



The Queen's Maries: A Romance of Holyrood

G. J. Whyte Melville

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‘Turn back, turn back, ye weel-fau’red May, my heart will break in three; and sae did mine on yon bonny hill-side, when ye wadna let me be!’

Many a smiling plain, many a wooded slope and sequestered valley adorns the fair province of Picardy. Nor is it without reason that her Norman-looking sons and handsome daughters are proud of their birth-place; but the most prejudiced of them will hardly be found to affirm that her seaboard is either picturesque or interesting; and perhaps the strictest search would fail to discover a duller town than Calais in the whole bounds of France. With the gloom of night settling down upon the long low line of white sand which stretches westward from the harbour, and an angry surge rising on the adjacent shoal, while out to seaward darkness is brooding over the face of the deep, an unwilling traveller might, indeed, be induced to turn into the narrow ill-paved streets of the town, on the seaman-like principle of running for any port in a storm; but it would be from the sheer necessity of procuring food and lodging, not from any delusive expectation of gaiety and amusement, essential ingredients in a Frenchman’s every-day life. And yet Calais has been the scene of many a thrilling incident and stirring event. Could they speak, those old houses, with their pointed gables, their overhanging roofs, and quaint diamond-paned windows, they could tell some strange tales of love and war, of French and English chivalry, of deeds of arms performed for the sake of honour, and beauty, and ambition, and gold—the four strings on which most of the tunes are played that speed the Dance of Death—of failures and successes, hopes and disappointments, the ups and downs, the ins and outs, the cross-purposes, the hide-and-seek, that constitute the



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