Lethington to her presence. She had learned that Darnley meant to leave the country: she met him before her Privy Council, who sided with her; he withdrew, and the lords, including Murray, early in October signed a “ band ” disclaiming all obedience to him. On the 7th or 9th of October, Mary went to Jedburgh on the affairs of Border justice, and a week later she rode with Murray to Hermitage castle, where for several days Bothwell had lain, wounded nearly to death by Eliot, a horder reiver. On her return she fell into an almost fatal illness and prepared for her end with great courage and piety; Darnley now visited her, but was ill-received, while Bothwell was borne to Jedburgh from Hermitage in a litter. While Buchanan represents the pair as indulging in a guilty passion, the French ambassador, du Croc, avers that Mary was never in better repute with her subjects. On the 24th of November Mary was at Craigmillar castle, near Edinburgh, where undoubtedly she held a conference with her chief advisers that boded no good to Darnley; and there were rumours of Darnley’s design to seize the infant prince and rule in his name. The evidence on these points is disputable, but now, or not long after, Huntly, Bothwell, Lethington and Argyll signed a “ band ” for Darnley’s murder.

Meanwhile, in December, Mary held the feasts for the baptism of her son by Catholic rites at Stirling (17th of December), while