

HISTORY
OF
SCOTLAND.

BY PATRICK FRASER TYTLER, Esq.

F. R. S. E. AND F. A. S.

VOLUME I.

EDINBURGH :
WILLIAM TAIT, 78, PRINCE'S STREET.
MDCCCXXVIII.

P R E F A C E.

I HAVE commenced the HISTORY OF SCOTLAND at the accession of Alexander the Third, because it is at this period that our national annals become particularly interesting to the general reader. During the reign of this monarch, England first began to entertain serious thoughts of the reduction of her sister country. The dark cloud of misfortune which gathered over Scotland immediately after the death of Alexander, suggested to Edward the First his schemes of ambition and conquest; and perhaps, in the history of Liberty, there is no more memorable war than that which commenced under Wallace in 1297, and termina-

ted in the final establishment of Scottish independence by Robert Bruce, in 1328.

In the composition of the present volume, which embraces this period, I have anxiously endeavoured to examine the most authentic sources of information, and to convey a true picture of the times without prepossession or partiality. To have done so, partakes more of the nature of a grave duty than of a merit ; and even after this has been accomplished, there will remain ample room for many imperfections. If, in the execution of my plan, I have been obliged to differ on some points of importance from authors of established celebrity, I have fully stated the grounds of my opinion in the Notes and Illustrations, which are printed at the end of the volume ; and I trust that I shall not be blamed for the freedom of my remarks, until the historical authorities upon which they are founded have been examined and compared.

HISTORY
OF
SCOTLAND.

CHAP. I.

ALEXANDER THE THIRD.

CONTEMPORARY PRINCES.

Kings of England.
Henry III.
Edward I.

King of France.
Louis IX.

Popes.
Innocent IV.
Alexander IV.
Urban IV.
Clement IV.

ALEXANDER the Third had not completed his ninth year, when the death of the king, his father, opened to him the peaceable accession to the Scottish throne.¹ He was accordingly conducted by an assembly of the nobility to the Abbey of Scone, and there crowned.²

¹ Winton's Chronicle, B. vii. c. 10. Mathew Paris, Hist. p. 516.

² Alexander the Third was son of Alexander the Second, by Mary, daughter of Ingelram de Couci. Imhoff. Regum Pariumque Magnæ Britt. Histor. Genealogica, Part I. p. 42. The family of De Couci affected a royal pomp, and considered all titles as beneath their dignity. The *Cri de Guerre* of this Ingelram, or Enguerrand, was—

Je ne suis Roy, ni Prince aussi.

Je suis le Seigneur de Couci.

On account of his brave actions, possessions, and three marriages with ladies of royal and illustrious families, he was surnamed Le Grand.—Winton, vol. ii. p. 482.

A long minority, at all times an unhappy event for a kingdom, was at this time especially unfortunate for Scotland. The vicinity of Henry the Third of England, who, although individually a weak monarch, allowed himself sometimes to be directed by able and powerful counsellors, and the divisions between the principal nobility of Scotland, facilitated the designs of ambition, and weakened the power of resistance; nor can it be doubted, that during the early part of this reign, the first approaches were made towards that plan for the reduction of Scotland, which was afterwards attempted to be carried into effect by Edward the First, and defeated by the bravery of Wallace and Bruce. But in order to show clearly the state of the kingdom upon the accession of this monarch, and more especially in its relations with England, it will be necessary to go back a few years, to recount a story of private revenge, which happened in the conclusion of the reign of Alexander the Second, and drew after it important consequences.

A tournament, the frequent amusement of this warlike age, was held near Haddington. At this play of arms, Walter Bisset, a powerful baron, who piqued himself upon his skill in his weapons, was foiled by Patrick Earl of Athole.¹ An old feud which existed between these families, embittered the defeat, and Athole was found murdered in his house, which,

¹ Henry Earl of Athole had two daughters, Isobel and Fernelith. Isobel married Thomas of Galloway. Their only son was Patrick Earl of Athole. Fernelith married David de Hastings.—Hailes' Annals, p. 157. Fordun a Goodal, vol. ii. p. 72. Math. Paris, p. 586.

probably for the purpose of concealment, was set on fire by the conspirators. The suspicion of this slaughter, which, even in an age familiar with ferocity, seems to have excited unwonted horror, immediately fell upon the Bissets; and although Walter was the person present at the tournament, the popular clamour pointed to William, the chief of the family.¹ He was pursued by the nobility, who were incited to vengeance by the Earl of March, and David de Hastings, and would have been torn to pieces, had not the interference of the king protected him from the fury of the friends of Athole. Bisset strenuously asserted his innocence. He offered to prove, that he had been fifty miles distant from Haddington when the murder was committed; he instantly excommunicated the assassins, and all who might have supported them, in every chapel in Scotland; he offered combat to any man who dared abide the issue, but he declined a trial by jury, on account of the inveterate malice of his enemies. The king accepted the office of judge, and the Bissets were condemned, their estates forfeited to the crown, and they themselves compelled to swear upon the Holy Gospel, that they would repair to Palestine, and there, for the remaining days of their lives, pray for the soul of the murdered earl.

¹ Lord Hailes remarks, 8vo ed. p. 189, that Fordun says the author of the conspiracy was Walter. Fordun, on the contrary, all along ascribes it, or rather says it was ascribed, to William Bisset.—Fordun a Goodal, vol. ii. pp. 72, 73, 74. The name of the Bisset banished from Scotland, as shown in the Patent Rolls of Henry the Third, is Walter.

Walter Bisset, however, instead of Jerusalem, sought the English court.¹ There, by artfully representing to Henry that Alexander owed fealty to him, and that, as Lord Superior, he ought to have been first consulted before judgment was given, whilst he described Scotland as the ally of France, and the asylum of his expatriated rebels,² he contrived to inflame the passion of the English monarch to so high a pitch, that Henry determined on an immediate invasion. Nor was the temper with which Alexander received this information in any way calculated to promote conciliation. To the complaints of the King of England, that he had violated the duty which he owed to him as his Lord Paramount, the Scottish monarch is said to have answered, that he neither did, nor ever would, consent to hold from the King of England the smallest portion of his kingdom of Scotland. His reply was warmly seconded by the spirit of his nobility. They fortified the castles situated on the marches, and the king soon found himself at the head of an army of nearly a hundred thousand foot soldiers and a thousand horse. Henry, on the other hand, led into the field a large body of troops, with which he

¹ Chronicon, Melross, p. 207.

² Math. Paris, pp. 432, 436. Speed's Chronicle, p. 527. Speed ascribes the disagreement between Henry and Alexander to the influence of Ingelram de Couci; and adds, that, on the death of this nobleman, the humour of battle,—this is Nym's phrase,—ceased. De Couci, in passing a river on horseback, was unseated, dragged in the stirrup, run through the body with his own lance, and drowned. It took a great deal to kill these old barons.

proceeded to Newcastle. The accoutrements and discipline of these two powerful armies, which were commanded by kings, and included the flower of the nobility of both countries, are highly extolled by Matthew Paris.¹ The Scottish cavalry, he says, were a fine body of men, and well mounted, although their horses were neither of the Spanish nor Italian breed; and the horsemen were clothed in armour of iron network. The English army far surpassed the Scottish in cavalry. It included a power of five thousand men-at-arms, sumptuously accoutred. These armies came in sight of each other at a place in Westmoreland called Ponteland; and the Scots prepared for battle, by confessing themselves to their priests, and expressing to each other their readiness to die in defence of the independence of their country. As Alexander, however, was much beloved in England, the nobility of that country coldly seconded the rash enterprise of their king, and showed no anxiety to hurry into hostilities. Richard Earl of Cornwall, brother to Henry, and the Archbishop of York, thought this a favourable moment for proposing an armistice; and, by their endeavours, such great and solemn preparations ended in a treaty of peace, without a lance being put in rest. Its terms were just, and favourable to both countries.²

¹ M. Paris, pp. 436, 437. Chron. Melross, p. 207. Rapin is in an error when he says, vol. iii. p. 369, that Alexander sent Henry word, he meant no longer to do him homage for the lands he held in England.

² Rymer's *Fœdera*, vol. i. pp. 374, 428. Rapin's *Acta Regia*, by Whately, p. 27, vol. i.

Henry appears prudently to have waved all demand of homage from Alexander for the kingdom of Scotland; and the Scottish monarch, on the other hand, who possessed land in England, for which, although the English historians assert the contrary, he does not appear to have ever refused homage, consented, for himself and his heirs, to maintain fidelity and affection to Henry and his heirs, as his liege-lord, and not to enter into any league with the enemies of England, except in the case of unjust oppression. It was also stipulated, that the peace formerly entered into at York, in the presence of Otto, the Pope's legate, should stand good; and that the proposal, there made, of a marriage between the daughter of the King of England, and the son of the King of Scots, should be carried into effect. Alan Durward, at this time the most accomplished knight, and the best military leader in Scotland, Henry de Baliol, and David de Lindesay, with other knights and prelates, swore on the soul of their lord the king, that the treaty should be kept inviolate by him and his heirs.¹

Thus ended this expedition of Henry's into Scotland, formidable in its commencement, but peaceable and bloodless in its result;² and such was the relative situation of the two countries, when Alexander

¹ The original charter granted to Henry by Alexander may be found in Mathew Paris, p. 437, and in Rymer, *Fœd.* vol. i. p. 423. See Illustrations, A. It is curious, as showing the state of the Scottish peerage in 1244. Neither Leslie nor Buchanan take any notice of this expedition and treaty.

² Tyrrel, *History of England*, vol. ii. p. 930.

the Third, yet a boy in his eighth year, mounted the Scottish throne.

The mode in which the ceremony of his coronation was performed, is strikingly illustrative of the manners of that age. The Bishops of St Andrews and Dunkeld, with the Abbot of Scone, attended to officiate ; but an unexpected difficulty arose. Alan Durward, the great justiciary, remarked, that the king ought not to be crowned before he was knighted, and that the day fixed for the ceremony was unlucky. Durward was then at the head of the Scottish chivalry, and expected that the honour of knighting Alexander would fall upon himself.¹ But Comyn, Earl of Menteith, who loved the boy for his father's sake, insisted that there were frequent examples of the consecration of kings before they had worn the spurs of a knight ; he represented that the Bishop of St Andrews might perform both ceremonies ; he cited the instance of William Rufus having been knighted by Lanfranc, Archbishop of Canterbury ; and he earnestly urged the danger of delay. Nor was this danger ideal. Henry the Third, in a letter to the Pope, had artfully represented Scotland as a fee of England, and had requested his Holiness to interdict the ceremony of the coronation from taking place until Alexander obtained the permission of his feudal superior.²

Fortunately, the patriotic arguments of the Earl of Menteith prevailed. The Bishop of St Andrews

¹ Fordun a Goodal, vol. ii. pp. 80, 81.

² Hailes, vol. i. p. 162. Rymer, vol. i. p. 463,

girded the king with the belt of knighthood, and explained to him the respective oaths which were to be taken by himself and his subjects, first in Latin, and afterwards in Norman French.¹ They then conducted the boy to the regal chair, or sacred stone of Scone, which stood before the cross, in the eastern division of the chapel. Upon this he sat—the crown was placed on his head, the sceptre in his hand; he was invested with the royal mantle, and the nobility, kneeling in homage, threw their robes beneath his feet. A Highland sennachy, or bard, of great age, clothed in a scarlet mantle, with hair venerably white, then advanced from the crowd, and, bending his wild form before the throne, repeated, in his native tongue, the genealogy of the youthful monarch, deducing his descent from the fabulous Gathelus. It is difficult to believe, that, even in those days of credulity, the nobility could digest the absurdities of this savage genealogist.²

Henry of England, at this time influenced by the devotional spirit of the age, had resolved on an expedition to the Holy Land; and in order to secure tranquillity to his dominions on the side of Scotland, the marriage, formerly agreed on, between his daugh-

¹ Fordun a Goodal, vol. ii. p. 81.

² Fordun a Goodal, vol. ii. pp. 80, 81, 82. Chron. Melross, p. 219. Holinshed, p. 197. Lord Hailes has omitted the anecdote of the Highland sennachy, but there is no reason to doubt its authenticity. It was probably relying on this story that Nisbet has asserted, (Heraldry, vol. ii. p. iv. p. 155,) that it was a part of the coronation ceremony to repeat six generations of the king's ancestry. Martin's Western Isles, p. 241.

ter Margaret and the young Scottish king, was solemnized at York on Christmas day, with every circumstance of feudal splendour and dignity.¹ The guests at this bridal were the King and Queen of England, Mary de Couci, Queen Dowager of Scotland, who had come from France with a train worthy of her high rank;² the nobility, and the dignified clergy of both countries, and in their suite a numerous assemblage of armed vassals. A thousand knights, in robes of silk, attended the bride, on the morn of her nuptials; and after some days spent in tournaments, feasting, and other circumstances of feudal revelry, the youthful couple, neither of whom had reached their eleventh year, set out for Scotland. "Were I," says Mathew Paris, in one of those bursts of monastic eloquence which diversify his annals, "to explain at length the abundance of the feasts, the variety and the frequent changes of the vestments, the delight of the plaudits occasioned by the jugglers, and the multitude of those who sat down to meat, my narrative would become hyperbolical, and might produce irony in the hearts of the absent. I shall only mention, that the archbishop, who, as the great Prince of the North, showed himself a most serene host to all comers, made a donation of six hundred oxen, which were all spent upon the first course; and from this

¹ Math. Paris, p. 715. Rymer, vol. i. p. 466. Fordun a Hearne, pp. 761, 762.

² Rymer, vol. i. edit. 1816, p. 278. Fordun a Hearne, p. 762.

circumstance, I leave you to form a parallel judgment of the rest.”¹

In the midst of these festivities, a circumstance of importance occurred. When Alexander performed homage for the lands which he held in England, Henry, relying upon the facility incident to his age, insidiously proposed that he should also render fealty for his kingdom of Scotland. But the boy, with a spirit and wisdom above his years, replied, “ That he had come into England upon a joyful and pacific errand, and that he would not treat upon so arduous a question without the advice of the states of his kingdom ;” upon which the king dissembled his mortification, and the ceremony proceeded.²

Alan Durward, who, as high justiciar, was the Scottish king’s chief counsellor, had married the natural sister of Alexander, and during the rejoicings at York, was accused by Comyn, Earl of Menteith, and William, Earl of Mar, of a design against the crown. The ground on which this accusation rested, was an attempt of Durward, in which he was seconded by the Scottish chancellor,³ to procure from the court of Rome the legitimation of his wife, in order, said his accusers, that his children should succeed to

¹ Math. Paris. p. 555. Winton, book vii. ch. x. p. 383. Speed’s Chronicle, p. 530.

² Math. Paris, p. 716. Rapin’s History, by Tindal, vol. iii. p. 392, 8vo. Dugdale’s Baronage, vol. i. p. 65.

³ Fordun a Hearne, p. 762. Chron. Melross, p. 219. Winton, b. vii. c. 10, p. 384.

the crown, if the king happened to die childless. From the ambitious and intriguing character of Durward, it is not at all unlikely that this story had some foundation in fact, and some of the accused actually fled from York; upon which Henry made a new appointment of ministers and guardians to the young king, at the head of whom were placed the Earls of Menteith and Mar.

The peace of Scotland was for many years after this interrupted by that natural jealousy of England, so likely to rise in a kingdom its equal in pride, although its inferior in national strength. Henry, too, adopted measures not calculated to secure the confidence of the Scottish people. He sent into Scotland, under the name of guardian to the king, Geoffry de Langley, a rapacious noble, who was immediately expelled. He procured Innocent the Fourth to grant him a twentieth of the ecclesiastical revenues of that kingdom, nominally for the aid of the Holy Land, and really for his own uses; and he dispatched Simon de Montfort, the Earl of Leicester, on a mission, described as secret in his instructions,¹ but the object of which was apparent from the increasing animosity of the disputes between the Scottish nobility. Many English attendants, some of them persons of rank and consequence, accompanied Margaret into her new kingdom; and between these intruders and the ancient nobility of Scotland, who fiercely asserted their privileges, disputes arose, which soon reached

¹ Rymer, *Fœdera*, vol. i. p. 523.

the ears of the English court. The young queen, accustomed to the indulgence, and probably superior refinement, of her father's court, bitterly complained that she was immured in a dismal fortress, without being permitted to have her own attendants around her person, or allowed to enjoy the society of her husband, the king.¹

These complaints, which appear to have been highly exaggerated, and a still more horrid report, that the queen's physician had been poisoned by the same party, because he ventured to remonstrate against the confinement of his mistress, were not lost upon Alan Durward, the late justiciar. He had accompanied Henry in his expedition to Guienne, where, by his courage and address, he regained the confidence of that capricious monarch;² and he now prevailed upon the king to dispatch the Earl of Gloucester, and Maunsell, his chief secretary, to the Scottish court, for the purpose of dismissing those ministers who were found not sufficiently obsequious to England.³ In sending these noblemen upon this mission, Henry entered into a solemn agreement not to attempt any injury against the person of the Scottish king, or to insist upon his being disinherited, or to endeavour to dissolve the marriage engagements,⁴ the particular history of which is involved in much obscurity, but which strongly, though generally, demonstrate, that

¹ Math. Paris, p. 908.

² Chron. Melross, p. 220.

³ Rymer, Fœdera, vol. i. pp. 558, 559. See Illustrations, B.

⁴ Rymer, vol. i. p. 559.

the English king had been accused of designs inimical to the honour and independence of Scotland. At the head of the party which steadily opposed the interested designs of Henry, was Walter Comyn, Earl of Menteith, whose loyalty we have seen insisting on the speedy coronation of the young king, when it was attempted to be deferred by Alan Durward. Many of the principal nobility, and some of the best and wisest of the elergy, were found in the ranks of the same faction.

The Earl of Gloucester and his associates accordingly repaired to Scotland ; and, in concert with the Earls of Dunbar, Strathern, and Carrick, surprised the Castle of Edinburgh, relieved the royal couple from the real or pretended durance in which they were held, and formally conducted them to the bridal chamber, although the king was yet scarcely fourteen years of age.¹ English influence appears now to have been predominant ; and Henry, having heard of the success of his forerunners, Maunsell and Gloucester, and conceiving that the time was come for the reduction of Scotland under his unfettered control, issued his writs to his military tenants, and assembled a numerous army. As he led this array towards the borders, he took care to conceal his real intentions, by directing, from Newcastle, a solemn declaration, that in this progress to visit his dear son Alexander, he should attempt nothing prejudicial

¹ Math. Paris, p. 908. Winton, book vii. ch. x. 1st vol. 385. Fordun a Goodal, vol. ii. p. 90. book x. ch. ix.

to the rights of the king, or the liberties of Scotland.¹ In the meantime, the Comyns collected an army, and the opposite faction suddenly removed the king and queen to Roxburgh, in which castle Alexander received Henry, and accompanied him, with great acclamations and a solemn procession, to the Abbey of Kelso. The government of Scotland was remodelled, a new set of counsellors appointed, and the party of the Comyns, with John Baliol and Robert de Ros, completely deprived of their political influence. In the instruments drawn up upon this occasion, some provisions were inserted, which were loudly complained of by the Scottish party, as derogatory to the dignity of the kingdom; the abettors of England were stigmatized as conspirators, who were equally obnoxious to prelates, barons, and burgesses; and the Bishop of Glasgow, the Bishop Elect of St Andrews, the chancellor, and the Earl of Menteith, indignantly refused to affix their seals to a deed, which, as they asserted, compromised the liberties of an independent country.²

A regency was now appointed, which included the whole party of the clergy and the nobility who were favourable to England,³ to whom were intrusted the

¹ Rymer, *Fœdera*, vol. i. pp. 560, 561. The instrument is dated 25th August, 1255.

² The Chronicle of Melross, p. 221, calls the deed "a pestiferous scroll." See Fordun a Goodal, book x. ch. ix. Winton, book vii. ch. x.

³ Richard Inverkeithen, Bishop of Dunkeld, Peter de Ramsay, Bishop of Aberdeen, Malcolm Earl of Fife, Patrick Earl of Dunbar or March, Malise Earl of Strathern, and Nigel Earl of Carric, Walter

custody of the king's person, and the government of the realm for seven years, till Alexander had reached the age of twenty-one. Henry assumed to himself the title of "principal counsellor to the illustrious King of Scotland," and the party of the Comyns, with the Earl of Mar, Baliol, Ross, and their chief accomplices, were removed from all share in the government of the kingdom.¹

Alexander, upon his part, engaged to the King of England, that the young queen should be treated with all due honour and affection; and the Earl of Dunbar, according to a common solemnity of this age, swore upon the soul of the king, that every article of the treaty should be faithfully performed. Thus ended a negotiation, conducted entirely by English influence; and which, although the ambition of the Comyns may have given some plausible colour to the designs of their enemies, was generally and justly unpopular in Scotland.² Alexander and his queen now

de Moray, David de Lindesay, William de Brechin, Robert de Meyners, Gilbert de Hay, and Hugh Gifford de Yester, were the heads of the English party. Rymer, *Fœdera*, vol. i. pp. 565, 566, 567.

¹ Rotul. Patent. 39, Hen. III. m. 2, in protectionibus duabus pro Eugenio de Ergadia.

² Winton, b. vii. c. 10.—

Thare wes made swylk ordynans,
That wes gret grefe and displesans
Till of Scotland ye thre statis,
Burgens, Barownys, and Prelatis.

Nothing can be more slight or inaccurate than the account of the

repaired to Edinburgh, and Henry, after having attempted to recruit his exhausted coffers, by selling a pardon to John de Baliol, and confiscating the estates of Robert de Ros, returned to commit new attacks upon the property of his English subjects.¹

Upon his departure, Scotland became the scene of civil faction, ecclesiastical violence, and Papal extortion. There were at this time in that kingdom thirty-two knights, and three powerful earls, of the name of Comyn;² and these, with their armed vassals, assisted by many of the disgraced nobility, formed an effectual check upon the measures of the regency. Gamelin, the Bishop Elect of St Andrews, and the steady enemy of English influence, unawed by his expulsion, procured himself to be consecrated by the Bishop of Glasgow, and although placed by the regency without the protection of the laws, he yet, in a personal appeal to the Court of Rome, induced the

early transactions of Alexander's reign, to be found in Buchanan, Boece, and Major. Nor are our more modern historians, who have not submitted to the task of examining the original authorities, at all free from the same fault. Maitland gives almost a transcript of Buchanan. Lingard, the author of a valuable history of England, has advanced opinions regarding the conduct of Henry the Third, and the once keenly-contested subject of homage, which do not evince his usual research: and even Hailes has not exposed, in sufficiently strong colours, that cunning and ambition in the English king, which, under the mask of friendship and protection, concealed a design against the liberties of an independent kingdom.

¹ Mathew Paris, p. 611.

² Fordun a Goodal, vol. ii. p. 92.

Pope to excommunicate his accusers, and to declare him worthy of his bishoprick.¹

Henry, enraged at the bold and patriotic opposition of Gamelin, prohibited his return, and issued orders to arrest him if he attempted to land in England, while the regents performed their part in the persecution, by seizing the rich revenues of his see.² In the midst of these scenes of faction and disturbance, the King and Queen of Scotland, with a splendid retinue, proceeded to London on a visit to their father, and were received with great magnificence. They were sumptuously entertained at Oxford, Woodstock, and in London. Tents were raised in the meadows, for the accommodation of their followers, and Henry renewed to Alexander a grant of the honour of Huntingdon, which had been held by some of his predecessors.³ The party of the Comyns, however, were slowly regaining their ground. The Pope, by his judgment in favour of Gamelin, espoused their quarrel, and they soon received a powerful support in Mary de Couci, the widow of Alexander the Second, and John of Acre, her husband, who at this time passed through England into Scotland.⁴ The delegates of the Pope seized this conjuncture, to publish the sentence of excommunication against the counsellors of the king. The ceremony, in those days an affair of awful moment, was performed by the Bishop of Dum-

¹ Chron. Melross, p. 221. Hailes, vol. i. p. 170, 4to.

² Rymer, Fœd. vol. i. p. 652. Chron. Melross, p. 221.

³ Math. Paris, pp. 626, 627.

⁴ Rymer, vol. i. p. 625.

blane, and the Abbots of Jedburgh and Melrose, in the abbey church of Cambuskenneth, and repeated, "by bell and candle," in every chapel in the kingdom.¹

The Comyns now assembled in great strength; they declared that the government of the kingdom had been shamefully mismanaged, that foreigners were promoted to the highest offices, that their sovereign was detained in the hands of accursed persons, and that an interdict would soon be fulminated against the whole kingdom.² Finding that their party increased in weight and popularity, they resorted to more desperate measures. Under cover of night they attacked the court of the king, which was then held at Kinross, seized the young monarch in his bed, carried him and his queen, before morning, to Stirling, made themselves masters of the great seal of the kingdom, and totally dispersed the opposite faction.

Alan Durward precipitately fled to England,³ and the Comyns, eager to press their advantage to the utmost, assembled their forces, and marched with the king against the English party. Nor were they remiss in strengthening their interest by foreign alliance. They entered into a remarkable treaty with Wales, at this time the enemy of England, which, with a wisdom scarcely to be looked for in those rude times, included in its provisions some important regulations regarding the commerce of both countries.⁴

¹ Chron. Melross, p. 221.

² See Illustrations, C.

³ Ibid. p. 221.

⁴ Rymer, Fœd. p. 370. Illustrations, D.

A negotiation at length took place at Roxburgh, and the nobility and principal knights, who composed the English faction, engaged to submit themselves to the king and the laws, and to settle all disputes in a conference to be held at Forfar. This was merely an artifice to gain time, for they immediately fled to England; and the Earls of Hereford and Albemarle, along with John de Baliol, soon after repaired to Melrose, where the Scottish king awaited the arrival of his army. Their avowed purpose was to act as mediators between the two factions, their real intention to seize, if possible, the person of the king, and to carry him into England.¹ But the plot was suspected; and Alexander, with the Comyns, defeated all hopes of its success, by appointing, for the scene of their conference, the forest of Jedburgh, in which a great part of his troops had already assembled.

The two earls, therefore, resumed their more pacific design of negotiation. It was difficult and protracted; so that in the interval, the king and the Comyns, having time to collect a large army, found themselves in a situation to insist upon terms which were alike favourable to their own power, and to the independence of the country. The King of England was compelled to dissemble his animosity, to forget his bitter opposition against Bishop Gamelin, and to reserve to some other opportunity all reference to the obnoxious treaty of Roxburgh. A new regency was appointed, which left the principal power in the hands of the

¹ Chron. Melross, p. 222.

queen-mother, and of the Comyns, but endeavoured to reconcile the opposite parties, by including in its numbers four of the former regents.¹ Meanwhile the country, torn by contending factions, was gradually reduced to a state of great misery. Men forgot their respect for the kingly authority, and despised the restraint of the laws ; the higher nobles enlisted under one or other of the opposite parties, plundered the lands, and slew the retainers of their rival barons ; churches were violated, castles and hamlets razed to the ground, and the regular returns of seed-time and harvest interrupted by the flames of private war. In short, the struggle to resist English interference was fatal, for the time, to the prosperity of the kingdom, and what Scotland gained in independence, she lost in security and national happiness.²

At this crisis, when they had effectually succeeded in diminishing, if not destroying, the English influence, the Comyns lost the leader, whose courage and energy were the soul of their councils. Walter Comyn, Earl of Menteith, died suddenly. It was reported in England that his death was occasioned by a fall from his horse ;³ but a darker story arose in Scotland. The Countess of Menteith had encouraged a criminal passion for an English baron named Russel,⁴ and was

¹ Rymer, *Fœdera*, vol. i. New ed. p. 378.

² Fordun a Goodal, vol. ii. p. 85.

³ Math. Paris, p. 660.

⁴ Buchanan, copying Boece, as he generally does, calls Russel *ignobilis Anglus*, and Hailes repeats the epithet. But it is probable they are in an error. John Russel is one of the witnesses, in 1220,

openly accused of having poisoned her husband to make way for her paramour, whom she married with indecent haste. Insulted and disgraced, she and her husband were thrown into prison, despoiled of their estates, and at last compelled to leave the kingdom.¹ Encouraged by the death of his opponent, and anxious to regain his lost influence, the English king became desirous that Alexander and his queen should pay him a visit at London, and for this purpose he dispatched William de Horton, a monk of St Albans, on a secret mission into Scotland. Horton arrived at the period when the king and his nobles were assembled in council, and found the nobility very jealous of this perpetual interference of England. They deemed these visits incompatible with the dignity of an independent country, and the messenger of Henry met with great opposition.² The nature of the message increased this jealousy. It was a request that Alexander and his queen should repair to London, to treat of matters of great importance, but which were not communicated to the parliament; and it was not surprising that the nobility, profiting by former experience, should have wisely taken precautions against any sinister designs of Henry. Accordingly, the Earl

who signs the agreement for the marriage of Johanna, sister of Henry the Third, to Alexander the Second, giving his obligation to Alexander for the fulfilment of the treaty. *Fœdera*, vol. i. p. 240. If this is the same person with the paramour of the Countess, he could not be an obscure individual.

¹ Hailes' Hist. vol. i. p. 172, 4to.

² Math. Paris, p. 663.

of Buchan, Durward the Justiciar, and the Chancellor Wishart, were in their turn dispatched upon a secret mission into England; and the result was, that Alexander and his queen consented to visit London, under the express stipulation, that, during their stay at court, neither the king, nor any of his attendants, was to be required to treat of state affairs, and under a solemn oath taken by the English monarch, that if the Queen of Scotland became pregnant, or if she gave birth to a child during her absence, neither the mother nor the infant should be detained in England.¹ So great, in the minds of the Scottish nobility, was the jealousy of English ambition and intrigue.

In the month of October, the King of Scotland repaired with a concourse of his nobility to the court of England, and left his queen, whose situation now speedily promised an heir to the Scottish throne, to follow him by slow stages, with the Bishop of Glasgow. On her approach to St Albans, she was met by her younger brother Edmund, who received her with a splendid retinue, lodged her sumptuously, and conducted her in the morning to London. The object of this visit of Alexander was not solely to gratify the King of England. He was anxious to exercise his rights over the territory of Huntingdon, which he held of the English crown, and the payment of his wife's portion had been so long delayed, that he wished to reclaim the debt. The reception of the royal persons appears to have been unusually magnificent, and the

¹ Rymer, *Fœdera*, vol. i. pp. 713, 714. Math. Westminster, p. 376.

country round the court was greatly exhausted by the sumptuous entertainments, and the intolerable expenses which they demanded.¹ In the midst of these festivities, the queen drew near her time ; and at the pressing instance of her father, it was agreed that she should lie-in at the court of England, not however without a solemn stipulation, sworn upon the soul of the king, that the infant, in the event of the death of its mother or of Alexander, should be delivered to an appointed body of the Scottish nobility.

Having secured this, Alexander returned to his kingdom, and in the month of February 1261, his young queen was delivered at Windsor of a daughter, Margaret, afterwards married to Eric King of Norway.²

In the beginning of the following year, Henry seems to have interposed his good offices, to prevent a rupture between Alexander and Haco King of Norway, regarding the possession of the western islands, the petty chiefs of which had for a long period been feudatory to the Norwegian crown.³ Their habits of constant war and piratical excursion had at this time rendered the Norwegians a formidable people, and their near vicinity to Scotland enabled them at a very early period to overspread the whole of the West-

¹ Math. Westminster, p. 376.

² Math. Westminster, p. 377. Chron. Melross, p. 223, places her birth in the year 1260. She certainly was not born as late as the 16th November, 1260.

³ Macpherson's Geographical Illustrations of Scottish History, under the word "Ilis." A most valuable work.

ern Archipelago. The little sovereignties of these islands, under the protection of a warlike government, appear to have been in a flourishing condition. They were crowded with people; and the useful and ornamental arts were carried in them to a higher degree of perfection than in the other European countries. A poet of the north, in describing a dress unusually gorgeous, adds, that it was spun by the Sudureyans.¹ And even in science and literature, this remarkable people had, in their colonies especially, attained to no inconsiderable distinction.²

The vicinity of such enterprising neighbours was particularly irksome to the Scottish kings, and they anxiously endeavoured to get possession of these islands. When treaty failed, they encouraged their subjects of Scotland to invade them; and Alan Lord of Galloway, assisted by Thomas Earl of Athole, about thirty years before this, carried on a successful war against the isles, and expelled Olaf the Black, King of Man, from his dominions.³ These Scottish chiefs had collected a large fleet, with a proportionably numerous army, and it required all the exertions of the Norwegian king to re-establish his vassal on his island throne. After this, the authority of Norway became gradually more and more precarious through-

¹ Johnson's *Lodbrodkar Quida*, stanza xv. and explanatory note.

² Macpherson's *Illustrations*, *ut supra*, *voce* "Ilis."

³ Johnston, *Antiquitates Celto-Normannicæ*, p. 30. A Memoir, by Mr Dillon, in the *Transactions of the Society of Scottish Antiquaries*, p. 356, vol. ii. p. 2. The fleet of Earl Alan alone consisted of 150 ships, small craft, of course, but formidable in piratic warfare.

out the isles. Some of the chiefs were compelled, others induced by motives of interest, to renounce their allegiance, and to embrace the nearer superiority of Scotland ; some who held lands of both crowns, were uncertain to whom they should pay their paramount allegiance ; and Alexander the Second, the immediate predecessor of Alexander the Third, after an unsuccessful attempt at negotiation, prepared an expedition for their complete reduction. The expressions used in threatening this invasion, may convince us that the Norwegians had not only acquired the sovereignty of the isles, but had established themselves upon the mainland of Scotland ; for the Scottish king declares, “ that he will not desist till he hath set his standard upon the cliffs of Thurso, and subdued all that the King of Norway possessed to the westward of the German Ocean.”¹ Alexander the Second, however, lived only to conduct his fleet and army to the shores of Argyleshire ; and, on the king’s death, the object of the expedition was abandoned.²

During the minority of Alexander the Third, all idea of reducing the isles seems to have been abandoned, but when the king was no longer a boy, the measure was seriously resumed ; and, after an unsuc-

¹ Chronicle of Man, p. 43.

² Math. Paris, p. 516. Mathew describes Alexander as having sailed on this expedition, for the purpose of compelling Angus of Argyle, “ a most brave and graceful knight,” to do him homage for certain lands which were held of Norway. Alexander’s object was to compel all the vassals of Norway to renounce their allegiance.

cessful embassy to the Norwegian court,¹ the Earl of Ross, and other island chiefs, were induced to invade the Kings of the Hebrides, in the western seas. Their expedition was accompanied with circumstances of extreme cruelty. The ketherans and soldiers of the isles, if we may believe the Norwegian Chronicles, not contented with the sack of villages and the plunder of churches, in their wanton fury raised the small children on the points of their spears, and shook them till they fell down to their hands : barbarities which might be thought incredible, were we not acquainted with the horrid atrocities which, even in our own days, have accompanied piratic warfare.²

Such conduct effectually roused Haco, the Norwegian king. He determined to revenge the injuries offered to his vassals, and immediately issued orders for the assembling of a fleet and army, whilst he repaired in person to Bergen, to superintend the preparations for the expedition. The magnitude of these spread an alarm even upon the coasts of England. It was reported, that the Kings of Denmark and Norway, with an overwhelming fleet, had bent their course against the Scottish islands ;³ and although the ap-

¹ Chronicle of Man, p. 45.

² The Chronicle of Man says, the Earl of Ross was assisted by Kearnach and the son of Macalmal. Macalmal is conjectured to be Macdonald. Who was Kearnach ? As to the inhuman practice mentioned in the text, see Johnston, Notes to the Norwegian Expedition.

³ Rymer, Fœdera, vol. i. p. 772. Letter from Ralph de Nevil, captain of Bamborough Castle.

parent object of Haco was nothing more than the protection of his vassals, yet the final destination of so powerful an armament was anxiously contemplated.

On the 7th of July, the fleet set sail from Herlover. The king commanded in person. His ship, which had been built at Bergen, was entirely of oak, of great dimensions,¹ and ornamented with richly-carved dragons, overlaid with gold. Every thing at first seemed to favour the expedition. It was midsummer, the day was fine, and innumerable flags, pennons, and gonfanons, flaunted in the breeze; the decks were crowded with knights and soldiers, whose armour glittered in the sun; and the armament, which was considered as the most powerful and splendid that had ever sailed from Norway, bore proudly away with a light wind for Shetland, which it reached in two days.² Haco thence sailed to Orkney, where he proposed to separate his forces into two divisions, and to send one of these to plunder in the Frith of Forth, whilst he himself remained in reserve, with his largest ships and the greater part of his army, in Orkney. It happened, however, that the higher vassals and retainers, who appear to have had a powerful influence in the general direction of the expedition, refused to go any where without the king himself, and this project was aban-

¹ Norse Account of this Expedition, with its translation, published by Johnston, p. 25. According to this work, Haco's ship had twenty-seven banks of oars; that is, twenty-seven seats for the rowers.

² Norse Account of the Expedition, pp. 38, 39. It calls it a mighty and splendid armament. Haco anchored in Bredeyiar Sound.

done.¹ The fleet, therefore, directed its course to the south, and, after being joined by a small squadron which had previously been dispatched to the westward,² Haco conducted his ships into the bay of Ronaldsvoe, and sent messengers to the neighbouring coast of Caithness to levy contributions. This country, exposed from its situation to perpetual piratic invasions, was, as we have seen, in 1249 under the dominion of Norway. But this did not long continue. The exertions of the Scottish government succeeded in reducing the inhabitants—hostages were exacted for their fidelity;³ and now we find this remote district in the state of a Scottish province, exposed to the exactions of Norway.

No aid, however, appeared from Scotland, and the Caithnesians quietly submitted to the tribute which Haco imposed upon them. It is remarked by the Norwegian Chronicle, that when their king lay with his fleet in Ronaldsvoe, “a great darkness drew over the sun, so that only a little ring was bright round his orb.” The ancient historian thus afforded to modern science the means of exactly ascertaining the date of this great expedition. The eclipse was calculated, and it was found to have taken place on the 5th of August 1263, and to have been annular at Ronaldsvoe in Orkney; a fine example of the clear and certain light reflected by the exact sciences upon his-

¹ Norse Account, p. 43.

² Observations on the Norwegian Expedition, Antiquarian Transactions, p. 363, vol. ii.

³ The Chronicle of Melross is thus evidently wrong in placing this expedition in 1262.

tory. Early in August, the king sailed across the Pentland frith, having left orders for the Orkney men to follow him when their preparations were completed ; thence he proceeded by the Lewes to the Isle of Sky, where he was joined by Magnus, the Lord of Man ; and from this holding on to the Sound of Mull, he met Dugal, and other Hebridean chiefs, with their whole forces.

The united armament of Haco now amounted to above a hundred vessels, most of them large, all well provided with men and arms ; and, on the junction of the fleet, the details of piracy commenced. A division of the forces first took place.¹ A squadron of fifty ships, under Magnus and Dugal, was sent to plunder in the Mull of Kentire ; five ships were dispatched for the same purpose to Bute ; and the king himself, with the rest of the fleet, remained at Gigha, a little island between the coast of Kentire and Isla. He was here met by King John, one of the island chiefs, whom Alexander the Second had in vain attempted to seduce from his fidelity to Norway. John was now, however, differently situated, and a scene took place which is strongly illustrative of feudal manners. Haco desired him to follow his banner, as was his duty ; upon which the island prince excused himself. He affirmed, that he had taken the oaths as a vassal of the Scottish king ; that he held of him more lands than of his Norwegian master ; and he entreated Haco to dispose of all those estates which

¹ Norse Account of the Expedition, p. 49.

he had conferred on him. This reasoning, although not agreeable to his powerful superior, was apparently such as Haco could not dispute; and after a short time John was dismissed, not only uninjured, but with presents.¹

Indeed, many of these island chiefs found themselves, during this northern invasion, in a very distressing situation. On one hand, the destroying fleet of Haco lay close to the shores of their little territories, eager to plunder them should they manifest the slightest resistance. On the other, they had given hostages for their loyal behaviour to the King of Scotland, and the liberty, perhaps the lives, of their friends, or their children, were forfeited if they deserted to the enemy. In this cruel dilemma was Angus, Lord of Kentire and Isla, apparently a person of high authority in these parts, and whose allegiance the Scottish king seems to have adopted every method to secure. He held his infant son as a hostage; a solemn instrument was drawn out, which declared his territories subject to instant forfeiture, if he deserted; and the barons of Argyle were compelled to promise that they would faithfully serve the king against Angus of Isla, and unite in accomplishing his ruin, unless he continued true to his oaths.² But the power of the King of Scotland was remote, the vengeance of piratical warfare was at his door; and

¹ Norse Account of the Expedition, p. 51. See also p. 69.

² Observations on the Norwegian Expedition, Antiquarian Transactions, pp. 367, 368. See Ayloff's Calendar of Ancient Charters, pp. 336, and 342.

Angus, with another island prince, Murchad of Kentire, submitted to Haco, and delivered up the whole lands which they held of Alexander. A fine of a thousand head of cattle was esteemed a proper punishment for their desertion from Norway; and when they renewed their oaths to Haco, he promised, what he did not live to perform, to reconcile them to the offended Majesty of Scotland.¹

In the meantime, the squadron which had been dispatched towards the Mull of Kentire, made a descent upon the peninsula, and wasted it with fire and sword; but in the midst of their havock, and when they were proceeding to attack the greater villages, they received letters from Haco, forbidding them to plunder, and commanding them to rejoin the king's fleet at Gigha. Haco next dispatched one of his captains, with some small vessels, to join the little squadron which had sailed against Bute; and intelligence soon after reached him, that the castle of Rothsay, in that island, had been taken by his soldiers, and that the Scottish garrison had capitulated. A pirate chief, named Roderic, who claimed Bute as his inheritance, but who had been opposed by the islanders, and outlawed by Alexander, was at this time with Haco. His knowledge of the seas in these quarters made him useful to the invaders, and the power of Haco enabled him to gratify his revenge. He accordingly laid waste the island, basely murdered part of the garrison of Rothsay, and leading a party of plunder-

¹ Norse Account of the Expedition, pp. 55, 56.

ers from Bute into Scotland, carried fire and sword into the heart of the neighbouring country.¹

While the king's fleet lay at Gigha, Haco received messengers from the Irish Ostmen, with proposals of submitting themselves to his power, under the condition that he would pass over to Ireland with his fleet, and grant them his protection against the attacks of their English invaders, who had acquired the principal towns upon the coast. In reply to this proposal, the king dispatched Sigurd, the Hebridean, with some fast-sailing ships, to communicate with the Ostmen ;² and in the meantime, he himself, with the whole fleet, sailed round the point of Kentire, and, entering the Frith of Clyde, anchored in the Sound of Kilbrannan, which lies between the island of Arran and the mainland.

¹ Norse Account of the Expedition, pp. 63, 67. This valuable historical chronicle is interspersed with pieces of poetry, descriptive of the events which occurred. The invasion of Bute, and the inroad of Rudri into Scotland, are thus sung :

“ The habitations of men, the dwellings of the wretched, flamed. Fire, the devourer of halls, glowed in their granaries. The hapless throwers of the dart fell near the swan-frequented plain, while south from our floating pines marched a host of warriors.”

² Norse Account of the Expedition, p. 67. These Ostmen, or Easterlings, appear to have been the descendants of the Norwegians, or Ostmen, who long inhabited the eastern coast of Ireland, and founded some of its best towns. They were still, in 1201, so considerable, that, at a recognition taken of the diocese of Limerick, the arbitrators were twelve English, twelve Irish, and twelve Ostmen. Edward the First gave Gilmorys, and other Ostmen of the county of Waterford, particular privileges.—Johnston's Notes on p. 66 of the Norse Expedition.

Hitherto the great body of the Norwegian fleet had remained in the Hebrides, and Scotland was only made acquainted with this formidable invasion by the small squadrons which had been dispatched for the purposes of plunder. But the whole naval armament of Haco, amounting to a hundred and sixty ships, as it entered the Frith of Clyde, became conspicuous from the opposite shores of Kyle, Carric, and Wigton; and the more immediate danger of a descent, induced the Scottish government to think seriously of some terms of pacification. Accordingly, there soon after arrived from Alexander a deputation of Prædicant, or Barefooted Friars, whose object was to sound Haco regarding the conditions upon which a peace might be concluded; and, in consequence of these overtures, five Norwegian commissioners¹ were sent to treat with the King of Scotland. They were honourably received by Alexander, and dismissed with a promise, that such terms of accommodation as the Scottish king could consent to, should be transmitted to Haco within a short time; and in the meanwhile a temporary truce was agreed on. To delay any pacification, yet without irritating their enemy, was the manifest policy of Scotland. Every day gave them more time to levy and concentrate their army; and as the autumn was drawing to a close, it brought the Norwegians a nearer prospect of wreck and disaster from the winter storms. Envoys were now

¹ These were Gilbert, Bishop of Hamar, Henry, Bishop of Orkney, Andrew Nicolson, Andrew Plytt, and Paul Soor.—Norse Account of the Expedition, p. 69.

dispatched from Alexander to Haco, and the moderate demands of the King of Scotland made it apparent, that, at this moment, he was not prepared to resist the fleet and army of Norway. He claimed Bute, Arran, and the two islands of the Cumrays, all lying in the Frith of Clyde, as the property of Scotland; but it appears that he was willing to have given up to Norway the whole of the Isles of the Hebrides.¹ These terms, so advantageous to Haco, were, fortunately for Scotland, rejected—no pacification took place; and the fleet of Norway bore in through the narrow strait, between the larger and the lesser Cumray, thus menacing a descent upon the coast of Ayrshire, which is scarcely two miles distant.

The crews had now run short of victuals, the weather was daily becoming more threatening, a strong Scottish force of armed peasants had gathered on the shore, and Haco was anxiously exhorted by his officers to give orders for a descent on the coast, were it only to recruit, by plunder, the exhausted state of their provisions.² This measure, it seems, he was unwilling to adopt, without a last message to the King of Scotland; and for this purpose he sent an ambassador³ to Alexander, whose commission was worded in the true style of ancient chivalry. He was to propose, "That the sovereigns should meet amicably at the head of their armies, and treat regarding a peace,

¹ Norse Account of the Expedition, p. 71.

² Ibid. pp. 73, 75.

³ Kolbein Rich was his name.

which if, by the grace of God, it took place, it was well; but if the attempt at negotiation failed, he was to throw down the gauntlet from Norway, to challenge the Scottish monarch to debate the matter with his army in the field, and let God, in his pleasure, determine the victory." Alexander, however, would agree to no explanation, but "seemed," says the Norse Chronicle, "in no respect unwilling to fight;"¹ upon which the envoy returned from his unsatisfactory mission, and the truce was declared at an end.

Haco next dispatched a fleet of sixty ships up the Clyde, into Loch Long, under the command of Magnus, King of Man, and with him four Hebridean chiefs, and two principal Norwegian officers. They penetrated and plundered to the head of Loch Long; they then took to their boats, and dragging them across the narrow neck of land between Arrochar and Tarbat, launched them into Loch Lomond, the islands of which lake were then full of inhabitants. To these islands the Scots had retreated for security, no doubt, little anticipating the measure, which the lightness of the Norwegian craft, and the active perseverance of that bold people, enabled them to carry into execution. Their safeholds now became the scenes of plunder and bloodshed; the islands were wasted with fire, the shores of this beautiful lake completely ravaged, and the houses on its borders burnt to the ground.² After this, one of the Hebri-

¹ Norse Account of the Expedition.

² Ibid. pp. 78, 79. Sturlas sings of this,—“The persevering shielded warriors of the thrower of the whizzing spear drew their

dean chiefs made an expedition into the rich and populous county of Stirling, in which he slew great numbers of the inhabitants, and returned, driving herds of cattle before him, and loaded with booty.¹ But the measure of Norwegian success was now full, the spirit of the Scottish nation was highly exasperated, time had been given them to collect their forces, and, as had been foreseen, the elements began to fight on their side. Upon returning to their ships, in Loch Long, the invaders encountered so dreadful a storm, that ten of their vessels were completely wrecked.² King Haco still lay with the rest of the fleet in the Frith of Clyde, near the little islands of the Cumrays, when, on Monday, the 1st of October, a second tempest came on, accompanied with such torrents of hailstones and rain, that the Norwegian chronicler ascribes its extreme violence to the horrid powers of enchantment, a prevalent belief at this period.³ The wind blew from the south-west, making the coast of Ayrshire a lee-shore to the fleet, and thus increasing its distress to a great degree. At midnight a

boats across the broad isthmus. Our fearless troops, the exactors of contribution, with flaming brands, wasted the populous islands in the lake, and the mansions around its winding bays."

¹ Excerpt. e Rotul. Compot. Temp. Alex. III. p. 38.

² Norse Account of the Expedition, pp. 81, 83, 84.

³ "Now our deep-enquiring sovereign encountered the horrid powers of enchantment. The troubled flood tore many fair galleys from their moorings, and swept them anchorless before the waves.

* * The roaring billows and stormy blast threw shielded companies of our adventurous nation on the Scottish strand."—Norse Account, p. 87.

cry was heard in the king's ship, and before assistance could be given, the rigging of a transport, driven loose by the storm, got entangled with the royal vessel, and carried away her head. The transport then fell alongside in such a manner, that her anchor grappled the cordage of the king's ship; and Haco, perceiving the storm increasing, and finding his own ship beginning to drag her anchors, ordered the cable of the transport to be cut, and let her drift to sea. When morning came, she and another vessel were seen cast ashore. The wind still increased, and the king, imagining that the powers of magic might be controlled by the services of religion, rowed in his long boat to the islands of the Cumrays, and there, amid the roaring of the elements, ordered mass to be sung.¹ But the tempest increased in fury. Many vessels cut away their masts; his own ship, although secured by seven anchors, drove from her moorings, five galleys were cast ashore, and the rest of the fleet violently beat up the channel towards Largs.²

Meanwhile, Alexander had neglected no precaution which was likely to ensure the discomfiture of this great armament. Before it appeared on the coast, the warders in the different castles which commanded a view of the sea, were directed to keep a strict lookout, a communication by beacons was established with the interior of the country,³ and now when the tem-

¹ Norse Account of the Expedition, p. 85.

² Ibid.

³ Observations on the Norwegian Expedition against Scotland, pp. 390, 391.

pest seemed to threaten the total destruction of their enemies, a mixed multitude of armed peasants hovered on the surrounding heights, observing every motion of the Norwegian fleet, and ready to take instant advantage of its distress. Accordingly, when the five galleys, with their armed crews, were cast ashore, the Scots rushed down from the heights and attacked them. The Norwegians defended themselves with great gallantry, and Haco, as the wind had a little abated, succeeded in sending in some boats with reinforcements, and soon after embarked himself, with the intention of joining his soldiers; but as soon as the king's men appeared, the Scots retired, satisfying themselves with returning during the night, to plunder the transports.¹

When morning broke, the king came on shore with a large reinforcement, and ordered the transports to be lightened, and towed to the ships. Soon after, the Scottish army appeared at a distance, upon the high grounds above the village of Largs; and as it advanced, with the sun's rays glancing from the spears and corslets, it was evident to the Norwegians, that a formidable body of troops were about to attack them. The cavalry, although they only amounted to fifteen hundred horsemen, made a noble appearance on the heights, most of them being knights or barons from the neighbouring counties, armed from head to heel, and mounted on Spanish horses, which were clothed in complete armour.² All the other horses were de-

¹ Norse Account of the Expedition, p. 91.

² Ibid, pp. 94, 95.

fended with breastplates ; and besides this cavalry, there was a numerous body of foot soldiers, well accoutred, and for the most part armed with spears and bows. This force was led by the king in person, along with Alexander, the high steward of Scotland.¹

On the shore, at this time, was a body of nine hundred Norwegians, commanded by three principal leaders ; two hundred men occupied in advance a small hill which rises behind the village of Largs, and the rest of the troops were drawn up on the beach. With the advance also was the king, whom, as the main battle of the Scots approached, his officers anxiously entreated to row out to his fleet, and send them farther reinforcements. Haco, for some time, pertinaciously insisted on remaining on shore ; but as he became more and more exposed, the barons would not consent to this, and at last prevailed on him to return in his barge to his fleet at the Cumrays. The van of the Scottish army now began to skirmish with the advance of the Norwegians, and greatly outnumbering them, pressed on both flanks with so much fury, that, afraid of being surrounded and cut to pieces, they began a retreat, which soon changed into a flight. At this critical moment, when every thing depended on Haco's returning with additional forces before the main body of the Scots had time to charge his troops on the beach, a violent storm came on, which completed the ruin of the Norwegian fleet, already shattered by the former furious gales. This

¹ Norse Account of the Expedition, p. 95. Winton, vol. i. p. 387. Fordun a Goodal, vol. ii. p. 98.

cut off all hopes of landing a reinforcement, and they were completely routed. Indeed, without a miracle, it could not have been otherwise. The main body of the Scots very far outnumbered the force of the Norwegians;¹ and their advance, under Ogmund, flying back in confusion, threw into disorder the small battalia which were drawn up on the beach. Many of these attempted to save themselves, by leaping into their boats and pushing off from land; others endeavoured to defend themselves in the transport which had been stranded; and, between the anger of the elements, the ceaseless showers of missile weapons from the enemy, and the impossibility of receiving succour from the fleet, their army was greatly distressed. Their leaders, too, began to desert them, and their boats became overloaded and went down.² The Norwegians were now driven along the shore, but they constantly rallied, and behaved with their accustomed national bravery. Many had placed themselves in and around some stranded vessels; and while the main body retreated slowly, and in good order, a conflict took place beside the ships, where Piers de Curry,³ a Scottish knight, was encountered and slain. Curry appears to have been a person of some note, for he and the Steward of Scotland are the only Scottish soldiers whose names have come down

¹ Norse Account of the Expedition, p. 97, says, that ten Scots fought against one Norwegian. This is no doubt exaggerated.

² Ibid. p. 97.

³ Winton, b. vi. vol ii. p. 388. "Perrys of Curry call'd be name."

to us as acting a principal part upon this occasion. His death is minutely described in the Norwegian Chronicle. Gallantly mounted, and splendidly armed, his helmet and coat of mail being inlaid with gold, Sir Piers rode fearlessly up to the Norwegian line, attempting, in the chivalrous style of the times, to provoke an encounter. In this he was soon satisfied; for a Norwegian, who conducted the retreat, irritated by his defiance, engaged him in single combat, and, after a short resistance, killed him by a blow which severed his thigh from his body, the sword cutting through the greaves of his armour, and penetrating to his saddle.¹ A conflict now took place round the body of this young knight, the plunder of whose rich armour the retreating Norwegians could not resist; their little square was thrown into confusion, and, as the Scots pressed on, the slaughter became great. Haco, a Norse baron, and near in blood to the king, was slain, along with many others of the principal leaders; and the Norwegians would have been entirely cut to pieces, if they had not at last succeeded in bringing a reinforcement from the fleet, by landing their boats through a tremendous surf.²

These new troops instantly attacked the enemy upon two points, and their arrival reinspired the Norsemen, and enabled them to form anew. It was now evening, and the day had been occupied by a protracted battle, or rather a succession of obstinate skirmishes. The Norwegians, although they fought

¹ Norse Account of the Expedition, p. 99.

² Ibid. p. 101.

with uncommon spirit, had sustained severe loss, and they now made a last effort to repulse the Scots from the high grounds immediately overhanging the shore. The desperate impetuosity of their attack succeeded, and the enemy were driven back after a short and furious resistance.¹ The relics of this brave body of invaders then reimbarbed in their boats, and, although the storm continued, arrived safely at the fleet.

During the whole of this conflict, which lasted from morning till night, the storm continued raging with unabated fury, and the remaining ships of Haco were dreadfully shattered and distressed. They drove from their anchors, stranded on the shore, where multitudes perished—struck against shallows and rocks, or found equal destruction by running foul of each other; and the morning presented a beach covered with dead bodies, and a sea strewed with sails, masts, cordage, and all the melancholy accompaniments of wreck.² A truce was now granted to the king; and the interval was employed in burying his dead, and in raising above them those rude memorials, which, in the shape of tumuli and huge perpendicular stones, still remain to mark the field of battle. The Norwegians then burnt the stranded vessels, and after a few days, having been joined by the remains of the fleet, which

¹ Norse Account of the Expedition, p. 103.

“ At the conflict of corslets on the blood-red hill, the damasked blade hewed the mail of hostile tribes, ere the Scot, nimble as the hound, would leave the field to the followers of our all-conquering king.”

² Fordun, c. 16, b. x.

had been sent up Loch Long, their shattered navy weighed anchor, and sailed towards Arran.¹

In Lamlash Bay the king was met by the commissioners whom he had sent to Ireland, and they assured him that the Irish Ostmen would willingly maintain his army, until he had freed them from the dominion of the English. Haco was eager to embrace the proposal. He appears to have been anxious to engage in any new expedition which might have banished their recent misfortunes from the minds of his soldiers, whilst it afforded him another chance of victory, with the certainty of re-provisioning the fleet; but their late disasters had made too deep an impression, and, on calling a council, the Irish expedition was opposed by the whole army.²

The shattered squadron, therefore, steered for the Hebrides, and in passing Isla, again levied a large contribution on that island. Haco, however, now felt the difference between sailing through this northern archipelago, as he had done a few months before, with a splendid and conquering fleet, when every day brought the island princes as willing vassals of his flag, and retreating as he now did, a baffled invader. His boat crews were attacked, and cut off by the islanders. He appears to have in vain solicited an interview with John the Prince of the Isles. The pirate chiefs who had joined him, disappointed of

¹ Observations on the Norwegian Expedition, Antiquarian Transactions, vol. ii. p. 385.

² Norse Account of the Expedition, p. 109.

their hopes of plunder, returned to their ocean-homes ; and although he went through the forms of bestowing upon his followers the islands of Bute and Arran, with other imaginary conquests, all must have seen, that the success and power of Scotland rendered these grants utterly unavailing.¹ The weather, too, which had been his worst enemy, continued lowering, and winter had set in. The fleet encountered in their return a severe gale off Isla, and, after doubling Cape Wrath, were met in the Pentland Frith by a second storm, in which one vessel, with all on board, went down ; and another narrowly escaped the same fate. The king's ship, however, with the rest of the fleet, weathered the tempest, and at last arrived in Orkney on the 29th of October.²

It was here found advisable to grant the troops permission to return to Norway, as, to use the simple expression of the Norwegian Chronicle, " many had already taken leave for themselves." At first the king resolved on accompanying them ; but although the Chronicle endeavours to conceal the truth, it is evident that anxiety of mind, the incessant fatigues in which he had passed the summer and autumn, and the bitter disappointment in which they ended, had sunk deep into his heart, and the symptoms of a mortal distemper began to show themselves in his constitution. His increasing sickness soon after this confined him to his chamber ; and although for some

¹ Norse Account of the Expedition, pp. 111, 113, 117.

² Ibid. p. 119.

time he struggled against the disease, and endeavoured to strengthen his mind by the cares of government, and the consolations of religion, yet all proved in vain. At last, feeling himself dying, the spirit of the old Norse warrior seemed to revive with the decay of his bodily frame, and, after some time spent in the services of the church, he commanded the Chronicles of his ancestors the Pirate Kings to be read to him. On the 12th of December, the principal of the nobility and clergy, aware that there was no hope, attended in the king's bedchamber. Though greatly debilitated, Haco spoke distinctly, bade them all affectionately farewell, and kissed them. He then received extreme unction, and declared that he left no other heir than Prince Magnus. The Chronicle of King Swerar was still read aloud to him when he was indisposed to sleep, but soon after this his voice became inaudible, and on the 15th of December, at midnight, he expired.¹

Such was the conclusion of this memorable expedition against Scotland, which began with high hopes and formidable preparations, but ended in the disappointment of its object, and the death of its royal leader. It was evidently a fatal mistake in Haco to delay so long in petty expeditions against the Western Islands. While it was still summer, and the weather fair, he ought at once to have attempted a descent upon the mainland; and had he done so, Alexander might have been thrown into great difficulties.

¹ Norse Account of the Expedition, p. 131.

Delay and protracted negotiation was the policy of the Scots. They thus avoided any general battle, and they knew that if they could detain the Norwegian fleet upon the coast till the setting in of the winter storms, its destruction was almost inevitable. Boece, in his usual inventive vein, covers the field with twenty-five thousand dead Norwegians, and allows only four ships to have been saved to carry the king to his grave in Orkney. But all this is fiction; and the battle of Largs appears to have been nothing more than a succession of fortunate skirmishes, in which a formidable armament was effectually destroyed by the fury of the elements, judiciously seconded by the bravery of the Scots.

The accounts of the death of Haco, and the news of the queen having been delivered of a son, were brought to King Alexander on the same day.¹ He was thus freed from a restless and powerful enemy, and he could look forward to a successor of his own blood. He now lost no time in following up the advantages already gained, by completing the reduction of the little kingdom of Man, and the whole of the Western Isles. For this purpose he levied an army, with the object of invading the Isle of Man, and he compelled the petty chiefs of the Hebrides to furnish a fleet for the transport of his troops. But the King of Man, terrified at the impending vengeance, sent

¹ Winton, vol. i. pp. 389, 390. Mackenzie, in his *Lives of Scottish Writers*, vol. ii. p. 86, mentions a fragment of the records of Colm-kill, which was in possession of the Earl of Cromarty, as containing an account of the battle of Largs.

envoys with messages of submission; and, fearful that these would be disregarded, set out himself, and met Alexander, who had advanced on his march as far as Dumfries.¹ At this place the Island Prince became the liegeman of the King of Scotland, and consented that in future he should hold his kingdom of the Scottish crown, binding himself to furnish to his lord paramount, when required by him, ten galleys or ships of war, five with twenty-four oars, and five with twelve.

A military force, commanded by the Earl of Mar, was next sent against those unfortunate chiefs of the Western Isles, who during the late expedition had remained faithful to Haco.² Some were executed, all were reduced, and the disputes with Norway were finally settled by a treaty, in which that country agreed to yield to Scotland all right over Man, the Æbudæ, and the islands in the western seas. The islands in the south seas were also included, and those of Orkney and Shetland especially excepted. The inhabitants of the Hebrides were permitted the option of either retiring with their property, or remaining to be governed in future by Scottish laws. On the part of the king and the Estates of Scotland, it was stipulated that they were to pay to Norway

¹ Fordun a Goodal, b. x. c. 18, vol. ii. p. 101. In Ayloff's Calendar of Ancient Charters, p. 328, we find the letter of the King of Man to the King of Scotland, *quod tenebit terram Man de rege Scotiæ*. It was one of the muniments taken out of Edinburgh Castle, and carried to England by Edward the First.

² Fordun a Goodal, vol. ii. pp. 101, 102. Excerpt. e Rotul. Compot. Temp. Alex. III., p. 18.

four thousand merks of the Roman standard, and a yearly quit-rent of a hundred marks sterling for ever. The King of Man received investiture as a vassal of Alexander, and all parties solemnly engaged to fulfil their obligations, under a penalty of ten thousand marks, to be exacted by the Pope.¹

Ottobon de Fieschi was at this time the Papal legate in England, and to defray the expenses of his visitation, he thought proper to demand a contribution from each cathedral and parish church in Scotland. The king, however, acting with the advice of his clergy, peremptorily refused the demand, appealed to Rome, and when Ottobon requested admittance into Scotland, steadily declared that he should not set his foot over the borders. The legate next summoned the Scottish bishops to attend upon him in England whenever he should hold his council, and he required the clergy to dispatch two of their number, who were heads of monasteries, to appear as their representatives. This they easily agreed to, but the representatives were sent, not as the willing vassals of the papacy, but as the proud members of an independent church. Such, indeed, they soon showed themselves; for when the legate procured several canons to be

¹ The treaty will be found in Fordun by Hearne, p. 1353-5. It is dated 20th July, 1366. In the account of the treaty, Lord Hailes has made a slight error, when he says, that the patronage of the bishoprick of Sodor was reserved to the Archbishop of Drontheim. The patronage was expressly ceded to Alexander, but the ecclesiastical jurisdiction was reserved in favour of the Archbishop of Drontheim.

enacted regarding Scotland, the Scottish clergy positively disclaimed obedience to them. Incensed at this conduct, Clement the Fourth shifted his ground, and demanded from them a tenth of their benefices, to be paid to Henry of England, as an aid for an approaching crusade. The answer of Alexander and his clergy was here equally spirited. Scotland itself, they said, was ready to equip for the crusade a body of knights suitable to the strength and resources of the kingdom, and they therefore rejected the requisition of his Holiness. Accordingly, David, Earl of Athole, Adam, Earl of Carric, and William, Lord Douglas, with many other barons and knights, assumed the cross, and sailed for Palestine.¹

In consequence, however, of the Papal grant, Henry attempted to levy the tenth upon the benefices in Scotland. The Scottish clergy refused the contribution, appealed to Rome, and, in addition to this, adopted measures, which were singularly bold, and excellently calculated to secure the independence of the Scottish church. They assembled a provincial council at Perth, in which a bishop of their own was chosen to preside, and where canons for the regulation of their own church were solemnly enacted. This they contended they were entitled to do, by the Bull of Pope Honorius the Fourth, granted in the year 1225; and aware of the importance of making a vigor-

¹ Fordun a Goodal, b. x. c. 24. Holinshed, vol. i. p. 406, gives as the names of the crusading nobles, the Earls of Carric and Athole, John Steward, Alexander Cumin, Robert Keith, George Durward, John Quincy, and William Gordon.

ous stand at this moment, by their first canon it was appointed that an annual council should be held in Scotland; and by their second, that each of the bishops should assume, in rotation, the office of "Protector of the Statutes," or Conservator Statutorum. These canons remain to this day an interesting specimen of the ancient ecclesiastical code of Scotland.¹

About this time happened an incident of a romantic nature, with which important consequences were connected. A Scottish knight of high birth, Robert de Brus, son of Robert de Brus, Lord of Annandale and Cleveland, was passing on horseback through the domains of Turnberry, which belonged to Marjory, Countess of Carric.² The lady happened at the moment to be pursuing the diversion of the chase, surrounded by a retinue of her squires and damsels. They encountered Bruce. The young countess was struck by his noble figure, and courteously entreated him to remain and take the recreation of hunting. Bruce, who, in those feudal days, knew the danger of paying too much attention to a ward of the king, declined the invitation, when he found himself suddenly surrounded by the attendants; and the lady, riding up, seized his bridle, and led off the knight, with gentle violence, to her castle of Turnberry. Here, after

¹ These canons were printed by Wilkins in his *Concilia*, and in a small 4to, by Lord Hailes. See Hailes' *Hist.* vol. i. p. 149.

² Although all the historians call this lady Martha, yet she is named Marjory by her son, King Robert Bruce. Register of the Great Seal, p. 108; and Marjory was the name of King Robert's daughter.

fifteen days' residence, the adventure concluded as might have been anticipated. Bruce married the countess, without the knowledge of the relations of either party, and before obtaining the king's consent; upon which Alexander seized her castle of Turnberry and her whole estates. The kind intercession of friends, however, and a heavy fine, atoned for the feudal delinquency, and conciliated the mind of the monarch. Bruce became, in right of his wife, Lord of Carric; and the son of this marriage of romantic love was the great Robert Bruce, the restorer of Scottish liberty.¹

Two years previous to this, died Henry the Third of England,² after a reign of nearly sixty years. His character possessed nothing great or noble; his genius was narrow; his temper wavering; his courage, happily, little tried; and he was addicted, like many weak princes, to favouritism. At times he had permitted himself to be guided by able ministers; and the vigour, talents, and kingly endowments of his son, Edward the First, shed a lustre over the last years of his reign, which the king himself could never have imparted to it. At the coronation of Edward his successor, Alexander and his queen, the new king's sister, attended with a retinue of great pomp and splendour. He took care, however, to obtain a letter under Edward's hand, declaring that this friendly visit should not be construed into any thing prejudicial to the independence of Scotland,³ a policy

¹ Fordun a Goodal, b. x. c. 29.

² On 16th Nov. 1272.

³ Ayloffé's Calendars of Ancient Charters, 328, 342. Leland's Collectanea, vol. ii. p. 471.

which the peculiarities of feudal tenure made frequent at this time ; for we find Edward himself, when some years afterwards he agreed to send twenty ships to the King of France, his feudal superior for the duchy of Normandy, requiring from that prince an acknowledgment of the very same description.

The designs of Edward upon Scotland had not yet, in any degree, betrayed themselves, and the kingly brothers appear to have met on cordial terms. Both were in the prime of manhood ; Alexander having entered, and Edward having just completed, his thirty-fourth year. Scotland, still unweakened by the fatal controversies between Bruce and Baliol, was in no state to invite ambitious aggression. The kingdom was peaceful, prosperous, and loyal, possessing a warlike and attached nobility, and a hardy peasantry, lately delivered, by the defeat of Haco, and the wise acquisition of the Western Isles, from all disturbance in the only quarter where it might be dreaded ; and from the age of Alexander and his queen, who had already borne him three children, the nation could look with some certainty to a successor. Edward, on the other hand, who had lately returned from Palestine, where he had greatly distinguished himself, received his brother-in-law with that courtesy and kindness which was likely to be increased by his long absence, and by the perils he had undergone. On his return to his kingdom, Alexander experienced a severe domestic affliction in the death of his queen, who expired on 26th February, 1274.¹

¹ Winton, vol. i. p. 391.

All went prosperously on between the two monarchs for some time. A dispute which had occurred with the Bishop of Durham, in which that prelate complained that Alexander had encroached upon the English marches, was amicably settled, and Edward, occupied entirely with his conquest of Wales, and according to his custom, whenever engaged in war, concentrating his whole energies upon one point, had little leisure to think of Scotland. The insidious disposition of the English king first showed itself regarding the feudal service of homage due to him by his Scottish brother, for the lands which he held in England; and he seems early to have formed the scheme of entrapping Alexander into the performance of a homage so vague and unconditional, that it might hereafter be construed into the degrading acknowledgment that Scotland was a fief of England.

In 1277 we find him writing to the Bishop of Wells, that his beloved brother, the King of Scotland, had agreed to perform an unconditional homage, and that he was to receive it at the ensuing feast of Michaelmas.¹ This, however, could not possibly be true, and the event showed that Edward had either misconceived or mistated the purpose of Alexander. He appeared before the English parliament at Westminster, and offered his homage in these words:—"I, Alexander, King of Scotland, do acknowledge myself the liegeman of my lord Edward, King of England, against all deadly;" terms which, at first sight,

¹ Rymer, *Fœdera*, vol. ii. p. 109.

appear unconditional enough ; but after having thus offered his fealty, Alexander requested that the oath should be taken for him by Robert de Brus, Earl of Carric, which being granted, that noble earl took the oath, in these words :—

“ I, Robert, Earl of Carric, according to the authority given to me by my lord the King of Scotland, in presence of the King of England, and other prelates and barons, by which the power of swearing upon the soul of the King of Scotland was conferred upon me, have, in presence of the King of Scotland, and commissioned thereto by his special precept, sworn fealty to Lord Edward, King of England, in these words :—‘ I, Alexander, King of Scotland, shall bear faith to my Lord Edward, King of England, and his heirs, with my life and members, and worldly substance ; and I shall faithfully perform the services, used and wont, *for the lands and tenements which I hold of the said king.*’ ” Which fealty being sworn by the Earl of Carric, the King of Scotland, confirmed and ratified the same.¹ Such is an exact account of the homage performed by Alexander to Edward, as given in the solemn instrument by which the English monarch himself recorded the transaction. The conduct of Edward was crafty and ungenerous, that of Alexander firm, open, and tem-

¹ Rymer, *Fœdera*, vol. ii. p. 126. Tyrrel, vol. iii. p. 22, misled by Knighton, b. iii. c. i. erroneously says, that the homage was performed by Alexander at Edward's coronation, and adds, that historians do not say whether it was for Scotland, or for the Earldom of Huntingdon.

perate. He probably had not forgotten the insidious snare in which Edward's father had attempted to entrap him, when still a boy, and these repeated stratagems might justly have incensed him. But he wished not to break with Edward; he held extensive territories in England, for which he was willing, as he was bound in duty, to pay homage, yet he so guarded his attendance at Edward's coronation, and his subsequent oath of fealty, that the independence of Scotland as a kingdom, and his own independence as its sovereign, were not touched in the most distant manner; and the King of England, baffled in his attempt to procure the unconditional homage which he expected, was forced to accept it as it was given. It is material to notice, that in the instrument drawn up afterwards, recording the transaction, but which the King of Scotland and his nobility either never saw, or refused to acknowledge, Edward declares his understanding, that this homage was merely for the Scottish king's possessions in England, by reserving his absurd claim of homage for Scotland, whenever he or his heirs should think proper to make it.

This matter being concluded, Alexander began to seek alliances for his children. He married his daughter Margaret, to Eric, King of Norway, then a youth in his fourteenth year. Her portion was fourteen thousand marks, the option being left to her father to give one-half of the sum in lands, provided that the rents of the lands were a hundred marks yearly for every thousand retained. The price of land at this early period of our history seems, therefore, to have

been ten years' purchase.¹ The young princess, accompanied by Walter Bullock, Earl of Menteith, his countess, the Abbot of Balmerino, and Bernard de Monte-alto, with other knights and barons, sailed for Norway; and on her arrival, was honourably received and crowned as queen. The alliance was wise and politic. It promised to secure the wavering fealty of those proud and warlike island chiefs, who, whenever they wished to throw off their dependence on Scotland, pretended that they were bound by the ties of feudal vassalage to Norway, and whose power and ambition often required the presence of the king himself to quell them.²

This marriage was soon after followed by that of Alexander the Prince of Scotland, then in his nineteenth year, to Margaret, a daughter of Guy, Earl of Flanders. The ceremony was conducted with great pomp, and fifteen days' feasting, at Roxburgh. Such alliances, so far as human foresight could reach, promised happiness to Alexander, while they gave an almost certain hope of descendants. But a dark cloud began to gather round Scotland, and a train of calamities, which followed in sad and quick succession,

¹ The marriage-contract, which is very long and curious, is to be found in Rymer, vol. ii. p. 1079, dated 25th July, 1281. Fordun a Goodal, vol. ii. p. 125.

² In 1275, Alexander led an armed force against Man. Johnston, *Antiquit. Celto-Norm.* pp. 41, 42. In 1282, Alexander Comyn, Earl of Buchan, and Constable of Scotland, led an army to quell some island disturbances. Rymer, *Fœdera*, vol. ii. p. 205.

spread despondency through the kingdom.¹ The Prince of Scotland, who from infancy had been of a sickly constitution, died not long after his marriage, leaving no issue; and intelligence soon after came from Norway that his sister, Queen Margaret, was also dead, having left an only child, Margaret, generally called the Maiden of Norway. David, the second son of Alexander, had died when a boy,² and thus the King of Scotland, still in the flower of his age, found himself a widower, and bereft by death of all his children.

To settle the succession was his first care; and for this purpose a meeting of the Estates of the realm was held at Scone, on the 5th of February, 1283-4.² The prelates and barons of Scotland there bound themselves to acknowledge Margaret, Princess of Norway, as their sovereign, failing any children whom Alexander might have, and failing any issue of the Prince of Scotland deceased. The parliament in which this transaction took place, having assembled immediately after the death of the prince, it was uncertain whether the princess might not yet present the kingdom with an heir to the crown. In the meantime, the king thought it prudent to make a second marriage, and chose for his bride a young and beautiful woman, Joleta, daughter of the Count de Dreux. The nuptials were celebrated with great pomp, (April 15, 1285,) and in presence of a splen-

¹ Fordun a Goodal, vol. ii. p. 124. Winton, b. vii. c. 10, vol. i. p. 391.

² Fœdera, vol. ii. p. 266.

did concourse of the French and Scottish nobility, at Jedburgh. In the midst of the rejoicings, and when music and pastime were at the highest, a strange masque was exhibited, in which a spectral creature like Death, glided with fearful gestures amongst the revellers, and at length suddenly vanished. The whole was probably intended as an excellent mummery; but it was too well acted, and struck such terror into the festive assembly,¹ that the chronicler, Fordun, considers it as a supernatural shadowing out of the future misfortunes of the kingdom. These misfortunes too rapidly followed. Alexander, riding late, in winter time, near Kinghorn, was counselled by his attendants, as the night was dark, and the road precipitous, not to pass Inverkeithing till the morning. Naturally courageous, he insisted on galloping forward, when his horse suddenly stumbled over a rocky cliff above the sea, fell with its rider, and killed him on the spot.² He died in the forty-fifth year of his age, and the thirty-seventh of his reign; and his death, at this particular juncture, may be considered as one of the deepest amongst those national calamities which chequer the history of Scotland.

Alexander's person was majestic; and although his figure was too tall, and his bones large, yet his limbs were well formed, and strongly knit. His countenance was handsome, and beamed with a manly and sweet expression, which corresponded with the courageous openness and sincerity of his character. He

¹ Fordun a Goodal, b. x. c. 40. Holinshed, vol. i. p. 409.

² Triveti Annales, p. 267. He died, March 16, 1285.

was exceedingly firm and constant in his purposes, yet, guided by prudence, and an excellent understanding, this quality never degenerated into a dangerous obstinacy. His inflexible love of justice, his patience in hearing disputes, his affability in discourse, and facility of access, endeared him to the whole body of his people; whilst his piety, untinged with any slavish dread of the Popedom, yet mixed with humility to heaven, rendered him the steadfast friend of his own clergy, and their best defender against the encroachments of the Romish church. In his time, therefore, to use the words of the honest and affectionate Fordun,—“The church flourished, its ministers were treated with reverence, vice was openly discouraged, cunning and treachery were trampled under foot, injury ceased, and the reign of virtue, truth, and justice, was maintained throughout the land.” We need not wonder that such a monarch was long and affectionately remembered in Scotland. Attended by his justiciary, by his principal nobles, and a military force, which awed the strong offenders, and gave confidence to the weak and oppressed, it was his custom to make an annual progress through his kingdom, for the redress of wrong, and the punishment of evil-doers. For this purpose, he divided the kingdom into four great districts, and on his entering each county, the sheriff had orders to attend on the kingly judge, with the whole militia of the shire,¹ and to continue with the court till the king had heard all the appeals of that county, which were brought be-

¹ Fordun a Goodal, b. x. c. 41.

fore him. He then continued his progress, accompanied by the sheriff and his troops; nor were these dismissed till the king had entered a new county, where a new sheriff awaited him with the like honours and attendance.

In this manner the people were freed from the charge of supporting those overgrown bands of insolent retainers which swelled the train of the Scottish nobles, when they waited on the king in his progresses; and as the dignified prelates and barons were interdicted by express law from travelling with more than a certain number of horse in their retinue, the poor commons had leisure to breathe, and to pursue their honest occupations.¹

In Alexander's time, many vessels of different countries came to Scotland, loaded with various kinds of merchandise, with the design of exchanging them for the commodities of our kingdom. The king's mind, however, was unenlightened on the subject of freedom of trade; and the frequent loss of valuable cargoes by pirates, wrecks, and unforeseen arrestments on light occasions, had induced him to pass some severe laws against the exportation of Scottish merchandise. Burgesses, however, were allowed to traffic with these foreign merchantmen, and in a short time the kingdom became rich in every kind of wealth, in the productions of the arts and manufactures, in money, in agricultural produce,² in flocks and herds, so

¹ Fordun a Goodal, vol. ii. pp. 129, 130.

² Yhwmen, pewere Karl, or Knawe
That wes of mycht an ox til hawe,

that many, says an ancient historian, came from the West and East to consider its power, and to study its polity. Amongst these strangers, there arrived in a great body the richest of the Lombard merchants, who offered to build royal settlements in various parts of the country, especially upon the mount above Queensferry, and on an island near Cramond, provided the king would grant them certain spiritual immunities. Unfortunately, the proposal of these rich and industrious men, for what cause we cannot tell, proved displeasing to some powerful members of the state, and was dismissed ; but from an expression of the historian, we may gather, that the king himself was desirous to encourage them, and that favourable terms for a settlement would have been granted, had not death stept in, and put an end to the negotiation.¹

The conduct pursued by this king, in his intercourse with England, was marked by a judicious union of the firmness and dignity which became an independent sovereign, with the kindness befitting his near connexion with Edward ; but, warned by the

He gert that man hawe part in pluche ;
 Swa wes corn in his land ewche ;
 Swa than begowth, and efter lang
 Of land wes mesure, ane ox-gang.
 Mychty men that had má
 Oryn, he gert in pluchys ga.
 Be that vertu all his land
 Of corn he gert be abowndand.

Winton, vol. i. p. 400.

¹ Fordun, book x. c. 41, 42.

ungenerous attempts which had been first made by the father, and followed up by the son, he took care, that when invited to the English court, it should be solemnly acknowledged¹ that he came there as the free monarch of an independent country.

To complete the character of this prince, he was singularly temperate in his habits, his morals were pure, and in all his domestic relations kindness and affection were conspicuous.² The oldest Scottish song, which has yet been discovered, is an affectionate little monody on the death of Alexander, preserved by Winton, one of the fathers of our authentic Scottish history.³

¹ Ayloff's Calendar of Ancient Charters, p. 328.

² Towards the conclusion of this reign, it is said that an awful visitant for the first time appeared in Scotland—the plague; but we cannot depend on the fact, for it comes from Boece.—Hailes, vol. i. p. 307.

³ Quhen Alysandyr, oure Kyng, wes dede,
That Scotland led in luwe* and le, †
Away wes sons of ale and brede,
Of wyne and wax, of gamyn and gle.
Oure gold wes changyd into lede.—
Christ, born in-to virgynyte,
Succour Scotland, and remede,
That stad ‡ is in perplexytè.

Winton, vol. i. p. 401.

* Love.

† Le—tranquillity.

‡ Placed, or situated.