



Bloody Mary: The Life and Legacy of England's Most Notorious Queen

Charles River Editors

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“When I am dead and opened, you shall find `Calais' lying in my heart.” – Mary I Queen Mary I ruled England and its conquered territories in Wales and Ireland for only five years, from 1553 to 1558, yet she has been remembered for nearly 500 years as Bloody Mary, the Catholic oppressor of a Protestant country. The truth, as usual, is more complicated than the myth. The oldest surviving child of King Henry VIII, she grew up in an era of religious and political turmoil, both in England and abroad, and though united in its Christianity, the continent was divided in how it approached that faith. A growing wave of protest and dissent had been met with brutal suppression in the 15th century, only to emerge like a phoenix from the flames in the form of Protestantism. With religious faith and political practice deeply intertwined, countries were being torn apart in a growing conflict between Catholics and Protestants. Mary’s life was shaped by her experience of this, and by the twisted family politics of her father, Henry VIII. Henry VIII’s lone male heir, his young son Edward, was a strong Protestant but a sickly teen, and as it became clear he would not survive to adulthood, Edward did not want his crown to pass to Mary, a zealous Catholic whose brutal reign would include 280 “heretics” being burned at the stake during the “Marian Persecutions”. However, Edward could see no constitutional, or indeed non-arbitrary, way to pass over Mary and instead choose the younger sister, Elizabeth. Hence, in his typical schoolboy penmanship, Edward’s will attempted to override the Succession to the Crown Act 1543 (advocated by his father and passed by Parliament), bar both Mary and Elizabeth from the succession, and instead declare as his heir Lady Jane Grey, who was the granddaughter of Henry VIII’s sister Mary. Lady Jane was proclaimed queen by the Privy Council, possibly under duress, but her support soon waned after her own close blood relations distanced themselves from her, and she was deposed after just over a week. Given this background, it is hardly surprising then that her reign epitomized an extreme reaction against these upheavals. Mary’s behavior was rightly viewed with fear and anger by many but in hindsight, it is hard not to pity the woman who took these terrible steps. Emotionally betrayed by her father, her husband and even her own body, Mary’s life is one of the great tragedies of the English crown. It also hasn’t helped Mary’s legacy that she was succeeded by one of England’s greatest monarchs, her younger sister Elizabeth. Elizabeth I was the last Tudor sovereign, and she would improve upon her predecessors’ successes and mitigate their failures. In the process, she would lend her name to the Elizabethan Age and set Great Britain on its future imperial course. *Bloody Mary: The Life and Legacy of England's Most Notorious Queen* traces the life of Mary and the history of her short reign. Along with pictures of important people, places, and events, you will learn about Bloody Mary like never before, in no time at all.

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