

CHAP. III.

JAMES THE FIFTH.

1524 - 1528.

CONTEMPORARY PRINCES.

<i>Kings of England.</i> Henry VIII.		<i>Kings of France.</i> Francis I.		<i>Germany.</i> Charles V.		<i>Spain.</i> Charles V.		<i>Popes.</i> Clement VII.
---	--	---------------------------------------	--	-------------------------------	--	-----------------------------	--	-------------------------------

FOR the last two years, the Earl of Angus, who had formerly shown himself so cordial a friend of England, had remained an exile in France, whence Henry the Eighth, desirous of employing him in his designs for embroiling the Government of Albany, had secretly called him into his dominions. It was now esteemed the moment when his presence in Scotland might once more reinstate the English faction, which had been long gaining strength, in undisputed power; and the Earl, whose foreign residence had increased his experience and talent, but not improved his patriotic feelings, at once lent himself to the projects of Henry. During his banishment, he had corresponded with that monarch; although an exile, he had made himself master of the political divisions and intrigues

by which the kingdom was distracted; and having agreed upon his plan of operations, he accelerated his preparations for his return to his native country. Before, however, this project could be put into execution, the departure of the regent had given rise to a revolution, which, for a season, totally changed the aspect of public affairs. In this, the chief actors were Margaret, the queen dowager, and the Earl of Arran; whilst its sudden and startling success seems to prove, that the project had been gradually matured, and only waited for the departure of Albany to bring it into effect. The young king had now entered his thirteenth year, and already gave promise of that vigor of character, which afterwards distinguished him. His mother, no longer controlled by the presence of a superior, determined to place him upon the throne; a scheme, which, by the assistance of England, she trusted, might be easily accomplished; whilst Henry was ready to lend himself to the design, from the persuasion that the royal power, though ostensibly in the king, would be truly in the hands of a council overruled by England. Surrey, therefore, remained in the north, to overawe any opposition, by the terror of an immediate invasion; and Margaret, having gained to her interest the peers to whom the person of the sovereign had been entrusted, suddenly left the Palace of Stirling, and accompanied by her son and a small retinue, proceeded to Edinburgh, which she entered, amid the acclama-

tions of the populace, who beheld their youthful sovereign with tears of affection and surprise. The procession, which, besides the queen mother and her train, consisted of the Earls of Arran, Lennox, Crawford, and others of the nobility, moved on to the Palace of Holyrood, where a council was held, the king declared of age, and proclamations instantly issued in his name. He then formally assumed the government; the peers tendered their oaths of allegiance; and many, as well of the spiritual as temporal estate, entered into a solemn agreement, by which they abjured the engagements which had been made to Albany, declared his regency at an end, and promised faithfully to maintain the supreme authority of their sovereign against all who might dare to question it.¹

Against this extraordinary act, of which the real object on the part of Henry could not be concealed, and over which the capricious character of the queen, alternately swayed by the most violent resentments or partialities, threw much suspicion, the only dissentient voices were those of the bishops of St. Andrew's and Aberdeen. They contended that to confer the supreme power upon a boy of twelve years old was ridiculous; that to remove him from the governors to whom his education had been entrusted, and plunge him at once in his tender years into the flatteries and

¹ Pinkerton, vol. ii. p. 238. Lesly, p. 129. Caligula, B. VI. 373.

vices of a court, must be certain ruin; and they reminded the nobles of their promises so lately pledged to the Duke of Albany, to whom the regency at this moment unquestionably belonged. For this bold and honest conduct they were by the queen's party immediately committed to prison; nor could the offer from Wolsey of a cardinal's hat induce Beaton to renounce his promises to Albany, or become the tool of England.¹ The news of the success of this revolution, which in its rapidity had anticipated the wishes of Henry, was received with the utmost satisfaction in England.² A guard of two hundred men-at-arms was immediately sent by that monarch at the queen's request, for the security of the person of the young king, whilst, as a token of his complete approval of her conduct, and an earnest of future favors, Margaret received a present of two hundred marks, and Arran a hundred pounds. In return she earnestly remonstrated against Henry's permitting the re-

¹ Pinkerton, vol. ii .p. 241. Caligula, B. VI. 353, August 19th, 1524. B. III. 96.

² State Papers, p. 150. The letter written to Henry in the name of the young king, informing him of his assumption of the government, was sent by Patrick Sinclair, whom Wolsey denominates a right trusty servant of James; and at the same time describes as a spy of Dr. Magnus, and a constant friend of England. Such was the character of this revolution. George Shaw, another personal servant of James, was a spy of Norfolk.—Norfolk to Wolsey, 19th September, 1524. Caligula, B. VI. 361.

turn of Angus into Scotland, not without a threat that, should her request be overlooked, she would find another support than that of England. She demanded, at the same time, a pension and the order of the garter for Arran, and declared that without greater supplies it would be impossible for her to defray the charges of the government.

In the mean time a full account of these changes was transmitted by Gonzolles, the captain of Dunbar, to the Duke of Albany, and a truce having been concluded for three months with England, it was determined that Dr. Magnus, a person of great acuteness and diplomatic experience, should proceed as ambassador to Scotland. He was accompanied by Ratcliffe, a gentleman of the privy chamber, whose agreeable and polished manners would, it was expected, have a favorable influence on the young king.

In the midst of these transactions, the sincerity of the queen became suspected. Her late demands were considered too peremptory and covetous, and the countenance shown to Angus at the English court in no small degree alienated her affections from her brother; nor was her personal conduct free from blame. With a volatility in her passions which defied the voice of reproof, or the restraints of decency, she had now become enamoured of Henry Stewart, the second son of Lord Evandale, and in the ardour of her new passion, raised him to the responsible office of treasurer. The people had hitherto regarded her

with respect, but they no longer restrained their murmurs: Lennox and Glencairn, who had warmly supported her in the late revolution, left the capital in disgust; and Arran, who had never ceased to look to the regency of Scotland as his right, and in whose character there was a strange mixture of weakness and ambition, though he still acted along with her, held himself in readiness to support any party which promised to forward his own views.

Whilst this earl and the queen continued to receive the money of England for the support of the guards, and the maintenance of their private state, it was deemed prudent to open a negotiation with Francis the First, then engaged in preparations for his fatal expedition into Italy. That monarch received their envoy with distinction: professed his anxiety to maintain the ancient alliance between the kingdoms: reminded them of the intended marriage between the Scottish king and his daughter, and declared, that Angus having secretly escaped from his dominions, without asking his permission or that of Albany, was undoubtedly animated by hostile intentions, and ought to be treated as a fugitive and a rebel.¹ He addressed also a letter to the queen, in which he besought her to adopt such measures as must secure the true interests of her son. But Margaret's blinded attachment to Henry Stewart, upon

¹ Calig. B. VI. 411. Instructions à l'ambassadeur du Roy d'Escosse.

whose youth she had now bestowed the high office of chancellor, and Arran's devotion to his own interests, effectually estranged from both the attachment of the nobles, who found themselves excluded from all influence in the government. They, indeed, as well as the queen, were in the pay of England; and to such a degree of organization had the system of bribery and private information been carried, that whilst the Duke of Norfolk maintained his spies even in the palace of the king, the original correspondence of the period presents us with the exact pensions allowed to the Scottish adherents of the English court, from the queen and Arran to the lowest agent of this venal association.¹ Amongst the principal are Arran, Lennox, and the master of Kilmaurs, afterwards Earl of Glencairn, a nobleman who thus early began to make a profitable trade of his attachment to England. The faction, however, contained within itself the seeds of its disunion; for whilst the queen and Arran dreaded the power of Angus, and warmly remonstrated against his return, the peers of the party who found themselves neglected in the administration, looked to this event as the most probable means of recovering the importance which they had lost. It was in this state of things that Wolsey, who began to find that Margaret and

¹ Pinkerton, vol. ii. p. 246. Caligula, B. I. 70. Ibid. 222.

Arran would not be sufficiently subservient to England, entered into a secret agreement with Angus,¹ in which that peer, on condition of his being permitted to enter Scotland, stipulated to support the English interest in that country and the government of James, equally against the open hostility of Albany, and the intrigues of the faction of the queen, which, from the venality and insolence of its measures, seemed to be rapidly hastening its ruin. An attempt was first made to reconcile Margaret to her husband, which completely failed; and symptoms appearing of a coalition between the party of Albany, and that of Arran and the queen, Angus was no longer detained by Henry; but, after an exile of two years, with increased ambition and exalted hopes, he returned to his native country. At the same time the English ambassadors, Dr. Magnus and Ratcliffe, arrived at the capital; and a complicated scene of intrigue and diplomacy commenced, into the minuter features of which it would be tedious to enter.

The scene which presented itself was indeed pitiable. It exhibited a minor sovereign, deserted by those who owed him allegiance and support, whilst his kingdom was left a prey to the rapacity of interested councillors, and exposed to

¹ Calig. B. VI. 395. Articles of Agreement, dated October 4th, 1524; signed by Angus, and his brother George Douglas.

the attacks of a powerful neighbour, whose object it was to destroy its separate existence, and reduce it to the condition of a dependent province.

When we look more narrowly into its condition, we find that three great parties or factions at this moment distracted the minority of James. The first was that of Albany, the late regent, supported by the influence of France, and conducted, during his absence, by the talents and vigor of the chancellor, Beaton: of the second the leaders were the Earl of Arran, and the queen mother, in whom the present power of the state resided, and who possessed the custody of the king's person: whilst at the head of the third was Angus, who had sold himself to the English government. The secret treaty, however, between this peer and Henry, was unknown in Scotland; and so great was the affection of the people for the house of Douglas, with whose history they associated so much chivalrous enterprize and national glory, that on his arrival in his native country, he was received by all ranks with joy and enthusiasm. Meanwhile Wolsey's jealousy of the attachment of Margaret became confirmed, when he found that the Bishop of Aberdeen and the Chancellor Beaton were set at liberty, and perceived the party of Albany once more rising into a dangerous importance.

Such was the state of affairs on the arrival of Angus in Scotland, and his improvement in judgment was seen by the moderation of his first mea-

tures. He addressed to the queen a submissive letter, professing his attachment to his sovereign, and his anxiety to do him service; he abstained from showing himself at court; and, although able to command an army of vassals, he travelled with a modest retinue of forty horse, in obedience to an order of the government. These quiet courses, however, produced no effect on Margaret, whose ancient love to Angus had long before this turned into determined hatred, whilst, with a contempt of all decency, she made no secret of her passion for Henry Stewart, entrusting to his weak and inexperienced hands the chief guidance of affairs. Magnus, the English ambassador, attempted, but with equal want of success, to effect a reconciliation between her and her husband. The continuance of the pensions, the support of the English guard of honor, the present of a considerable sum for the exigencies of the moment, and lastly the promise of a matrimonial alliance between her son and the princess Mary, were artfully held out as inducements to consent to a pacification and to abandon her opposition to Angus. Margaret was immoveable, and, avowing her venality, she did not scruple to assign as her chief motive, that in the event of a treaty of peace with England, the kingdom, by which we may understand herself and Arran, would lose the annual remittance of Francis, which amounted to forty thousand franks.¹ Thus

¹ Caligula, B. I. 285 - 290, inclusive. Pinkerton, vol. ii. p. 248.

thwarted in his application to the queen, Magnus, who, in the complicated parties and interests by which he was surrounded, required the exertion of his whole diplomatic talents, began to sound the peers, and not only found that there was no insurmountable impediment to the reconciliation of Angus and Arran, but that even Beaton the chancellor, the leader of the party of Albany, evinced, though we may suspect his sincerity, no unfavorable disposition to England.¹ The late regent's continued absence in France, and the vanity of expecting any active co-operation from the French monarch, then occupied with his campaign in Italy, had greatly weakened the influence of Albany, and the great body of the nobility detested the government of the queen. It was determined, therefore, that a sudden blow should be struck, which might at once punish her obstinacy, and ensure the pre-eminence of the English interest.

A parliament having assembled at Edinburgh, the distracted condition of the government, and the expediency of an immediate embassy to England preparatory to a general peace, came before the three estates. In one measure all parties seemed to agree. Albany's regency, in consequence of his continued absence, was declared at an end, and a committee of regency appointed. It consisted of the chancellor Beaton, the Bishop of Aberdeen, and the Earls of Arran and Argyle, whilst,

¹ Calig. B. VI. 333.

apparently to lull the suspicions of the queen, she was declared chief in this council. Such was the state of matters, and the parliament had now sat for a week, when, on the 23rd of November, before day-light, an alarm was heard at the walls of the capital, and a party of armed men, fixing their scaling-ladders on the parapet, made good their entrance into the town, after which, with shouts and acclamations, they opened the gates to their companions. It was now discovered that this force, which amounted only to four hundred men, was led by the Earls of Angus and Lennox; Scott of Buccleugh, the Master of Kilmaurs, and other chiefs, had joined them; and as daylight broke they advanced fearlessly to the cross, and proclaimed that they came as faithful subjects to the king's grace; they next proceeded to the council of regency which had assembled in great alarm, and repeating the same assurance, declared that the young king was in the hands of evil-disposed persons, who were compassing their ruin and that of the whole nobility; wherefore they required them to assume the custody of their monarch, and exercise the chief rule in the government.¹ During these proceedings the castle, which was in the hands of the queen's party, began to open its fire upon the town with the object of expelling Angus; and in the midst of the thunder of its artillery, and the shouts of the

¹ Magnus to the Lord Cardinal. Cal. B. I. 121. Lesly, p. 131.

infuriated partizans, a deputation, consisting of the Bishop of Aberdeen, the Abbot of Cambuskenneth, and Magnus the English ambassador, hurried to the palace, where they found the queen, and some lords of her party, denouncing vengeance against Angus, and mustering a force of five hundred men with which they proposed to assault him. On their arrival Margaret consented to receive the bishop and his associate, but she peremptorily ordered Magnus to begone to his lodging, and abstain from interfering in Scottish affairs—a mandate which that cautious civilian did not think it prudent to disobey. Meanwhile the fire of the fortress continued, and the peaceful citizens fell victims to the unprincipled efforts of two hostile factions. The conduct of Angus, however, was pacific; whilst in the city, his followers abstained from plunder; although they met with various peers with whom they were at deadly feud, no blood was shed; and upon a proclamation commanding him, in the king's name, to leave the city, he retired to Dalkeith towards dusk. After dark the queen, taking with her the young king, proceeded by torchlight to the castle, and dismissing all the lords, except Murray, who was devoted to the French interest, shut herself up in the fortress, and meditated some determined measures against her enemies.¹ Although there

¹ The letter, in which Magnus and Ratcliffe give an account of this affair, is interesting and curious. It is dated at Edinburgh, 26th of November, and addressed to the lord cardinal. "The queen's

is no decisive evidence of the fact, there appears a strong presumption that this attack upon the queen was preconcerted by English influence, and probably not wholly unexpected by Beaton the chancellor. Magnus, indeed, in writing to the cardinal represents it as unlooked for by all parties, but there exists a letter from the Earl of Rothes which seems to throw a doubt upon the sincerity of his ignorance.¹ It was probably a contrivance of the chancellor to try the strength and judgment of Angus, and its consequences were important, for it led to a coalition between this potent prelate, generally esteemed the richest subject in Scotland, and the Douglasses, whose extensive possessions and vassalage placed them at the head of the Scottish aristocracy.

Alarmed at so sudden a turn of affairs, the queen and Arran hastened to appease Henry by an embassy, of which the purpose was to treat of an immediate pacification, upon the basis of the proposed marriage between the young king and the princess Mary.² As a further means of accomplish-

grace taking with her the young king, her sonne, departed in the evening by torchlight from the abbey to the castell, and ther contynueth, all the lordes being also departed from hence, but only the Erle of Murray fully of the Frenche Faction, and newly comen into favor with the queen's grace; and as we her the said erle, and one that was the Duke of Albany's secretary, begyne to compass and practyse newe thynges as muche to the daunger of the said younge kinge as was at the Duk of Albany's being hire." Calig. B. I. p. 121.

¹ Pinkerton, vol. ii. p. 255. Caligula, B. I. 81. ² Calig. B. VI. 191.

ing this, Marchmont Herald was dispatched to France, with the announcement that the regency of Albany had been formally declared at an end, and a remonstrance was addressed to Francis, against the injurious consequences which too steady an attention to his interests had brought upon the commerce of Scotland.¹ These measures, if adopted some time before this, might have been attended with the recovery of her influence by the queen; but they came too late; their sincerity was suspected; and although Margaret continued to retain possession of the king's person, whom she kept in the castle of Edinburgh, the Earl of Angus and the Chancellor Beaton already wielded an equal, if not a superior authority, and had succeeded in attaching to themselves, not only the great majority of the nobility, but the affections of the citizens; they were supported also by the English influence; and it became at length evident to the haughty spirit of the queen, that to save the total wreck of her power in Scotland, she must consent to a reconciliation with her husband, and a division of the power which she had abused, with those who were entitled to a share in the government.

The situation of the country, which was the theatre of constant rapine and assassination, called loudly for a settled administration; the nation were disgusted with the sight of two factions who fulminated against each other accusations of treachery and rebellion. Such was the prodi-

¹ Epist. R. Scot. I. 351 - 356.

gality of the queen, who squandered the royal revenues upon her pleasures, that when the English monarch withdrew the pensions which had hitherto supported her administration, and recalled the guard which waited on the sovereign, the necessities of the state became urgent, and the palace and the court were left in poverty. Under such circumstances, it was absolutely necessary that some decisive step should be adopted by Angus and the chancellor, and, in a meeting of the principal lords of their party held at St. Andrew's, a declaration was drawn up which called upon all who were interested in the good of the commonweal to interfere for the establishment of its independence and that of the young king. They represented the sovereign as imprisoned by an iniquitous faction in an unhealthy fortress, exposed to the unwholesome exhalations of the lake by which it was surrounded, and incurring additional danger from the reiterated commotions of the capital.¹ They protested that no letters or orders of the king ought to be obeyed until promulgated by a council chosen by the parliament, and they summoned a convention of the three estates to meet on the 6th of February, at Stirling. These were bold measures; and the queen determined to make yet one

¹ Caligula, B. VI. 394. It commences thus:—"We dou you to witt that for as mekill as it is understandin be the weill avisit lordis of oure soveran lordis counsaill, thay seand daily slaughteris, murtharis, reiffis, theftis, depredationis, and heavy attemptates that ar daily and hourly committit within this realme in falt of justice, our soveran lord beand of less age, &c."

effort for the confusion of her enemies. She appealed to England, flattered Henry by a pretended acquiescence in his designs, urged the accomplishment of the marriage between her son and the princess, and earnestly requested the advance of the Duke of Norfolk with ten thousand men to the borders; she next assembled the few peers who remained with her in the castle, expatiated on the arrogance of their opponents, and implored them to raise their followers, and give battle to the enemy; but Henry suspected her sincerity, the peers dreaded the insolence of her new favorite, Henry Stewart; and she discovered, with the deepest mortification, that from neither could she expect any thing like cordial support. She submitted, therefore, to the necessity of the case, and agreed to a conditional reconciliation with her husband,¹ the terms which she was permitted to dictate being more favorable than from her dependent situation might have been expected. Her first stipulation evinced the inveteracy of her feelings against Angus, whom, upon pain of treason, she insisted should not assume any matrimonial rights, either over her person or her estate; the king, her son, she agreed to remove from the castle, to a more salubrious and accessible residence in the palace of Holyrood; the custody of his person was to be entrusted to a council of peers nominated by the parliament, and over which the queen was to

¹ Magnus to Wolsey, Caligula, B. II. 59 to 61. Lesly, p. 132.

preside¹; the patronage of all the highest ecclesiastical benefices was to belong to a committee of the nobles, amongst whom Margaret was to be chief, whilst all below the value of a thousand pounds were to be placed at her sole disposal. Upon these conditions the pacification between the two parties was concluded, and Angus, supported by the chancellor Beaton, who was now the most influential man in Scotland, resumed his authority in the state.

Magnus, the acute minister of Henry, had from the first suspected the sincerity of the queen, and within a short period her duplicity was completely detected.² The very day on which the agreement with the peers and her husband was concluded, she opened a secret negociation with Albany, acknowledged his authority as regent, professed a devotion to the interests of France, denounced as ignominious the idea of a peace with England, declared that she would leave Scotland sooner than consent to a sincere reconciliation with Angus, and eagerly requested the interest of Francis and Albany to accelerate at the Roman court her process of divorce. For such conduct, which presented a lamentable union of falsehood and selfishness, no apology can be offered; and it is satisfactory to find that it met with its reward in almost immediate exposure and disappointment.

¹ Acts of the Parliament of Scotland, vol. ii. p. 289. 22nd Feb. 1524-5.

² Calig. B. I. 61.

Her letters were intercepted and transmitted to England, and the French monarch long before they could have reached him was defeated and made prisoner in the battle of Pavia.¹

A minute account of the continued plots and intrigues which for some time occupied the adverse factions would be equally tedious and uninteresting. Nothing could be more unhappy than the condition of Scotland torn by domestic dissension, exposed to the miseries of feudal anarchy, with a nobility divided amongst themselves, and partly in the pay of a foreign power, a minor monarch whose education was neglected, and his passions indulged that he might be subservient to his interested guardians, a clergy, amongst whom the chief prelates were devoted to their worldly interests, and a people who, whilst they groaned under such manifold oppressions, were yet prevented by the complicated fetters of the feudal system from exerting their energies to obtain redress. All was dark and gloomy, the proposal of a lengthened peace with England, and a marriage between the king and the princess Mary, appeared to be the single means which promised to secure any thing like tranquillity; and this measure, if guarded so as to prevent a too exclusive exertion of foreign influence, might have been attended with the happiest results; yet such was the infatuation of the queen mother, that she gave the match her most determined opposition, and, by her influence

¹ Calig. B. VI. 416.

with her son, implanted an aversion to it even in his youthful mind.

It was not to be expected, that the characteristic impetuosity and haughtiness of Henry should brook such conduct; he addressed to his sister a letter so replete with reproaches, that, on perusing it, she burst into tears, and bitterly complained that the style of the king was more fit for some vulgar railer, than to be employed by a monarch to a noble lady.¹ Yet terrified by its violence, and convinced that her partizans were gradually dropping away, she replied in a submissive tone. So deep, indeed, were her suspicions of Angus, and the Chancellor, with whom she had lately entered into an agreement, that she refused to trust her person in the capital, where her presence in a parliament was necessary as president of the council of State; and as the recent truce with England could not be proclaimed without her ratification, the country was on the point of being exposed to the ravages of border war for the gratification of her capricious terrors. It was therefore determined, that the deed should be effectual without this solemnity, and irritated by this last indignity, she attempted a secret negotiation with the queen mother of France, who, upon the captivity of her son in the battle of Pavia, had succeeded to the regency. Even this resource failed her, for by this time Wolsey had quarrelled with the emperor,

¹ Calig. B. VII. 3. Letter of Magnus to Wolsey, 31 March.

and according to those selfish views, by which his public policy was often directed, had prevailed upon his royal master to conclude a treaty with France; a death blow to the hopes of the Scottish queen, and the prospects of the French faction. In the proceedings of the same parliament, there occurs a strong indication of the increase of the principles of the Reformation; and we learn the interesting fact, that the books of Luther, and other eminent supporters of the truth, had made their way into Scotland, and excited the jealousy of the church. It was enacted, that no merchants or foreigners should dare to bring into the realm, which had hitherto firmly persevered in the holy faith, any such treatises on pain of imprisonment, and the forfeiture of their ships and cargoes; and it was enjoined, that all persons, who publicly professed such doctrines, should be liable to the same penalties.¹

An embassy now proceeded to England, a truce of three years was concluded; and whilst the queen mother retained merely a nominal authority, the whole of the real power of the state gradually centred in Angus and the Chancellor. A feeble attempt was indeed made by Arran, to prevent by force the ratification of the truce; and for a moment the appearance of a body of five thousand men, which advanced to Linlithgow, threatened to plunge the country into war; but the storm was dissi-

¹ Acts of the Parliament of Scotland, vol. ii. p. 295.

pated by the promptitude of Douglas. Taking the king along with him, and supported by the terror of the royal name, he instantly marched against the rebels, who, without attempting to oppose him, precipitately retreated and dispersed.¹

At this moment, the country, so long distracted by the miseries of border war and internal anarchy, enjoyed something like a prospect of tranquillity. A pacification of three years had been concluded with England;² and this was an important step towards the marriage which had been lately contemplated between the young king, and the princess Mary. The alliance between England and France had destroyed, for the moment, the French party in Scotland, and removed that fertile source of misery which arose to that country out of the hostilities of these great rivals; the anxiety of Henry to accomplish a reconciliation between Angus and his sister the queen was sincere; and if Margaret had consented to a sacrifice of her private feelings it would have probably been attended with the best effects. Magnus, whose prolonged residence in the capital as the envoy of England was odious to the people, had, by his departure, removed this cause of enmity; and the able Lord Dacre, whose intrigues for so many years had sown disunion and treachery amongst the nobles, and defeated every exertion of the well-affected to

¹ Pinkerton, vol. ii. p. 271. Lesly, 133.

² Acts of Parliament Scotland, vol. 1. 396. 397.

promote peace and good government, was removed by death from the stormy element in which he had presided.¹

Every thing, therefore, seemed to promise repose; but this fair prospect was defeated by the obstinacy of the queen mother, and the towering ambition of Douglas. Blinded by her attachment to Stewart, Margaret would not for a moment listen to the proposal of a re-union with her husband; and he, who desired it, not from any affection, but with the motive of possessing himself of her large estates, renounced all desire of reconciliation the moment he discovered that the council would withhold their consent from such a project. The divorce accordingly was pronounced with that mischievous facility, which marked the prostitution of the ecclesiastical law; and scarcely was the sentence passed, when Margaret precipitately wedded her paramour, Henry Stewart, who disdained to ask the consent of the king, or to communicate the event to his chief ministers. Incensed

¹ This able and busy lord, whose MS. correspondence, first opened by the acute Pinkerton, presents the most interesting materials for the history of this period, is entitled to the equivocal merit of being the inventor of that policy which was afterwards carried to perfection by the sagacious Burleigh under Elizabeth; the policy of strengthening the government of his sovereign by the organised system of corruption, bribery, and dissensions, which he encouraged in the sister Kingdom; he died 25 Oct. 1525. Pinkerton informs us, the estates of Dacre afterwards passed by marriage to the Howards, Earls of Carlisle. It is possible, therefore, that, in the papers of that noble House, there may be some of Lord Dacre's manuscripts.

at this presumption in an untitled subject, the Lords of the Council, in the name of the king, sent Lord Erskine with a small military force to Stirling, where the queen resided; and the princess was compelled to deliver up her husband, who submitted to the ignominy of a temporary imprisonment.¹

Hitherto, the great object of Angus had been to accomplish a reconciliation with the queen, and possessing her influence and estates, with the custody of the king's person, to engross the supreme power. This scheme was now at an end, and its discomfiture drove him upon new and more violent courses. His authority in the capital, and throughout the whole of the south of Scotland was immense; since the marriage of the queen, he had effected a union with Arran and his adherents,—a party which, in feudal dignity and vassalage, was scarcely inferior to his own; he was warden of the marches, an office of great authority; and his place as one of the council of state gave him, according to the act of a recent parliament, a command over the person of the young king, which he had employed with great success to win his boyish affections. The party of Albany had gradually disappeared; the queen, since her marriage, had fallen into contempt; Lennox, one of the most powerful of the peers, had become a firm ally of Angus; and, nothing but the authority of the Secret Council, which resided chiefly in the chan-

¹ Lesly, p. 133. Calig. B. VII. 29.

cellor Beaton, stood between the Earl and the entire command of the state. In these circumstances, an artful stroke of Douglas's enabled him at once to reach the summit of his ambition.

The king had now completed his fourteenth year, a period, when, by the law of the country, his majority as an independent sovereign commenced. The event took place in April, and between this period, and the month of June, Angus appears to have matured his plans. On the 13th of that month, a parliament assembled at Edinburgh, and an ordinance was suddenly passed, which declared that the minority of the sovereign was at an end; that the royal prerogative now rested solely in the hands of the king, who had assumed the government of the realm, and that all other authority which had been delegated to any person whatever was annulled;¹ a measure against which, as it was founded apparently on the most substantial legal grounds, neither the Chancellor, nor the Secret Council could protest, but which in one moment destroyed their power. But although the statute which gave the powers of the government to the Secret Council was annulled, the act of the three estates, which entrusted the keeping of the king's person to certain peers in rotation, remained in force,—of these Angus was one; and this crafty statesman had taken care to convene the parlia-

¹ Acts of Parliament of Scotland, vol. ii. p. 301. Crawford's Officers of State, p. 68

ment at the precise time, when, by a former act, it belonged to himself and the Archbishop of Glasgow to assume the guardianship of the king, so that this new resolution of the three estates evidently placed the supreme power in the hands of him who had the custody of the sovereign. It was an able stroke of policy, but it could not possibly have occurred under any other than a feudal government.

To masque this usurpation, a new secret council was appointed, consisting chiefly of the friends of Angus; and including the Archbishop of Glasgow, the Prelates of Aberdeen and Galloway, the Earls of Argyle, Morton, Lennox, and Glencairn, with the Lord Maxwell, whose advice, it was declared, his grace the sovereign will use for the welfare of the realm; but it was shortly perceived, that their authority centered in Angus alone, and that it was to be wielded with no mild or impartial sway. One of their first acts was to grant a remission to themselves for all crimes, robberies, or treasons, committed by them during the last nineteen years;¹ and within a few months there was not an office of trust or emolument in the kingdom, which was not filled by a Douglas, or by a creature of that house: Archibald Douglas, of Kilspindy, was made high treasurer; Erskine of Halton, Secretary; Crichton, Abbot of Holyrood, a man wholly devoted

¹ Acts of the Parliament of Scotland, vol. ii. p. 307. This remission the Douglasses afterwards pleaded in 1528. Acts of Parliament, ii. p. 323.

to the interest of Angus, privy seal ; and to crown the whole, the earl sent a peremptory message to Beaton, requiring him to resign the great seal, which this prelate not daring to disobey, he, without delay installed himself in the office of chancellor.

The ancient tyranny of the House of Douglas now once more shot up into a strength which rivalled or rather usurped the royal power ; the borders became the scene of tumult and confusion, and the insolence of the numerous vassals of this great family was intolerable. Murders, spoliations, and crimes of varied enormity were committed with impunity. The arm of the law, paralysed by the power of an unprincipled faction, did not dare to arrest the guilty ; the sources of justice were corrupted, ecclesiastical dignities of high and sacred character became the prey of daring intruders, or were openly sold to the highest bidder, and the young monarch, who was watched with the utmost jealousy and rigor, began to sigh over a captivity, of which he could not look for a speedy termination.

Such excesses at length roused the indignation of the kingdom, and Lennox, one of the honestest of the peers, secretly seceded from Angus. It was now the middle of summer, and as the Armstrongs had broken out into their usual excesses on the borders, Angus, with the young king in his company, conducted an expedition against them, which was attended with slight success. Before this, however, James had contrived to trans-

mit a secret message to Lennox and the laird of Buccleugh, a potent vassal of that house, which complained bitterly of the durance in which he was held by the Douglasses; and as the royal cavalcade was returning by Melrose to Edinburgh, Walter Scott, of Buccleugh, suddenly appeared on a neighbouring height, and, at the head of a thousand men, threw himself between Angus and the route to the capital.¹ Douglas instantly sent a messenger, who commanded the border chief, in the royal name, to dismiss his followers; but Scott bluntly answered, that he knew the king's mind better than the proudest baron amongst them, and meant to keep his ground, and do obeisance to his sovereign, who had honoured the borders with his presence.² The answer was meant and accepted as a defiance, and Angus instantly commanded his followers to dismount; his brother George, with the Earls of Maxwell and Lennox, forming a guard round the young king, retired to a little hillock in the neighbourhood, whilst the earl, with Fleming, Home, and Ker of Cessford, proceeded with levelled spears, and at a rapid pace, against Buccleugh, who also awaited them on foot. His chief followers, however, were outlawed men of the borders, whose array offered a feeble resistance to the determined charge of the armed knights belonging to Angus; the conflict, accord-

¹ Lesly, p. 134.

² Acts of the Parliament of Scotland, vol. ii. p. 330.

ingly, was short, eighty of the party of Buccleugh were slain, the chief was compelled to retire, and, on the side of the Douglasses, the only material loss was the death of Ker of Cessford, a brave baron, who was lamented by both parties.¹

Not long after this, another and more determined effort to rescue the king from his ignominious thralldom was made by Lennox, who, it was privately suspected, had encouraged the attempt of Buccleugh. Having leagued himself with the chancellor and the queen, this nobleman advanced to Stirling at the head of an army of ten thousand men, whilst, with the hope of conciliating his hostility, the Douglasses dispatched against him his uncle Arran, who commanded a superior force. The mission, however, was vain. Lennox declared, that he would enter the capital, and rescue his sovereign, or die in the attempt; and Arran instantly dispatching a messenger to Edinburgh, Angus commanded the trumpets to sound, displayed the royal banner, and, unable to restrain his impatience, pushed on towards Linlithgow, leaving the king to follow, under the charge of his brother, Sir George Douglas. It was on this occasion that a slight circumstance occurred which produced afterwards important effects, and marked the ferocious manners of the times. The young monarch, who was fond of Lennox, and knew that he had taken arms from affection to his person,

¹ Acts of the Parliament of Scotland, vol. ii. p. 312.

advanced slowly and unwillingly, and was bitterly reproached for his delay by Douglas. On reaching Corstorfine, the distant sound of the artillery announced the commencement of the battle, and his conductor urging speed, broke into passionate and brutal menaces. "Think not," said he, "that in any event you shall escape us—for even were our enemies to gain the day, rather than surrender your person, we should tear it into pieces"—a threat which made an indelible impression on the royal mind, and was never forgiven.¹ Meanwhile the action had commenced, and Arran having, with considerable military skill, seized the bridge across the river Avon, Lennox found himself compelled to attempt a passage at a difficult ford, opposite the nunnery of Manuel; an enterprise by which his soldiers were thrown into disorder, and exposed to a severe fire from the enemy. Yet they made good their passage, and some squadrons, as they pressed up the opposite bank, attacked the army of Arran with great gallantry, but their array had been broken, they found it impossible to form, and were already giving way, when the terrible shout of "Douglas," rose from the advancing party of Angus, and the rout became complete.² Lennox himself fell amongst the foremost ranks, and Arran, a man of a gentle and affectionate nature, was found kneeling beside the bleeding body of his uncle, which he had covered

¹ Buchanan, xiv. 28.

² Ibid. 135. Lesly, p. 136.

with his cloak, and passionately exclaiming that the victory had been dearly purchased by the death of the wisest and bravest knight in Scotland.¹ The triumph of Angus was great; his power was consolidated by the total failure of the coalition against it, and the chains of the young king appeared more firmly rivetted than ever.

It was hardly to be expected that the Douglasses would use their success with moderation, or neglect the opportunity it offered to destroy effectually the power of their enemies. They accordingly made a rapid march to Stirling, with the intention of seizing the queen and the chancellor; but both had fled, and Beaton found the pursuit so hot, that he was compelled for some time to assume the disguise of a shepherd, and to conceal himself in the mountains till the alarm was over.² The distress of the young king was great, on hearing of the death of Lennox, and it rose to a feeling of the deepest resentment, when he discovered that after he had first surrendered, he was murdered in cold blood by Hamilton, the bastard of Arran, a ferocious partizan of Angus. On hearing that the day was going against him, James had sent forward Sir Andrew Wood, with earnest intreaties that his life might be spared, but, in the rejoicings for their victory, his humanity was treated with derision by the Douglasses, whose triumph soon after seemed complete, when Henry the Eighth dispatched his letters

¹ Lindsay, 215.

² Ibid. 217.

to offer them his congratulations on their late successes, with his best advice for the education of his nephew, and the entire destruction of their enemies.¹

Upon this last point Angus scarcely needed instruction; and having convoked a parliament, he proceeded, with no gentle hand, to the work of spoliation and vengeance. It was first declared, that his and Arran's proceedings in the late rebellion of Lennox, were undertaken for the good of the king, and the safety of the commonwealth; and this act was followed by the forfeiture of the estates of the insurgent lords. To Arran were presented the lands of Cassilis and Evandale; to Sir George Douglas the estate of Stirling of Keir, who had been slain; whilst Angus took for himself the ample principality of Lord Lindsay, and the lands of all the eastern and northern barons who had supported Lennox. To the queen mother, for whom the king had become a suppliant, he behaved with moderation. She was invited to the capital, welcomed on her approach by her son, who met her with a numerous retinue, permitted to converse with him familiarly, and received with courtesy by Angus, a conduct adopted out of respect to Henry the Eighth, and which shows that her power was at an end; Beaton, the chancellor, had in the meantime, by large gifts and the sacrifice of the abbey of Kilwinning, made his peace with his enemies, and counted himself happy

¹ Calig. B. VII. 67, 69. Sir Thomas More to Wolsey, 21 Sept.

in being permitted to retire from court, whilst Arran, the successful colleague of Angus, becoming a prey to the most gloomy remorse for the death of Lennox, shut himself up in one of his castles, and declined all interference in matters of state. The government was thus abandoned to an undivided despotism, and the tyranny of the House of Douglas became every day more intolerable to the nation. To bear the name was esteemed sufficient to cover the most atrocious crime, even in the streets of the capital; and during the sitting of parliament, a baron who had murdered his opponent on the threshold of the principal church, was permitted to walk openly abroad, solely because he was a Douglas; and no one, by his arrestment, dared to incur the vengeance of its chief.¹

There were men, however, bred in these iron times, and nursed in that enthusiastic attachment to their chief, created by the principle of feudal vassalage, who despised all danger, in the desire of fulfilling their duty. Of this, an event which now occurred strikingly demonstrated the truth. A groom of Lennox, having arrived in the capital, whether by accident or intention does not appear, met a fellow-servant in the street, and eagerly demanded if he had seen the bastard of Arran? "I have, and but a short time since," was the reply. "What!" said he, "and wert thou so un-

¹ Calig. B. VI. 420. Sir C. Dacre to Lord Wm. Dacre, Dec. 2, 1526. "As for th'ordring of God's justice there is noon done in all Scotland."

grateful a recreant to thy murdered lord, as to permit him to live?—begone! thou art unworthy of so noble a master.” With these words he sought the palace, where a numerous body of the retainers of Douglas were mustering for a projected expedition to the borders. Singling out Arran from amongst them, he watched him till he left the assembly, and springing upon him as he entered a dark passage, repeatedly buried his dagger in his bosom, leaving him stretched with six wounds apparently lifeless upon the ground. As the cry of blood arose, he darted into the midst of the crowd, and might have eluded pursuit but for an order which commanded the palace gates to be closed, and all within the court to draw up against its walls. This scrutiny instantly led to the seizure of the assassin, who was discovered, according to the strong expression of the Scottish law, “Red hand,” with the marks of recent blood upon his dagger and his person.¹ On hearing that Hamilton was likely to survive, he bitterly upbraided himself for the failure of his purpose, and when, in the tortures which preceded his execution, his right hand was amputated, observed, that it merited such a fate, not for its crime, but for its failure. Such were the tempers and the principles which grew out of the feudal system.

To atone for the injustice of his usurpation, Angus, during his progress to the borders,

¹ Lesly, p. 139. Buchanan, xiv. c. 31.

assumed a severity which constrained the Armstrongs and their lawless adherents to renounce, for a season, their ferocious habits, and to give hostages for their future obedience to the government. He next proceeded to appease a deadly feud which had broken out between the families of Lesly and Forbes, and whose ramifications of private vengeance, extending through the districts of Mar, Gareoch, and Aberdeen, plunged the country in blood.¹

The Highlands, remote from the seat of government, and completely neglected since the defeat at Flodden, had gradually relapsed into a state of almost irretrievable disorganization. Where the law was not totally forgotten, it was perverted to the worst purposes of rapine and injustice; its processes were employed to screen the spoliator and the murderer, crimes which mingled in their character the ferocity of a savage with the polished cunning of a refined age were perpetrated with impunity, and the venal government of Angus neglected the outrages which they found it lucrative to countenance, and almost impossible to repress.

Matters at last proceeded to such an extremity, that the alternative of immediate interference, or the entire separation of the remoter northern counties from the government was presented. Lachlan Macintosh, chief of the noted Clan Chattan, was murdered by Malcolmson, his near relative, on the sole ground that he had endeavoured to restrain the

¹ Lesly, p. 136.

excesses of his retainers.¹ The assassin escaping, buried himself in an island of the lake of Rothiemurchy; but his retreat was invaded, and he fell a victim to the vengeance of the clansmen. The infant son of the chief was delivered to the keeping of the Earl of Murray; and Hector, his bastard brother, succeeded to the temporary command of the clan till the majority of his nephew. Scarcely had he assumed this dignity, when he sent Murray a peremptory order to deliver up the infant, and, on his refusal, mercilessly ravaged his lands, sacked the town of Dyke, which belonged to him, and stormed and rased to the ground his castle of Tarnaway. Nor was this enough; the young heir of Macintosh had been committed to the care of the Ogilvies, Murray's near kinsmen; and, to revenge this imaginary insult, the ferocious mountaineer appeared before the castle of Pettie, belonging to Ogilvy of Durness, and carrying it by assault, murdered twenty-four of their house. But the triumph was brief; for when Hector was about to continue his outrages, Murray, who had procured a royal commission, rapidly assembled an army, and suddenly invading the Macintoshes, defeated them with the utmost slaughter. Two hundred of the principal delinquents were made prisoners, and led to instant execution; but the chief himself escaped; and such was the fidelity of his clansmen, that neither rewards nor tortures could induce them to disclose the place of his re-

¹ Lesly, p. 137.

treat. His brother, however, was seized and hanged, whilst Hector, flying to the capital, obtained the royal mercy, only to fall a victim to the dagger of a monk at St. Andrew's, whose history and motive are alike unknown.¹ Amid these dark and sanguinary scenes, the government of Douglas continued firm, being strengthened by the friendship of England, to whose interests he cordially attached himself, and by the apparent accession of the chancellor Beaton. The great wealth of this crafty prelate, and the liberality with which it was distributed to the Douglasses, obtained for him a ready oblivion of his former opposition; and, although Sir George Douglas warned his brother of the dangerous designs which might be in agitation under the pretended reconciliation, Angus, who was inferior to his rival in a talent for intrigue, derided his suspicion.

The reconciliation of the archbishop to his powerful rivals, and his re-admission to a share in the government, were signalised by a lamentable event,—the arraignment and death of Patrick Hamilton, abbot of Ferne, the earliest, and, in some respects, the most eminent of the Scottish martyrs. This youthful sufferer was the son of Sir Patrick Hamilton, of Kincaivil, and Catherine Stewart, a daughter of the Duke of Albany. Educated at St. Andrew's, in what was then esteemed the too liberal philosophy of John Mair, the master of Knox and Buchanan, he early distinguished himself by a freedom of mind, which detected and despised the tenets of the schoolmen. He afterwards

¹ Lesly, p. 138.

imbibed, probably from the treatises of Luther, a predilection for the new doctrines; and, being summoned before an ecclesiastical council, he preferred, at that time, when his faith was still unsettled, an escape to the continent, to the dangerous glory of defending his opinions. At Wittenberg, he sought and obtained the friendship of Luther and Melancthon; they recommended him to the care of Lambert, the head of the university of Marpurg, and by this eminently learned and pious scholar Hamilton became fully instructed in the truth. No sooner did a full conviction of the errors of the Romish church take possession of his mind, than a change seemed to be wrought in his character; he that before had been sceptical and timid, became courageous, almost to rashness, and, resisting the tears and entreaties of his affectionate master, declared his resolution of returning to Scotland, and preaching the faith in his native country.¹ He embarked, arrived in 1527 at St. Andrew's, publicly addressed the people, and, after a brief career of usefulness and zeal, was arrested by the ecclesiastical arm, and thrown into prison. His youth (he was then only twenty-eight) his talents, his amiable and gentle manners, interested all in his favor; and many attempts were made to induce him to retract his opinions, or, at least, to cease to disturb the tranquillity of the church, by their promulgation to the people. But all was in vain; he justly considered this tranquillity, not the stillness of true peace, but the sleep of ignorance and death; he defended

¹ Spottiswood, p. 62, 63. Knox, p. 7, 8.

his doctrines with such pious earnestness and deep acquaintance with scripture, that Aless, a Catholic priest, who had visited him in his cell, with a desire to shake his resolution, became himself a convert to the captive, and he was at last condemned as an obstinate heretic, and led to the stake. On the scaffold, he turned affectionately to his servant, who had long attended him, and, taking off his gown, coat, and cap, bad him receive all the worldly goods now left him to bestow, and with them the example of his death. "What I am about to suffer, my dear friend," said he, "appears fearful and bitter to the flesh; but, remember, it is the entrance to everlasting life, which none shall possess who deny their lord."¹ In the midst of his torments, which, from the awkwardness of the executioner, were protracted and excruciating, he ceased not to exhort those who stood near, exhibiting a meekness and unaffected courage, which made a deep impression. Lifting up his eyes to Heaven, he exclaimed, "How long, O God! shall darkness cover this kingdom? How long wilt thou suffer this tyranny of men?" and when death at last came to his relief, he expired with these blessed words upon his lips, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."² The leading doctrines of Hamilton were explained by himself in a small Latin treatise.

¹ There is some reason to believe that a scheme for his rescue had been organised by Andrew Duncan, of Airdrie, in Fife, one of his most attached followers, but it was discovered and defeated.

² Biographia Brit. Art Duncan, Kippis Edn.

tise, which has been translated by Fox, and incorporated in his *Book of Martyrs*. It contains a clear and scriptural exposition of the manner in which a sinner is justified before God, through faith in Jesus Christ, and a beautiful commentary on some of the principal Christian graces. Although occasionally quaint and obscure, it proves that the mind of this good man was far in advance of his age, at least in Scotland.¹

It was now two years since Angus had obtained the supreme power. During this time, the despotism of the house of Douglas had been complete; and the history of the country presented the picture of a captive monarch,² a subservient and degraded nobility, and a people groaning under oppression, yet bound by the ties of the miserable system under which they lived to the service of their oppressors. To use the strong and familiar language of an ancient historian, "the Douglasses would frequently take a progress to punish thieves and traitors, yet none were found greater than in their own company;" and an

¹ Knox, p. 8, Glasgow edition.

² In *Caligula*, B. II. 118, Aug. 30th, 1527, is a letter from Magnus to Wolsey, which shows that James had ineffectually remonstrated to Henry VIII. against the thraldom in which he was held by Angus. "This daye," says Magnus, "passed from hence a chaplaine of the Bishoppe of St. Andrew's, wyth a letter addressed from the younge kyng of Scottes to the kinge's hieness, a copy whereof I send; mencioning, among other thynges, that the said yong king, contrary his will and mynd, is kept in thraldom and captivitie with Archibald, Erle of Anguisshe."

attempt made, at this time, by the arch plunderer himself to obtain possession of the queen's dowry lands so alarmed Margaret and her husband, that, giving way to terror, they suddenly threw themselves into the castle of Edinburgh. But Douglas, taking the young monarch in his company, and summoning the lieges to muster under the royal standard, laid siege to the fortress ; and Margaret, although she knew that her son was an unwilling enemy, and weary of his fetters, did not dare to disobey his summons. Falling on her knees before the king, she presented the keys of the fortress, and implored pardon for herself and her husband, whilst Angus, in the insolence of uncontrollable dominion, smiled at her constrained submission, and ordered Methven to a temporary imprisonment.¹ The secret history of this enormous power on the one hand, and implicit obedience on the other, is to be found in the fact, that the Douglasses were masters of the king's person ; they compelled the young monarch to affix his signature to any deeds which they chose to offer him. Angus was chancellor, and the great seal at his command ; his uncle was treasurer, and the revenues, as well as the law of the country, with its terrible processes of treason and forfeiture, were completely under his controul. So long as James remained a captive, all this powerful machinery was theirs, and their authority which it supported, could not be shaken ; but as soon as the king became free, the tyrannical system was destined to disappear.

¹ Lesly, p. 140.

The moment destined for the liberation of the monarch and the country was now at hand ; nor can it be doubted that James, who had completed his sixteenth year, and, began to develop a character of great vigor and capacity, was the chief contriver of the plot for his freedom. Beaton, the chancellor, and his assistant in his schemes, having given a magnificent entertainment to the young king and the Douglasses in his palace of St. Andrew's, so completely succeeded in blinding the eyes of Angus, that the conspiracy for his destruction was matured when he deemed himself most secure.¹ James prevailed first on the queen, whom it was not deemed prudent to intrust with the secret, to exchange with him her castle of Stirling for the lands of Methven, to be given with the dignity of peer to her husband ; and having placed this fortress in the hands of a captain on whose fidelity he could rely, he induced Angus, under some plausible pretext, to permit him to remove to his palace of Falkland, within a moderate distance from St. Andrew's.² It was here easy for him to communicate with Beaton, and nothing remained but to seize a favourable moment for the execution of their design : nor was this long of presenting itself. Lulled into security by the late

¹ Caligula, B. III. 136. By a letter of Thomas Loggen, one of Magnus's spies, to that ambassador, it appears the Douglasses had detected Beaton secretly writing to the pope, representing his services, and requesting a cardinal's hat. It is singular this did not make Angus more cautious. Lindsay, p. 206.

² Caligula, B. VII. 73. Credence given by the Queene of Scotts to Walter Taite.

defeat of the queen, and the well-feigned indifference of the chancellor, the Douglasses had for a while intermitted their rigid watch over the young king. Angus had passed to Lothian, on his private affairs; Archibald, his uncle, to Dundee; and Sir George Douglas, the master of the royal household, having entered into some transactions with Beaton regarding their mutual estates, had been induced by that prelate to leave the palace for a brief season, and to visit him at St. Andrew's; only Douglas, of Parkhead, captain of the royal guard, was left with the young monarch, who instantly took his measures for escape. Calling Balfour of Ferny, the keeper of Falkland forest, and chamberlain of Fife, he issued orders for a hunting party next morning, commanding him to warn the tenantry, and assemble the best dogs in the neighbourhood; he then took supper, went early to bed, under pretence of being obliged to rise next morning before daybreak, and dismissed the captain of his guard, who, without suspicion, left the royal apartment. When all was quiet in the palace, James started from his couch, disguised himself as a yeoman of the guard, stole to the stable, attended by a single servant, and, throwing himself upon a fleet horse, reached Stirling before sunrise. On passing the bridge, then secured by a gate and tower, he commanded it to be shut, and kept so at the peril of the warden's life; and then, proceeding to the castle, the governor, in a tumult of delight to behold his sovereign free, knelt down, and tendered his homage

as he presented the keys of the fortress, amid the shouts and rejoicings of the garrison and the citizens. Worn out with anxiety and travel, James now snatched a few hours of sleep ; and, couriers having been dispatched in the interval, he awoke to see himself surrounded by his nobles, and felt, for the first time in his life, that he was a free monarch.¹ His first act was to summon a council, and issue a proclamation that no lord or follower of the house of Douglas should dare to approach within six miles of the court, under pain of treason,—a step, strongly indicating that vigor and judgment which marked his future administration. The meeting was attended by the Earls of Arran, Argyle, Eglinton, and Murray, with the Lords Evandale, Sinclair, Maxwell, and Montgomery.²

Meanwhile, all this had passed with such speed and secrecy, that the Douglasses still believed the king safe in the palace of Falkland ; and so secure did they esteem themselves, that Sir George Douglas,

¹ Lindsay, Hist., pp. 218, 219. Lesly, p. 140.

² In an unpublished letter of Angus to Dr. Magnus (March 15th, 1527), Caligula, B. I. 105, the vigilance of that peer is strongly marked. In excusing himself for not keeping his appointment, he says, “Thyrdly, as the caiss stands, I dar not a ventur to depairt fra the keping of the kingis person, for danger that way appears ; for all the lords ar departit of toun, nane uther lords remayning with his grace as now, bot my lord of Glasgow, Levenax, and I ; and as I belief the kingis grace of England nor ze suld be easie, yat I depairt fra the keping of my said soveran’s person, in this tyme of necessitie, sic perell appearing and brekis throu thir lait novellis.”

the master of the household, arriving late in the evening, and hearing that James had retired for the night, made no further inquiries, but sought his own chamber. A loud and early knocking awoke him; and Carmichael, the baily of Abernethy, rushing in, demanded if he had lately seen the king. "His grace," said Douglas, "is yet in bed." "No, no, cried Carmichael, "Ye are all deceived and betrayed; the king has passed the bridge of Stirling." Sir George now flew to the royal apartment, found it locked, burst open the door with his foot, and, his consternation, found that the report was true. The royal vestments, which had been thrown off for the friendly disguise, lay upon the unpressed couch; and Douglas, awakening to the full extent of the calamity, stood, for an instant, rooted to the ground, in an agony of rage and disappointment. To raise the cry of treason, to summon Angus and his uncle, who soon after arrived in breathless haste, was the work of a few hours; and without farther delay, the three lords, accompanied by a slender retinue, set out for Stirling. Before they had proceeded any distance, they were met by the herald, entrusted with the royal proclamation; and this officer, reining up his horse, boldly read the act, which prohibited their approach to court under the pain of treason. For a moment they hesitated—the hereditary and haughty fearlessness of their house impelled them to proceed; but the terror of the royal name arrested their steps; and the same weapons which they had found invincible in their

own grasp, were now employed against themselves. All the penalties of treason, the loss of their property, the desertion of their vassals, the forfeiture of their lives, rose in fearful array before them ; and, with imprecations against their own carelessness and folly, they turned their horses heads, and slowly rode back to Linlithgow.¹

¹ Buchanan, XIV. 33. In Mr. Pitcairn's valuable collection of Criminal Trials, to which, in the course of my historical investigations, I have been under repeated obligations, there occurs (vol. i. p. 188), an incidental notice, from which we may pretty nearly fix the hitherto uncertain date of the king's escape. Pinkerton (vol. ii. p. 291) assumes it to have taken place in July. This, however, is undoubtedly incorrect ; for we find, on December 1st, 1528, the lady Glamis was summoned to answer before parliament for the assistance afforded the Earl of Angus, in convocating the lieges for eight days immediately preceding June 1st, to invade the king's person. This brings the date of the escape to the 22nd or 23rd of May.