

The Pseudocyesis of Mary Tudor - II

Lead: Scorned by a nation appalled at her bloody attempts to restore Catholicism and abandoned by her Spanish husband, Queen Mary of England was further weakened emotionally by a series of false pregnancies.

Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.

Content: If she was to return England to the Catholic fold Mary knew she would need a long reign and an heir who shared her convictions, but her choice of her husband was a

bad one. Philip was the heir to the Spanish throne and though he was the Queen's husband, from the beginning, he neither liked or was liked by the English people. The presence of the future King of Spain gave a bad odor to Mary's religious program and whipped up English nationalism.

To make matters worse, beginning in the winter of 1555 Queen Mary began in the first in a series of false pregnancies, pseudocyesis. She felt pregnant, her period ceased, the stomach began swell, the doctors around her assured her that the child was growing inside and in the Spring she retired to Hampton Court Palace up the Thames from London, to await the baby's arrival. And they waited.

And they waited. And they waited. A month passed, no baby. Some said the Queen ate so little that she couldn't keep a child alive. Other physicians guessed it might be a tumor. Tabloid-like rumors circulated. The queen had given birth to a "mass of flesh," she trying to pass off another's child as her own, and so forth.

As late as the end of July, Mary still believed her doctors that she only had a month or two left, but within ten days even she had given up. This process further weakened her position as Queen and combined with her vigorous prosecution of Protestants led to resistance if not open rebellion.

A second occasion of pseudocyesis came in 1557 and the affair took its toll on the Queen. She begged her husband Philip to return to support her but he was reluctant to return from the Continent as he was caught up in a war with France. The following year Mary died a disillusioned and failed monarch, her false pregnancies dealing a blow to her spirit, her body, her reputation, and her rule over England.

At the University of Richmond, this is Dan Roberts.

Resources

**Ericksen, Carolly. *Bloody Mary*. Garden City, NY:
Doubleday Publishing Company, 1979.**

**Prescott, Hilda Frances Margaret. *Mary Tudor*. New York,
NY: Macmillan and Company, 1953.**

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