

CHAP. V.

JAMES THE SIXTH.

1597-8—1600.

CONTEMPORARY PRINCES.

<i>England.</i> Elizabeth.	<i>France.</i> Henry IV.	<i>Germany.</i> Rudolph II.	<i>Spain.</i> Philip II. Philip III.	<i>Portugal.</i> Philip II. Philip III.	<i>Pope.</i> Clement VII.
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HAVING thus continuously traced the establishment in Scotland of this limited Episcopacy, we must look back for a moment on the civil history of the country. This was not marked by any great or striking events. There was no external war, and no internal rebellion or commotion; and the success which had attended all the late measures of the King produced a tranquillity in the country, which had the best effects on its general prosperity. James had triumphed over the extreme license and democratic movements of the Kirk; had restrained the personal attacks of its pulpit; defined, with something of precision, the limits between the civil and ecclesiastical jurisdictions; evinced an anxiety to raise the character and usefulness of the clergy, by granting them a fixed provision; and added consideration and dignity to the Presbyterian polity, by giving it a representation

in the great Council of the country. He had, on the other hand, shown equal wisdom and determination in his conduct to the Roman Catholic earls. None could say that he had acted a lukewarm part to religion. These nobles remained in the country, and had been restored to their estates and honours solely because they were reconciled to the Church. According to the better principles of our own times, he had acted with extraordinary severity and intolerance; but even the highest and hottest Puritan of these unhappy days could not justly accuse him of indifference. He had, moreover, strengthened his aristocracy by healing its wounds, removing or binding up the feuds which tore it, and restoring to it three of its greatest members, Huntly, Angus, and Errol. He had punished, with exemplary severity, the tumult which had been excited in his capital, and read a lesson of obedience to the magistrates and middle orders, which they were not likely to forget. Lastly, he had, in a personal expedition, reduced his Borders to tranquillity; and in his intercourse with England, had shown that, whilst he was determined to preserve peace, he was equally resolved to maintain his independence, and to check that spirit of restless intrigue and interference in which the English Ambassadors at the Scottish Court had, for so many years, indulged with blameable impunity. Sir Robert Bowes, who had long filled that difficult and dangerous office, had recently died at Berwick, a victim apparently to its anxieties; and having undergone, during his devoted services, the same trials of penury and neglect which, with

scarcely one exception, seem to have been the portion of his royal mistress' Ambassadors and diplomatic agents.¹ On the 11th of May he had written to his sovereign, imploring his recall, and lamenting that his decay in health, and weakness in body and estate, unfitted him for farther labour; but his remonstrance was ineffectual: and it was not till nearly six months after, that an order arrived, permitting him to retire, and naming Sir William Bowes as his successor. The release, however, came too late. He was then unable to stand from weakness; and he only reached Berwick to expire.² The duties of his office, in the meantime, devolved upon Mr George Nicolson, his secretary, a man of ability, whose letters contain much that is valuable in the history of the times.

On the arrival of Sir William Bowes at the Scot-

¹ MS. Letter, St. P. Off., Sir Robert Bowes to Sir R. Cecil, 11th May, 1597.

In the last letter but one which Sir Robert Bowes addressed to Cecil from Edinburgh, there is this pathetic passage:—"Her Majesty's gracious compassion taken of me, and of my weakness, is great comfort unto me in my present distress, wherein I now lie, at the seat of God's mercy, and at the point of life, death, sickness, or recovery; in which, as I shall fare, you shall be shortly advertised. For albeit I had intended this day to have entered my journey towards Berwick; yet, by the advice of my friends, and in respect of my weakness disabling me to stand without help, I have agreed to defer this journey until to-morrow." MS. Letter, St. P. Off., Sir R. Bowes to Sir R. Cecil, 31st October, 1597.

² His last letter is written from Berwick to Sir R. Cecil on the 6th of November, 1597. He died on the 16th of the same month. In the St. P. Office is preserved a fly-leaf, with a printed epitaph on Sir R. Bowes, by Mr William Fowler, Secretary to Queen Anne of Denmark.

tish Court, he found the King's mind entirely occupied by one great subject—his title to the English throne after the death of the Queen. On this point the tranquillity from other cares now gave James full leisure for thought; and he evinced an extreme sensitiveness in everything connected with it. Reports of speeches against his right of succession in the English Parliament; books written in favour of the claim of the Infanta; intrigues of pretenders at home; the jealousy with which the Catholics regarded his reconciliation with the Kirk; the suspicion with which the Kirk observed his favour to the Catholics: all these thorny matters perpetually haunted and harassed him. From his observations, the Ambassador dreaded that the royal mind was beginning to be alienated from England; and in his first interview James certainly expressed himself with some bitterness against Elizabeth. The expostulations addressed to him by his good sister, he said, were unnecessarily sharp. She accused him of diminished friendliness, of foreign predilections, of credulity and forwardness; but he must retort these epithets, for he had found herself too ready to believe what was untrue, and to condemn him unheard. It was true that, when he saw other competitors for the Crown of England endeavouring, in every way, to advance their own titles, and even making personal applications to the Queen, he had begun to think it time to look to his just claim, and to interest his friends in his behalf. It was with this view he had required assistance from his people to furnish Ambassadors to various foreign

powers. This, surely, he was entitled to do; but anything which had been reported of him beyond this was false: and his desire to entertain all kindly offices with his good sister of England continued as strong as it had been during his whole life.¹ Elizabeth, however, was not satisfied: she still suspected that the Scottish Court was inimical to England; and these suspicions were increased by the letters of Nicolson her agent. James was said to be much guided by the opinions of Elphinstone, Secretary of State, who was little attached to English interests. There was the warmest friendship between the Scottish Queen, Anne of Denmark, and the Countess of Huntly, a devoted Catholic. They often slept in the same bed; and this favoured lady, as Nicolson quaintly expressed it, had the "plurality of her Majesty's kisses."² The two young Princesses were intrusted to Lady Livingston, a Catholic; many things, in short, concurred to show, that although appearances were preserved that the King might not forfeit his English "gratuity," cordiality was at end. At this moment a strange circumstance occurred, which exasperated the feelings of both monarchs. A miscreant, named Valentine Thomas, accused James of employing him in a plot against the life of Elizabeth; and it was at first whispered, and afterwards more plainly asserted at the Scottish Court, that the Queen, though she did not choose to speak openly, believed the accusa-

¹ MS. Letter, St. P. Off., Sir William Bowes to Sir R. Cecil, 1st February, 1597-8.

² MS. St. P. Off., Occurrences, 2d February, 1597-8.

tion. Some dark expressions which she used in a letter to the King seemed to countenance this idea; and it was certain that she had employed Sir Edward Coke, Sir Francis Bacon, and other judges, in the investigation. James resented this, and insisted on explanations. It was needless in him, he said, to disclaim "such vile intended murder;" but he demanded the fullest investigation, and the severest punishment of the wretch who had so foully slandered him. He would proclaim it as false to all the world by sound of trumpet, by open challenge, in any number; yea, of a King to a King! When his late Ambassador to England attempted to pacify him, he struck him on the breast, and said he was sure there was a chain of Elizabeth's under his doublet. It was in vain that, to appease him, the Queen of England wrote a letter with her own hand, in which she assured him, that she was not "of so viperous a nature" as to harbour a thought against him; and that the deviser of such abominable slander should have his deserts.¹ Even this was not enough. The accusation had been public; the depositions of the villain remained uncanceled; who could say what use might not be made of them against his future rights, and to prejudice him in the hearts of the English people? Here was the sore point; and James did not cease to remonstrate till he had extorted from the Queen a solemn and formal refutation of the whole story.

¹ MS. Letter, St. P. Off., 11th May, 1598, Nicolson to Burghley. MS. Letter, St. P. Off., Royal Letters, Scotland, Elizabeth to James, 1st July, 1598.

The subject of his title, indeed, had kept the monarch, for the last three years, in a state of perpetual and irritable activity. He encouraged authors to write upon the question; and jurisconsults, heralds, and genealogists, made their harvest of his anxiety. Monsieur Jessè, a French literary adventurer, who in 1596 visited the Scottish Court, was made Historiographe au Roi d'Escoffe, and commanded to "*blaw abroad*" Secretary Elphinstone's discourse on his majesty's title. Walter Quin, an Irish poet and scholar, drew up a work in Latin on the same subject. Monsieur Damon, another Frenchman, corrected it and the King sent the manuscript to Waldegrave, his printer, who, in an agony, declared to Nicolson, that he must either print it, and irrecoverably offend his gracious sovereign Queen Elizabeth, or refuse, at the peril of his life. Nor was this all; James was suddenly seized with the most sensitive feelings on the subject of his royal mother's memory. His claims came through her; and slander on the Queen of Scots might taint the transmitted title. Spenser, as it was asserted, had glanced at her under the character of Duessa in his *Fairy Queen*; and the Scottish Secretary of State insisted that *Edward Spenser*, (the diplomatist did not even know the immortal poet's name,) should be severely punished. Quin, too, came to the rescue, and wrote an answer to Spenser; whilst "Dickson," an English pedagogue, who taught the Art of Memory, forsook his *ferula*, and found in Scotland a more profitable employment

in answering the famous Treatise of Doleman, or rather Father Parsons, from materials furnished by the King himself.¹

These constant cares were only interrupted by the alarming increase of witches and sorcerers, who were said to be swarming in thousands in the kingdom; and for a moment all other cares were forgotten in the intensity with which the monarch threw himself once more into his favourite subject. But a shocking discovery put an end to this dreadful inquisition. An unhappy creature, named Aitken, was seized on suspicion, put to torture, and in her agony confessed herself guilty, named some associates, and offered to purge the country of the whole crew, if she were promised her life. It was granted her; and she declared that she knew witches at once by a secret mark in their eyes, which could not possibly be mistaken. The tale was swallowed. She was carried for months from town to town throughout the country, and in this diabolical circuit accused many innocent women, who, on little more than the evidence of a look, were tried and burnt. At last suspicion was roused. A woman, whom she had convicted of having the devil's eye-mark, was disguised, and, after an interval, again brought before her; she acquitted her. The experiment was repeated with like success; and the miserable creature, falling on her knees, confessed that torture had made her a

¹ MS. Letter, St. P. Off., Nicolson to Cecil, 25th Feb., 1597-8. MS. Advocates' Library, Edinburgh, Balcarres Papers, vol. vii. pp. 26, 29, The King to the Secretary.

liar, both against herself and others. This, as it well might, brought the royal inquisitionist of sorcery, and his civil and ecclesiastical assistants, to their senses. The Commission of Inquiry was recalled, and all proceedings against the witches discharged till the Parliament should have determined the form and evidence to be adopted in their trial.¹

Everything was now tranquil in the southern part of the kingdom; and the whole Estate, to use Nicolson's expression to Cecil, so "marvellous quiet,"² that the King had leisure to attend to an important and long neglected subject: the condition of the Highlands and Isles. It had, for some time, been James' intention to visit these remote districts in person, and, as usual, to overawe them by the terror of the royal name, backed by an army and a fleet; but year after year had passed, and nothing was done. His impoverished finances, his quarrel with the Kirk, his entanglements with the Papist earls, his embassies to foreign Courts on the subject of his title,—all these engrossed his attention; and the fragments of leisure which remained were filled up by the witches, and a visit made to Scotland by the Duke of Holstein, the brother of his Queen, which seems to have thrown the Court into a perpetual whirl of pageantry, intoxication, and masquerade. The people, according to Nicolson, groaned at the expense; and his majesty was much

¹ Spottiswood, p. 448, MS. Letter, St. P. Off., Bowes to Cecil, 15th Aug., 1597. Same to same, 5th Sept., 1597.

² MS. Letter, St. P. Off., Nicolson to Sir R. Cecil, 20th Nov., 1598.

distempered both in his privy purse and his digestion.¹ But these revels and potations had at last an end. The joyous Dane took leave; and the royal mind, relapsing into sobriety, turned to the Isles and Donald Gorm Macdonald. This potent Highland chieftain had recently made advances to Elizabeth; and it is not uninteresting to remark the stateliness with which a prince amongst the northern *vikings* approached the English Semiramis. He styled himself Lord of the Isles of Scotland, and Chief of the Clandonnel Irishmen; and after a proud enumeration of the petty island princes and chiefs who were ready to follow him in all his enterprises, he offered, upon certain "*reasonable motives and considerations*," to embrace the service of the Queen of England, and persuade the Isles to throw off all allegiance to the Scottish Crown. He and his associates were ready, they declared, on a brief warning, to stir up rebellion throughout all the bounds of the mainland, to "*fasche*"² his majesty, and weary the whole Estates; to create a necessity for new taxation, and thus disgust all classes of his subjects. To induce Elizabeth to embrace these proposals, Donald informed the Queen, that he knew the secret history of the Scottish King's intercourse with her arch-rebel Tyrone, and could lay before her the whole intrigues of the Catholic earls lately reconciled to the Kirk, but "meaning nothing less in their hearts than that which they showed outwardly to the world." He would disclose, also, he said, the

¹ MS. Letter, St. P. Off., Nicolson to Cecil, 9th June, 1598.

² Trouble.

secret history of the Spanish practices in Scotland; and prove with what activity the northern Jesuits and seminary priests had been weaving their meshes, and pushing forward "their diabolical, pestiferous, and antichristian courses;" which he, Donald Gorm Macdonald, protested before God and his angels he detested with his whole soul. All this he was ready to do, upon "good deservings, and honest courtesies," to be offered him by the Queen of England; to whose presence he promised to repair upon a moment's warning.¹

What answer was given by the English Queen to these generous and disinterested proposals does not appear; although the letter of Donald Gorm, who made it, is marked in many places by Burghley with the trembling hand of sickness and old age. It is probable, that under the term "*honest courtesies*," more substantial rewards were found to be meant than Elizabeth was willing to bestow; and that the perpetual feuds, massacres, and conspiracies which occurred amongst these Highland chiefs and their followers, disgusted this Princess, and shook her confidence in any treaties or alliances proposed by such savage auxiliaries. It was in one of these barbarous plots that Maclean of Duart, a firm friend of Elizabeth, with whose warlike exploits we are already acquainted, met his death;² being treacher-

¹ MS. St. P. Off., indorsed by Burghley "Donald Gorme Macdonald," March, 1598.

² MS. Letter, St. P. Off., Nicolson to Sir R. Cecil, 10th Aug., 1598. *Supra*, p. 170.

ously slain in Isla, by his nephew, Sir James Macdonald, who persuaded him to visit the island; alleging, as a pretext, his desire to make an amicable settlement of their differences. So little did the brave Lord of Duart suspect any foul play, that he came to the meeting without armour, in a silk dress, and with only a rapier at his side. Along with him were his second son, and the best of his kin, in their holiday garb, and with little other arms than their hunting-knives and boar-spears: but although set upon by an ambush of nearly seven hundred men, they made a desperate defence. Maclean, a man of herculean strength, slew three of the Macdonalds at the first onset. When he saw there was no hope, he commanded his son, who fought beside him, to fly, and live to avenge him;¹ but the chief himself, and a little knot of his clansmen, stood, shoulder to shoulder, and were not cut down till after fifty of their assailants had fallen.

The death of this great chief was little resented by the King: for James had long been jealous of his dealings with Elizabeth, and his bitter hostility to Huntly; whilst, at this moment, Sir James Macdonald of Dunluce, his murderer, was in high favour at the Scottish Court.² This Macdonald, known in Irish history as James Macsorlie, had been long a thorn in the side of England, stirring up rebellion in Ireland, and offering his services to James as an

¹ The present Earl Compton, eldest son of the Marquess Northampton, is descended, through his mother the late amiable and accomplished Lady Compton, from this second son.

² MS. Letter, St. P. Off., Nicolson to Cecil, 10th Aug., 1598.

active partisan both in Spanish and Scottish affairs. Macsorlie seems to have been a perfect specimen of those Scoto-Hebridean barons who so often concealed the ferocity of the Highland freebooter under the polished exterior which they had acquired by an occasional residence in the low country. It was his pleasure sometimes to join the Court at Falkland or Holyrood, mingle in its festivities, give rich presents to the Queen and her ladies, outshine the gayest, and fascinate all observers by the splendour of his tastes and the elegance of his manners;¹ but suddenly would come a message from some Highland ally, and Macsorlie flew back to his native islands, where, the moment his foot touched the heather, the gay courtier became a rampant and blood-bolstered savage. Macsorlie had, for years, been the ally of Tyrone, and the soul of the resistance in Ireland; and Elizabeth resented the favour shown him by James; who replied, "That if his convicted traitors, Bothwell and Colvil, walked the streets of her capital, he was as free to entertain an island chief who owed her no allegiance, and whose assistance was useful to him in reducing the remote Highland districts which had insolently assumed independence."²

So dreadful, indeed, was now the state of those portions of his dominions, that, to prevent an utter dissevering from the Scottish Crown, something must be done; and many were the projects suggested. At one time the King resolved to proceed

¹ *Analecta Scotica*, p. 105, Sir John Skene to the Lord Secretary.

² MS. Letter, St. P. Off., Nicolson to Cecil, 16th August, 1598.

to the disturbed districts in person, and fix his head-quarters in Kentire; at another, a Deputy was to be sent, armed with regal powers; and twice the Duke of Lennox was nominated to this arduous office.¹ The old plan, too, might have been repeated, of granting a royal Commission to one or other of the northern *Reguli*, who were ever prepared, under the plea of loyalty, to strengthen their own hands, and exterminate their brethren; but this, as had been often felt before, was to abandon the country to utter devastation; and a more pacific and singular policy was now adopted. An association of Lowland barons, chiefly from Fife, took a lease from the Crown of the Isle of Lewis, for which they agreed, after seven years' possession, to give the King an annual rent of one hundred and forty chalders of victual, and came under an obligation to *conquer* their farm at their own charges. Another company of noblemen and gentlemen in Lothian offered, under a similar agreement, to subdue Skye. And this kind of feudal joint-stock company actually commenced their operations with a force of six hundred soldiers, and a motley multitude of farmers, ploughmen, artificers, and pedlers. But the Celtic population and their haughty chiefs, could not consent to be handed over, in this wholesale fashion, to the tender mercies and agricultural lectures of a set of Saxon adventurers. The Lowland barons arrived, only to be attacked with the utmost fury, and to have the leases of their farms, in the old Douglas phrase, written on their

¹ Gregory, pp. 267, 283.

own skins with steel pens and bloody ink. For a time, however, they continued the struggle; and having entered into alliance with some of the native chiefs, fought the Celts with their own weapons, and more than their own ferocity. Instead of agricultural or pastoral produce, importations of wool, or samples of grain, from the infant colony, there was sent to the Scottish Court a ghastly cargo of twelve human heads in sacks; and it was hoped that, after such an example of severity, matters might succeed better. But the settlers were deceived. After a feeble and protracted struggle of a few years, sickness and famine, perils by land, and perils by water, incessant war, and frequent assassinations, destroyed the colony; and the three great northern chiefs, Macdonald of Sleat, Macleod of Harris, and Mackenzie of Kintail, enjoyed the delight of seeing the principal gentlemen adventurers made captive by Tormod Macleod; who, after extorting from them a renunciation of their titles, and an oath never to return to the Lewis, dismissed them to carry to the Scottish Court the melancholy reflection, that a Celtic population, and the islands over which it was scattered, were not yet the materials or the field for the operations of the economists of Fife and Mid-Lothian.¹

The King's recent triumph over the ministers; the vigour with which he had brought the bishops into Parliament, and compelled his nobles to renounce their blood-feuds; seem to have persuaded him that

¹ Gregory, p. 290-299. MS. Letter, St. P. Off., Nicolson to Cecil, 1st July, 1598.

his will and prerogative were to bear down all before him ; but a slight circumstance now occurred which, had he been accustomed to watch such political indications, might have been full of warning and instruction. The magistrates of Edinburgh had arrested an offender : he was rescued by one of the servants of the King. The magistrates prosecuted the rescuer, and compelled him to give assurance that he would deliver the original culprit ; but the courtier failed in his promise, and the civic authorities seized him and sent him to prison. An outcry arose. It was deemed disgraceful that an officer of the royal household, a gentleman responsible solely to the King, should be clapt up in jail by a set of burghers and bailies. James interfered, and commanded his servant to be set free ; but the bailies refused. The monarch sent a more angry message ; it was met by a still firmer reply : the Provost and magistrates declared that they were ready to resign their offices into the King's hands ; as long, however, as they kept them, they would do their duty. James was much enraged, but cooled and digested the affront.¹

Within a fortnight after, however, arose a more serious dispute between the Crown and the Court of Session, the Supreme Court of Judicature, in which its President, Sir Alexander Seton, and the majority of the judges, exhibited a spirit of independence which is well worthy of being recorded. The subject of quarrel was a judgment pronounced by the Court in favour of the celebrated minister of the Kirk, Mr

¹ MS. Letter, St. P. Off., Nicolson to Cecil, 27th Feb., 1598-9.

Robert Bruce, who had been deprived of his stipend by the King. Bruce sued the Crown before the Session, and obtained a decision in his favour. The monarch appealed; came to the Court in person; pleaded his own cause with the utmost violence, and commanded the judges to give their vote against Mr Robert. The President Seton then rose: "My liege," said he, "it is my part to speak first in this Court, of which your Highness has made me head. You are our King; we, your subjects, bound and ready to obey you from the heart, and, with all devotion, to serve you with our lives and substance: but this is a matter of law, in which we are sworn to do justice according to our conscience and the statutes of the realm. Your Majesty may, indeed, command us to the contrary; in which case I and every honest man on this bench will either vote according to conscience, or resign and not vote at all." Another of the judges, Lord Newbattle, then rose, and observed, "That it had been spoken in the city, to his Majesty's great slander, and theirs who were his judges, that they dared not do justice to all classes, but were compelled to vote as the King commanded: a foul imputation, to which the lie that day should be given; for they would now deliver a unanimous opinion against the Crown." For this brave and dignified conduct James was unprepared; and he proceeded to reason long and earnestly with the recusants: but persuasions, arguments, taunts, and threats, were unavailing. The judges, with only two dissentient votes, pronounced their decision in favour of Mr

Robert Bruce ; and the mortified monarch flung out of Court, as a letter of the day informs us, muttering revenge, and raging marvellously.¹ When the subservient temper of these times is considered, and we remember that Seton, the President, was a Roman Catholic, whilst Bruce, in whose favour he and his brethren decided, was a chief leader of the Presbyterian ministers, it would be unjust to withhold our admiration from a judge and a court which had the courage thus fearlessly to assert the supremacy of the law.

It was during the course of this year, that the Queen of England lost Lord Burghley, who died on the 4th of August, 1598, in his seventy-eighth year ; a long tried and affectionate servant to his royal mistress ; but of whom, however high his character as an English statesman, no Scottish historian can speak without censure. He had been for nearly forty years the almost exclusive adviser of the English Queen in her Scottish affairs. It was chiefly his advice and exertions that brought the unhappy Mary to the scaffold ; and in his policy towards Scotland, he seems almost invariably to have acted upon the principle, that to foster civil dissension in that kingdom, was to give additional strength and security to England. Happily, the time has come when we may pronounce this maxim as unsound as it is dishonest ; but, in those days, craft was mistaken for political wisdom : and Sir Robert Cecil, Lord Burghley's second son, who now succeeded to his father's power, had been educated in the same narrow school.

¹ MS. Letter, St. P. Off., Nicolson to Cecil, 16th March, 1598-9.

This able man, who filled the office of Secretary of State to Elizabeth, had, as we have seen, for some years taken the chief management of Scottish affairs; and, soon after his father's death, he became deeply alarmed for the orthodoxy of James and his Queen; suspecting them, as appears by a paper in his own hand, of growing every day more devoted in their affection to the Pope.¹ That these were ideal terrors of the English Secretary, the result plainly showed: but the true key to this apparent Papal predilection, was James' extreme poverty; the rigid economy of Elizabeth, who refused to supply his wants; and a hope entertained by the Scottish King, that if he exhibited a disposition to relax in the rigidity of his Protestant principles, and to maintain an amicable intercourse with the Catholics, his exhausted exchequer might be recruited by a supply of Roman and Spanish gold. But Cecil, although he allowed some weight to this, thought it too slight a cause to account for the strong symptoms of declension from the reformed opinions exhibited both by the King and his councillors, and advised his royal mistress instantly to despatch Sir William Bowes into Scotland, whose veteran experience in Scottish politics might, he hoped, bring about a reaction. Want of money might, as Cecil contended, explain somewhat of James' late coldness; but there must be deeper agencies and convictions producing the strange appear-

¹ MS. St. P. Off., Memorial of the present state of Scotland, 1598. Id. Ibid., Nicolson to Cecil, 14th April, 1599.

ances now exhibited by a country which had, within these few years, stood in the van of Protestant kingdoms; which had been the stronghold of Presbyterian purity. It was noted too by Cecil, that Elphinstone, James' principal Secretary of State, was a Catholic; that Seton, the President of the Session, was a Catholic; that Lord Livingston, the governor of the young princesses, was a Catholic; and that Huntly, who, notwithstanding his recent recantation, was strongly suspected of a secret attachment to his ancient faith, possessed the highest influence over the King.¹ Then, James' late embassies to Catholic princes; the favour shown to Gordon the Jesuit; his secret encouragement of Tyrone, the great enemy of England; a late mission of Colonel Semple to Spain; his animosity to the ministers of the Kirk; his introduction of bishops; his correspondence with the Duchess of Feria, and other Catholics; and even his speeches in the open Convention of his three Estates, were all quoted, and not without good reason, as strong proofs of his defection.

The necessities to which the King had reduced himself by his too lavish gifts to his favourites, and the thoughtless extravagance of his household, were indeed deplorable, and produced repeated remonstrances from his Treasurer, Comptroller, and other financial officers. Money, they said, in a homely and passionate memorial, was required for the "entertainment of the King's bairns, gotten and to be begotten;" for the renewing of his Majesty's whole moveables and

¹ MS. St. P. Off., Memorial of the present state of Scotland.

silver work, all worn and consumed; for the repair and fortification of his castles of Edinburgh, Dumbarton, and Blackness; for the keeping up of his palaces, of which Holyrood and Linlithgow were in shameful decay, and in some parts wholly ruinous. Money was required in all departments of the service of the State, and in all districts; without the kingdom and within it; in the south and in the north. There were no funds to pay the resident in England; no funds to procure secret intelligence; none to support the public officers at home; none to furnish the Wardens of the West Marches; none to fit out a lieutenant for the expedition against the Western Isles, where the rebels had taken Dunyveg, and were in great strength.¹ It was in vain for James to look to England. Elizabeth replied by sending him a list of her gratuities, which proved that, from 1592 to 1599, she had given him twenty-six thousand pounds.² At Court, the want of money produced strange scenes; and the high offices of State, instead of being sought after as objects of ambition, were shunned as thankless and ruinous to their possessors. The great office of Lord High Treasurer was going a-begging. Blantyre declared he could hold it no longer. Cassillis, a young nobleman who had recently married the rich widow of the Chancellor Thirlstane, a lady who might have been his mother, was prevailed on to accept it; and had taken the oaths, when the gossip of the Court brought to his ears an ominous speech of the

¹ MS. St. P. Off., The King's Extraordinary Charges.

² MS. St. P. Off., Her Majesty's Gratuities to the King of Scots.

King, who had been heard to say, that Lady Cassillis' purse should now be opened for her rose nobles. This alarmed the incipient Treasurer into a prompt resignation; but James stormed, ordered his arrest, seized his and his wife's houses, and compelled him to purchase his pardon by a heavy fine.¹ In the end the dangerous gift was accepted by the Master of Elphinstone, brother of the Secretary of State, "a wise, stout man," as Nicolson characterizes him; yet all his wisdom and firmness were unequal to the task of recruiting the public purse; and so utterly impoverished did he find it, that the expenses of the baptism of the young Princess Margaret, which took place at this time, were defrayed out of the private pockets of the Lords of the Bed-chamber.²

On Sir William Bowes' arrival in Edinburgh, early in May 1599, he found the ministers of the Kirk in high wrath against the King, and full of the most gloomy views as to the state of the country. James had been recently employing his leisure hours in writing his celebrated Treatise on Government, the *Basilicon Doron*, which he had addressed to his son the Prince of Wales; and having employed Sir James Sempil, one of his gentlemen, to make a transcript, the work was imprudently shown by him to Andrew Melvil; who took offence at some passages,

¹ MS. Letter, St. P. Off., Nicolson to Cecil, 10th April, 1599. Id. Ibid., same to same, 14th April, 1599. Id. Ibid., same to same, 9th June, 1599. Spottiswood, p. 454.

² MS. Letter, St. P. Off., Nicolson to Cecil, 20th April, 1599. Id. Ibid., same to same, 10th April, 1599.

made copies of them, and laying them, without mentioning any names, before the Presbytery of St Andrews, accused the anonymous author of having bitterly defamed the Kirk. What the exact passages were which Melvil had transcribed does not appear; but it is certain that the book contained an attack upon the Presbyterian form of Church Government, and that the Prince was instructed to hold none for his friends but such as had been faithful to the late Queen of Scots. It was very clear, (so the ministers argued,) that no person entertaining such sentiments as were openly expressed in this work, could endure for any long time the wholesome discipline of the Kirk; and that the severe and sweeping censure pronounced upon the Scottish Reformation as the offspring of popular tumult and rebellion, very plainly indicated the author's leaning to Prelacy and Popery. What was to be expected, said they, from a writer who described the leaders of that glorious work as "fiery and seditious spirits, who delighted to rule as *Tribuni plebis*"; and having found the gust of Government sweet, had brought about the wreck of two Queens; and during a long minority had invariably placed themselves at the head of every faction which weakened and distracted the country? What was to be hoped for if those men, who had been ever the champions of the truth, were to be held up to scorn and avoidance in terms like the following: "Take heed, therefore, my son, to such Puritans, very pests in the Church and commonweal, whom no deserts can oblige, neither oaths nor promises bind; breathing nothing but

sedition and calumnies, aspiring without measure, railing without reason; and making their own imaginations (without any warrant of the Word) the square of their conscience. I protest before the Great God,—and since I am here as upon my testament it is no place for me to lie in,—that ye shall never find with any Highland or Border thieves greater ingratitude, and more lies, and vile perjuries, than with these fanatic spirits.”

When the royal Commissioners, Sir Patrick Murray and Sir James Sandilands, attempted to discover the means by which these obnoxious sentences had been presented to the Synod of St Andrews, they were utterly foiled in the attempt; but the offence was at last traced to an obscure minister at Anstruther, named Dykes; who fled, and was denounced rebel. The rumour had now flown through the country that James was the author of the passages, and had given instructions to the Prince, which showed an inveterate enmity to the Kirk; and it was thought that the publication of the whole work would be the likeliest means to silence the clamour. The book accordingly made its appearance; and in Archbishop Spottiswood's opinion,¹ did more for James' title, by the admiration it raised in England for the piety and wisdom of the royal author, than all the Discourses on the Succession which were published at this time. In Scotland the effect, if we believe Sir William Bowes, was the very opposite. It was received by the ministers with a paroxysm of indignation; and soon after the arrival

¹ Spottiswood, p. 456.

of the English Ambassador, the whole Kirk agreed to proclaim a general Fast, to avert, by prayer and humiliation, the judgments so likely to fall on an apostate King and a miserable country. For two entire days the Fast was rigidly observed; and Bowes declared, in his letter to Cecil, that in all his life he had never been witness to a more holy or powerful practice of religion.¹ From the pulpit the ministers proclaimed to the people the chief causes for their call to mourning. A general coldness in God's service had seized, they said, on all ranks; the enemies of the Gospel, who in purer days had been driven into banishment, were now everywhere returning; and almost a third of the realm was deprived of every means for the teaching of the people. The King himself had become the defamer of the Kirk; his children were brought up by an excommunicated Papist; and the young nobility, the hopes of the country, went abroad meanly instructed, and returned either Atheists or Catholics.²

A singular event occurred at this time, which led to the recall of Bowes the English Ambassador, and gave high umbrage to the Scottish King. An English gentleman, named Ashfield,³ had lately come from Berwick, on a visit to the Scottish Court, who, as there is strong reason to believe, was one of those confidential agents whom James had employed in England to give him secret advice and information on the subject of his succession to the English throne,

¹ MS. Letter, St. P. Off., Bowes to Cecil, 25th June, 1599.

² Id. Ibid.

³ Afterwards Sir Edmund Ashfield.

after the death of the Queen. Lord Wylloughby, the Governor of Berwick, had himself recommended Ashfield to James' notice; but he had scarcely taken his leave, when Wylloughby discovered that he was a suspicious character, and might do much mischief in Scotland. His alarm became still greater, when he found the attention shown to Ashfield by James; his intimacy with the Catholic party at Court, then in great favour with the King; and the strong suspicion of Bowes the Ambassador, that some treachery against England was contemplated. It was determined to destroy it in the bud, by kidnapping the principal party; and John Guevara, Deputy-warden of the East Marches, Wylloughby's cousin, undertook the commission. Repairing, with only three assistants, to Edinburgh, it was concerted with Bowes, that the Ambassador's coach should be waiting on Leith sands, and that Ashfield, under pretence of taking a pleasure drive, should be inveigled into it, and carried off. All succeeded to a wish. Ashfield, as he took his exercise on the sands with some gentlemen, amongst whom were young Fernyhirst, Sir Robert Melvil, and Bowes, was met by Guevara and his companions, and easily persuaded, "under colour of old friendship and good fellowship,"¹ to join in a wine party; at which, becoming somewhat merry and confused, he readily fell into the trap, entered the coach, and instead of being driven

¹ MS. Letter, St. P. Off., B.C., Lord Wylloughby to Cecil, 15th June, 1599. See, also, B.C., Wylloughby to Cecil, 13th June, 1599.

back to Edinburgh, found himself, to his utter confusion, conveyed rapidly to Berwick, and placed under sudden restraint by Lord Wylloughby. Next morning, Wainman, another of the Governor's servants, arrived with Ashfield's papers, which he and Bowes had seized, and brought intelligence that the Scottish King was in the greatest rage at the indignity offered him; and that the people had surrounded Sir William Bowes' lodging, and threatened his life. It had been discovered that the gentlemen who kidnapped Ashfield were in Wylloughby's service, that the coach belonged to the English Ambassador, and that some intoxicating potion had been put in his wine. James wrote a severe and dignified remonstrance to Wylloughby, in which he demanded to know whether this outrage had been committed under any warrant or order from the English Queen;¹ assuring him that it was a matter which, without speedy reparation, he would not pass over. To this Wylloughby boldly replied, that what had been done was not in consequence of any warrant from the Queen, but in the discharge of his own public duty;² whilst Sir William Bowes, who had concerted the whole, when challenged on the subject, made no scruple of asserting, that he had not only no hand in the business, but was utterly ignorant of all about it.³ So

¹ St. P. Off., B.C., James VI. to Lord Wylloughby, 14th June, 1599.

² MS. St. P. Off., B.C., Lord Wylloughby to James, original draft, 15th June, 1599.

³ MS. Letter, St. P. Off., B.C., Wylloughby to Cecil, 15th June, 1599. Also, MS. Letter, St. P. Off., Bowes to Cecil, 16th June

true was Sir Henry Wotton's well-known pun on the character of ambassadors of these days. James' dissatisfaction, however, was so great, and the coldness and distance with which he treated Bowes made his place so irksome, that Elizabeth soon afterwards recalled him.¹

The arrival of a French Ambassador at this crisis, increased the dissatisfaction of the English Queen and the ministers of the Kirk; who suspected that his mission, although kept secret, was connected with James' intrigues with the Catholics abroad. He was a gentleman of the house of Bethune, a younger brother of the great Sully, and much caressed at the Scottish Court: but what especially alarmed the Kirk, was his having brought a Jesuit along with him, who was frequently closeted with the King; whilst the openness with which Sully was allowed the exercise of his religion, caused the brethren to sigh over the contrast of the present cold and liberal times, with the happy days when it was death to set up the Mass in Scotland. Scarcely had these feelings subsided, and the ministers

1599.—Bowes' activity and connivance is completely proved by Lord Wylloughby's letter of the 15th June, to Cecil. He there says:—"I sent some to Edinburgh, with instructions for his reducing. They made divers overtures to my Lord Ambassador, [this was Bowes.] It pleased him to accept of one, which was to draw him to Leith; there, under colour of a dissolute kindness and good fellowship, to make him merry with wine; then to persuade him to ride home in a coach, sent out of purpose therein to surprise him, and bring him away; which, as it pleased God, had very good success." The coach was Bowes'.

¹ MS. Letter, St. P. Off., B.C., Bowes to Cecil, 9th July, 1599.

begun to congratulate themselves on the prospect of the speedy departure of Bethune, when their wrath was rekindled by the arrival of Fletcher and Martin, with their company of Comedians; whom James, who delighted in the theatre, had sent for from England. To the strict notions of these divines, profane plays, and the licentious mummeries of the stage, were almost as detestable as the Mass itself. The one was idolatry—the worship of Baal, or the golden calf; the other was profanity—the dancing of Herodias' daughter: and as this had led to Herod's rash oath, and the decapitation of the Baptist, so did these English buffoons recall to their mind the miserable times of the Guisean domination, when the Court was full of revelry and masquerade, and the blood of the saints was shed like water. It was no wonder that, with such feelings, the arrival of this gay troop of players was received with a storm of ecclesiastical wrath, for which the gentlemen of the buskin were little prepared; and their case appeared desperate, when the magistrates of the capital, acting under the influence of the Kirk, prohibited the inhabitants, by a public act, from haunting the theatre. But James was not so easily defeated. Fletcher had been an old favourite; nor was this his first visit to Scotland. He had been there before, in 1594; and on his return to England, had suffered some persecution from his popularity with James; who now called the Provost and his counsellors before him, compelled them to rescind their act, and proclaimed, by sound of trumpet, not only that the comedians should continue

their entertainments, but insisted that, next Sunday, the ministers should inform their flocks that no restraint or censure should be incurred by any of his good subjects who chose to recreate themselves by "the said comedies and plays." "Considering," so runs the royal act, "that we are not of purpose, nor intention, to authorize or command anything quhilk¹ is profane, or may carry any offence."²

The King's mind had long run intently on the subject of the succession; and he now adopted a measure which, so far as Elizabeth was concerned, was calculated rather to injure than advance his title. A general Band or Contract was drawn up, "purporting to be made by the good subjects of the King's Majesty, for the preservation of his person and the pursuit of his undoubted right to the crown of England and Ireland."³ The whole matter, during its preparation, was kept secret, and James trusted that no whisper would reach the ears of his good sister Elizabeth. But he was disappointed; for Nicolson, on the 27th November, 1599, thus mentioned it to Cecil. "I hear, which I beseech your honour to keep close, that there is a general Band, subscribed by many, and to be subscribed by all earls, lords, and barons; binding them, by solemn vow and oath, to serve the King with their lives, friends, heritages, goods, and gear; and to be ready, in warlike furniture, for the same on all occa-

¹ Quhilk; which.

² MS. Letter, St. P. Off., 12th November, 1599, Nicolson to Cecil.

³ MS. St. P. Off., A general Band, voluntarily made by the good subjects of the King's Majesty, &c.

sions, but especially for his claim to England."¹ The English Envoy then mentioned, that on the 10th of the succeeding month of December, there was to be held a full Convention of the Estates, in which some solid course was to be adopted to supply the King with money, and provide for the arming of his subjects, to be ready when he might need them. But when the Estates assembled, the result did not justify expectations. The Convention, indeed, was fully attended, and sufficiently loyal in its general feeling; yet when the monarch explained his wants, and sought their advice and assistance, they heard him coldly, and delayed their answer till the next meeting of the Estates. In his harangue, James declared his dislike to any offensive scheme of taxation; proposing, in its place, that a certain sum should be levied on every head of cattle and sheep, throughout the country; but this was utterly refused. He forbore, therefore, to press the point, and contented himself with an appeal to them for that support which all good subjects should give their prince for the vindication of his lawful claims. He was not certain, he said, how soon he should have occasion to use arms; but whenever it should be, he knew his Right, and would venture crown and all for it. Let them take care, therefore, that the country be furnished with armour according to the acts made two years before.² This was cheerfully agreed to; and meanwhile the King, whose financial ingenuity seems to have been

¹ MS. Letter, St. P. Off., 27th Nov., 1599, Nicolson to Cecil.

² MS. Letter, St. P. Off., 15th Dec., 1599, Nicolson to Cecil.

whetted by the gloomy prospect of an empty Exchequer at the time money was becoming every day more needed, drew up another scheme which was submitted to his Estates with as little success as the former. Its object was excellent: being to remove the burden of supplies from the poor commons and labourers of the ground; for which purpose he proposed, that the whole country should be "disposed, as it were, into one thousand persons, and each person to pay a particular sum;" which, all being joined, would make up a total equal to his majesty's necessities.

Against this plan, which had, at least, the merit of simplicity, a formal Protest was presented by the barons and burghs. The Laird of Wemyss in the name of the barons, and John Robertson for the burghs, insisted that they should be specially excepted from any commission given to the Sheriffs, for the levying such a sum, and should continue to "stint [tax] themselves in auld manner;" but as the proposal was hypothetical, and came before the Estates merely as an overture, it was judged enough to meet it by delay; and so anxious was the King to spare his people, and fall in with the wishes of all, that he not only agreed to except the barons and burghs, but to drop the whole scheme if any better should be proposed at the next Convention, which was fixed to be held at Edinburgh, on the 20th of June.¹ It was happy that all ended so amicably; for at the beginning of the Convention he had

¹ MS. St. P. Off., Copy of the Act of the Convention at St Johnston.

exerted himself to carry his purpose by means which were violent and unconstitutional. "To effect this," said Nicolson, in writing to Cecil, "the King drew in the whole Borders, the officers of Estate, Sir Robert Ker, Sir Robert Melvil, and others, contrary to the order there appointed, of six only of every Estate to have voted for the rest."

It was during this Convention held at Edinburgh in December, that the King, with advice of his Secret Council, passed an important act, appointing, in all time coming, the "first day of the year to begin upon the first of January;" and this statute, it was added, should take effect upon the first day of January next to come, which shall be the first day of January, 1600.¹ Previous to this time the Scottish year had begun on the 25th of March; and it is worthy of observation that this still continued the mode of reckoning in England.²

¹ MS. St. P. Off., Act for the year of God to begin the 1st of January, yearly.

² Sir H. Nicolas's excellent work on the Chronology of History, p. 41.