

MARY STUART

(Based on Schiller's drama)

Arranged by Mary Ann Porterfield



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Queen Mary of Scotland, endowed with beauty, brains, and charm, had always ruled with love and gentleness, and her cousin Elizabeth, crafty, sharp and subtle, feared, hated and envied her.

Fearing the usurpation of her throne by Mary, Elizabeth plotted to destroy her name by means of lies and false accusations. Although Mary was innocent in all implications, appearances were against her. Elizabeth's tricks succeeded and Mary was believed guilty. After twenty long years in an English prison, Mary has sought an audience with the queen to plead for her life. As Elizabeth enters her cell, Mary says:

"Is this Elizabeth? Oh, God, from out these features there speaks no heart."

ELIZABETH: You are where it becomes you, Lady Stuart, at my feet.

MARY: Heaven, oh cousin, seems to have declared itself on thy side and has graced thy happy head with victory. Oh, for God's pity, stand not so estranged and inaccessible, like some tall cliff. Open thy arms, extend in mercy to me thy royal hand and raise me from my fearful fall. You have done your worst to me. You have blighted me in my youth and broken my spirit.

E.: I have granted your wish to speak to me. What would you say?

M.: Oh, how shall I begin? Thou turnst such icy looks upon me that my soul doth sink within me. Elizabeth, toward me thou hast been neither merciful nor just. I am thine equal and yet thou hast made of me a prisoner. All I ask now is only my freedom that I may bear my heart in the presence of my people and prove that I am innocent.

E.: It would not be wise, Mary. 'Twas many years ago you came to Scotland causing me more trouble than you will ever know. We were both young and beautiful. But we have lived our separate ways. I have learned the ways of a queen. I have lived and lied for my country, but your choice has not been wise. You have held too light a reign. One of us must lose our throne--I play the winning game. You cannot rule.

M.: And now I see your hand outlaid. You mean to keep me here in everlasting darkness and to bury in the darkness of my prison my rightful claims.

E.: Oh, no, my gracious queen. oppression is not content to do its work in halves. No dungeon can inter you deep enough. Your death alone can make my throne secure.

M.: Would you dare, regardless of shame, to lay my crowned head upon the fatal block?

E.: This land, my queen, has seen many a royal lady descend from the throne to mount the scaffold. Your subjects believe you guilty.

M.: But I'm not guilty. I speak the truth before the God of truth.

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