

CHAP. IV.

ROBERT BRUCE.

 CONTEMPORARY PRINCES.

King of England.
Edward II.

Kings of France.
Philip IV.
Lewis X.
Phillip V.
Charles IV.

Popes.
Clement V.
John XII.

A DEEP and general panic seized the English, after the disastrous defeat at Bannockburn. The weak and undecided character of the king infected his discontented nobility, and the common soldiers, having lost all confidence in their officers, became feeble and dispirited in themselves. "A hundred English would not hesitate," says Walsingham, "to fly from two or three Scottish soldiers, so grievously had their wonted courage deserted them."¹ Taking advantage of this dejection, the king, in the beginning of autumn,² sent Douglas and Edward Bruce across the eastern marches, with an army which wasted Northumberland, and carried fire and sword through

¹ Walsingham, p. 106.

² It was before the 10th of August. *Rotuli Scotiæ*, 8, Edw. II, m. 9, p. 129.

the principality of Durham, where they levied severe contributions. They next pushed forward into Yorkshire, and plundered Richmond, driving away an immense body of cattle, and making many prisoners. On their way homeward they burnt Appleby and Kirkwold, sacked and set fire to the villages in their route, and found the English so utterly dispirited, that their army reached Scotland, loaded with spoil, and unchallenged by an enemy.¹ Edward, indignant at their successes, issued his writs for the muster of a new army to be assembled from the different wapentachs of Yorkshire, commanded ships to be commissioned and victualled for a second Scottish expedition, and appointed the Earl of Pembroke to be governor of the country between Berwick and the river Trent, with the arduous charge of defending it against the reiterated attacks, and, to use the words of the royal commission, "the burnings, slaughters, and inhuman and sacrilegious depredations of the Scots."² These, however, were only parchment levies; and before a single vessel was manned, or a single horseman had put his foot in the stirrup, the indefatigable Bruce had sent a second army into England, which ravaged Redesdale and Tynedale, again marking their progress by the black ashes of the towns and villages, and compelling the miserable inhabitants of the border countries to surrender their whole wealth, and to purchase their lives with great sums of money.³ From

¹ Chron. Lanercost, apud Tyrrel, vol. iii. p. 262.

² Rotuli Scotiæ, 8. Edw. II. m. 8, dated 10th August, 1314.

³ Chron. Lanercost, in Tyrrel, vol. iii. p. 262.

this they diverged in their destructive progress into Cumberland, and either from despair, or from inclination, and a desire to plunder, many of the English borderers joined the invading army, and swore allegiance to the Scottish king.¹

Alarmed at these inundations, and finding little protection from the inactivity of Edward, and the disunion and intrigues of the nobility, the barons and clergy of the northern parts of England assembled at York; and having entered into a confederacy for the protection of their neighbourhood against the Scots, appointed four captains to command the forces of the country, and to adopt measures for the public safety. Edward immediately confirmed this nomination, and, for the pressing nature of the emergency, the measure was not impolitic; but these border troops soon forgot their allegiance, and, upon the failure of their regular supplies from the king's exchequer, became little better than the Scots themselves, plundering the country, and subsisting themselves by every species of theft, robbery,² and murder.

Robert wisely seized this period of distress and national dejection, to make pacific overtures to Edward,

¹ Rotuli Scotiæ, 9. Edw. II. m. 4, pp. 152, 153.

² Rotuli Scotiæ, 8. Edw. II. m. 6, p. 137, 10th January, 1314. Walsingham, p. 110. Lord Hailes has stated, that Edward assembled a parliament at York in 1314, and quotes the *Fœdera*, vol. iii. pp. 491, 493, for his authority. This must be an error; as these pages prove that no parliament was then assembled, nor is there any writ for a parliament in Rymer in this year at all. Walsingham, p. 106, says, indeed, that the king held a great council at York immediately after his flight from Bannockburn.

and to assure him, that having secured the independence of his kingdom, there was nothing which he more anxiously desired, than a firm and lasting peace between the two nations. Negotiations soon after followed. Four Scottish ambassadors met with the commissioners of England, and various attempts were made for the establishment of a perpetual peace, or at least of a temporary truce, between the rival countries; but these entirely failed, owing, probably, to the high tone assumed by the Scottish envoys, and the termination of this destructive war appeared still more distant than before.¹ Towards the end of this year, so glorious to Scotland, the unfortunate John Baliol died in exile at his ancient patrimonial castle of Bailleul, in France, having lived to see the utter demolition of a power which had insulted and dethroned him. He had been suffered to retain a small property in England, and his eldest son appears to have been living in that country, and under the protection of Edward, at the time of his father's death.²

In addition to the miseries of foreign war and intestine commotion, England was now visited with a grievous famine, which increased to an excessive degree the prices of provisions, and, combined with the frequent and destructive visitations of the Scots, reduced the kingdom to a very miserable condition. A parliament, which assembled at London in Janu-

¹ Rotuli Scotiæ, 8. Edw. II. m. 8, p. 131. York, 18th September, 1314. See also m. 8, pp. 132, 133, 6th October, 1314.

² Fœdera, vol. iii. p. 506, 4th January, 1315.

ary, endeavoured, with short-sighted policy, to provide some remedy in lowering the market price of the various necessaries of life ; and making it imperative upon the seller, either to dispose of his live stock at certain fixed rates, or to forfeit them to the crown,¹ a measure which a subsequent parliament found it necessary to repeal.² The same assembly granted to the king a twentieth of their goods, upon the credit of which, he requested a loan from the abbots and priors of the various convents in his dominions, for the purpose of raising an army against the Scots.³ But the king's credit was too low, the clergy too cautious, and the barons of the crown too discontented, to give efficiency to this intended muster, and no army appeared. The famine, which had begun in England, now extended to Scotland ; and as that country became dependent upon foreign importation, the merchants of England, Ireland, and Wales, were rigorously interdicted from supplying Scotland with grain, cattle, arms, or any other commodities. Small squadrons of ships were employed to cruize round the island, so as to intercept all foreign supplies ; and letters were directed to the Earl of Flanders, and to the Counts of Holland, Lunenburgh, and Brabant, requesting them to put a stop to all commercial intercourse between their dominions and the same country,—a request

¹ Rotuli Parl. 8. Edw. II. n. 35, 86, quoted in Tyrrel, vol. iii. p. 263.

² Tyrrel, vol. iii. p. 265.

³ Ibid. vol. iii. p. 263. Rymer, Fœdera, vol. iii. p. 511.

with which these sagacious and wealthy little states peremptorily refused to comply.¹

In the spring, another Scottish army broke in upon Northumberland, again plundered the principality of Durham, sacked the seaport of Hartlepool, and, after collecting a great booty, compelled the inhabitants to redeem their property and their freedom by a high tribute. Carrying their arms to the gates of York, they desolated the country with fire and sword, and reduced the wretched English to the lowest extremity of poverty and despair.² Carlisle, Newcastle, and Berwick, defended by strong fortifications, and well garrisoned, were now the only cities of refuge where there was security for property; and to these towns the peasantry flocked for protection, whilst the barons and nobility, instead of assembling their vassals to repel the common enemy, spent their time in riot and licentiousness in the capital.³

An important measure, relating to the succession of the crown, now occupied the attention of the states of the kingdom in a parliament held at Ayr, on the 26th of April. By a solemn act of settlement, it was determined, with the consent of the king, and of his daughter and presumptive heir, Marjory, that the crown, in the event of Bruce's death, without heirs

¹ Rotuli Scotiæ, 8. Edw. II. m. 6, pp. 135, 136. Rymer, Fœdera, vol. iii. p. 770. Edward wrote also to the magistrates of Dam, Nieuport, Dunkirk, Ypre, and Mechlin, to the same import. Rotuli Scotiæ, 12. Edw. II. m. 8.

² Hutchinson's History and Antiquities of the County of Durham, p. 262.

³ Walsingham, p. 107.

male of his body, should descend to his brother, Edward Bruce, a man of tried valour, and much practised in war. It was moreover provided, with consent of the king, and of his brother Edward, that, failing Edward and his heirs male, Marjory should immediately succeed; and failing her, the nearest heir lineally descended of the body of King Robert; but under the express condition, that Marjory should not marry without the consent of her father, and failing him, of the majority of the estates of Scotland. If it happened, that either the king, or his brother Edward, or Marjory his daughter, should die, leaving an heir male, who was a minor, in that event Thomas Randolph, Earl of Moray, was constituted guardian of the heir, and of the kingdom, till the estates of Scotland considered the heir of a fit age to administer the government in his own person; and in the event of the death of Marjory, without children, the same noble person was appointed to this high office, if he chose to accept the burden, until the states and community of the kingdom should, in their wisdom, determine the rightful succession to the crown.¹

Not long after this, the king bestowed his daughter Marjory in marriage upon Walter the hereditary High-Steward of Scotland; an important union, which gave heirs to the Scottish crown, and afterwards to the throne of the United Kingdoms.²

An extraordinary episode in the history of Scot-

¹ Fordun a Goodal, vol. ii. pp. 256, 258. Robertson's Index, pp. 7, 8.

² Stewart's History of the Stuarts, p. 18.

land, now claims our attention. Edward Bruce, the king's brother, a man of restless ambition, and undaunted enterprise, fixed his eyes upon Ireland, at this time animated by a strong spirit of resistance against its English masters, and having entered into a secret correspondence with its fierce and discontented chieftains, he conceived the bold idea of reducing that island by force of arms, and becoming its king.¹ A desire to harass England in a very vulnerable quarter, and a wish to afford employment, at a distance, to a temper which was so fierce and encroaching at home,² that it began to threaten disturbance to the kingdom, induced the King of Scotland to agree to a project replete with danger and difficulty; and Edward Bruce, with six thousand men, landed at Carrickfergus in the north of Ireland, on the 25th of May, 1315. He was accompanied by the Earl of Moray, Sir Philip Mowbray, Sir John Soulis, Sir Fergus of Ardrossan, and Ramsay of Ochterhouse. In a series of battles, which it would be foreign to the object of this history to enumerate, although they bear honourable testimony to the excellent discipline and superior chivalry of the Scottish knights and soldiers, Edward Bruce overran the provinces of Down, Ar-

¹ Barbour, book x. l. 6, p. 277.

² It is singular that neither Lord Hailes nor any other Scottish historian has taken notice of the ambitious and factious character of Edward Bruce, although Fordun expressly says, — "*Iste Edwardus erat homo ferox, et magni cordis valde, nec voluit cohabitare fratri suo in pace, nisi dimidium regni solus haberet; et hac de causa mota fuit guerra in Hibernia, ubi ut præmittitur finivit vitam.*" Fordun a Hearne, p. 1009. Bower, vol. ii. 217, has softened these expressions,

magh, Louth, Meath, and Kildare, but was compelled by want, and the reduced numbers of his little army, to retreat into Ulster, and dispatch the Earl of Moray for new succours into Scotland. He was now solemnly crowned King of Ireland, and immediately after his assumption of the regal dignity, laid siege to Carrickfergus. On being informed of the situation of his brother's affairs, King Robert intrusted the government of the kingdom to his son-in-law, the Steward, and Sir James Douglas. He then passed over to the assistance of the new king, with a considerable body of troops; and after their junction, the united armies, having reduced Carrickfergus, pushed forward through the county Louth to Slane, and beleaguered Dublin; but being compelled to raise the siege, they advanced into Kilkenny, wasted the country as far as Limerick, and after experiencing the extremities of famine, and defeating the enemy wherever they made head against them, terminated a glorious but fruitless expedition, by a retreat into the province of Ulster, in the spring of 1317.¹

The King of Scotland now returned to his dominions, taking along with him the Earl of Moray, but having left the flower of his army to support his brother in the possession of Ulster. A miserable fate awaited these brave men. After a long period of inaction, in which neither the Irish annals nor our early Scottish historians afford any certain light, we find King Edward Bruce encamped at Tagher, near Dun-

¹ Fordun a Hearne, p. 1008.

dalk, at the head of a little army of two thousand men, exclusive of the native Irish, who were very numerous, but badly armed and disciplined. Against him, Lord John Bermingham, along with John Maupas, Sir Miles Verdon, Sir Hugh Tripton, and other Anglo-Irish barons, led an army which was strong in cavalry, and outnumbered the Scots by nearly ten to one. Edward, with his characteristic contempt of danger, and nothing daunted by the appalling disparity of force, determined, against the advice of his oldest captains, to give the enemy battle. In the course of a three years' war, he had already engaged the Anglo-Irish forces eighteen times, and although his success had led to no important result, he had been uniformly victorious.¹ But his fiery career was now destined to be quenched, and his shortlived sovereignty to have an end. On the 5th of October, 1318, the two armies joined battle, and the Scots were almost immediately discomfited.² At the first onset, John Maupas slew King Edward Bruce, and was himself found slain, and stretched upon the body of his enemy. Sir John Soulis and Sir John Stewart³ also fell, and the rout becoming general, the slaughter was very great. A miserable remnant, however,

¹ I have here followed the authority of Barbour, book xi. l. 180, p. 317.

² Barbour, book xii. l. 770, p. 364.

³ Lord Hailes calls this Sir John Stewart the brother of the Steward of Scotland; erroneously, I apprehend, as Winton tells us this John, the brother of the Steward, was slain at the battle of Hali-don, in 1333.

escaped from the field, and under John Thomson, the leader of the men of Carrick, made good their retreat to Carrickfergus, and from thence reached Scotland. Two thousand Scottish soldiers were left dead upon the field, and amongst these some brave and distinguished captains.¹ Thus ended an expedition which, if conducted by a spirit of more judicious and deliberate valour than distinguished its prime mover, might have produced the most serious annoyance to England. Unmindful of the generous courtesy of Bruce's behaviour after the battle of Bannockburn, the English treated the body of the King of Ireland with churlish indignity. It was quartered and distributed as a public spectacle over Ireland, and the head was presented to the English king by Lord John Bermingham, who, as a reward for his victory, was created Earl of Louth.²

Having given a continuous sketch of this disastrous enterprise, which, from its commencement till the death of Edward, occupied a period of three years, we shall return to the affairs of Scotland, where the wise and excellent administration of King Robert continued to be crowned with merited success both at home and abroad.

The ships which had transported Edward Bruce and his army to Ireland, were immediately sent home; and Robert undertook an expedition against the Western Isles, some of which had acknowledged his domi-

¹ Their names will be found in Trivet, contin. p. 29.

² Rymer, *Fœdera*, vol. iii. p. 767.

nion,¹ whilst others, under John of Argyle, the firm ally of England, had continued for a long time to harass and annoy the commerce of his kingdom. Although constantly occupied in a land war, during the course of which he had brought his army into an admirable state of discipline, Bruce had never been blind to the strength which he must acquire by having a fleet which could cope with the maritime power of his rival; and from the complaints of the English monarch in the state papers of the times, we know, that on both sides of the island, the Scottish vessels, and those of their allies, kept the English coast towns in a state of constant alarm.²

Their fleets seem to have been partly composed of privateers, as well Flemish as Scotch, which, under the protection of the king, roved about, and attacked the English merchantmen. Thus, during Edward Bruce's expedition, he met, when on the Irish coast, and surrounded with difficulties, with Thomas of Doune, a Scottish "scoumar," or freebooter, "of the se," who, with a small squadron of four ships, sailed up the river Ban, and extricated his countrymen from their³ perilous situation.

In his expedition to the Isles, Bruce was accompanied

¹ Fœdera, vol. iii. p. 238.

² Rotuli Scot. 9. Edward II. m. 5, vol. i. p. 151, date 6th November, 1315.

³ Barbour, book x. pp. 288, 375. In Leland, Collect. vol. i. p. 549, we find, in an extract from the Scala Chron., "One Cryne, a Fleming, an admiral, and great robber on the se, and in high favour with Robert Bruce."

by his son-in-law, the Steward of Scotland, and having sailed up the entrance of Loch-Fine to Tarbat, he dragged his vessels upon a slide, composed of smooth planks of trees, laid parallel to each other, across the narrow neck of land which separates the lochs of East and West Tarbat. The distance was little more than an English mile, and by this expedient Bruce not only was saved the necessity of doubling the Mull of Kentire, to the small craft of those days often a fatal enterprise, but he availed himself of a superstitious belief then current amongst the Western islanders, that they should never be subdued till their invader sailed across the isthmus of Tarbat.¹ The presence of the king in the Western Isles was soon followed by the submission of all the little pirate chiefs who had given him disturbance, and by the capture and imprisonment of John of Lorn, who, since his defeat at Cruachin Ben, had been constantly in the pay of Edward, with the proud title of Admiral of the Western fleet of England.² This island prince was first committed to Dumbarton castle, and afterwards shut up in the castle of Lochlevin, where he died.³ After the termination of his peaceful maritime campaign, the king indulged himself and his friends in the diversion

¹ Barbour, b. x. l. 850, p. 302. The fishermen constantly drag their boats across this neck of land. Tar-bat for trag-bat, or drag-boat.

² Rotuli Scotiæ, 7. Ed. II. m. 7, p. 121. This John of Lorn seems to be the same person as the John of Argyle, so frequently mentioned in the Rotuli.

³ Barbour, b. x. l. 868, p. 303.

of hunting, whilst, at home, his army, under Douglas, continued to insult and plunder the English border counties.¹ On his return from the Western Isles, Bruce undertook the siege of Carlisle; but, after having assaulted it for ten days, both by engines and storming parties, he was compelled, by the strength of the works and the spirit of its townsmen and garrison, to draw off his troops. Berwick, too, was threatened from the side next the sea by the Scottish ships, which attempted to steal up the river unperceived by the enemy, but were discovered, and bravely repulsed.² Against these reiterated insults, Edward, unable from his extreme unpopularity to raise an army, contented himself with querulous complaints, and with some ineffectual advances towards a reconciliation,³ which as yet was far distant.

About this time, to the great joy of the King of Scotland and of the nation, the Princess Marjory bore a son, Robert, who was destined, after the death of David, his uncle, to succeed to the throne, and become the first of the royal house of Stewart; but grief soon followed joy, for the young mother died almost immediately after child-birth.⁴

¹ Leland, Collect. vol. i. p. 24. Douglas wasted Egremont, plundered St Bees's Priory, and destroyed two manors belonging to the Prior. The work quoted by Leland is an anonymous MS. History of the Abbots of St Mary's, York, by a monk of the same religious House.

² Chron. Lanercost, apud Tyrrel, vol. iii. p. 264. This was in the end of July, 1315.

³ Rotuli Scotiæ, 9. Ed. II. m. 6, p. 149.

⁴ Fordun a Goodal, b. xii. c. 25. It is strange that Fordun

Undaunted by the partial check which they had received before Carlisle and Berwick, the activity of the Scots gave the English perpetual employment. On one side they attacked Wales, apparently making descents from their ships upon the coast ; and Edward, trembling for the security of his new principality, countermanded the Welsh levies, which were about to join his army, and enjoined them to remain at home ; but he accompanied this with an order to give hostages for their fidelity, naturally dreading the effect of the example of the Scots upon a nation, whose fetters were yet new and galling.¹ On the other side, King Robert in person led his army, about midsummer, into Yorkshire, and wasted the country, without meeting an enemy, as far as Richmond. A timely tribute, collected by the neighbouring barons and gentlemen, saved this town from the flames ; but this merely altered the order of march into the West Riding, which was cruelly sacked and spoiled for sixty miles round, after which the army returned with a great booty and many prisoners.² Bruce then embarked for Ireland ; and soon after, the English king, encouraged by his absence and that of Randolph, summoned his military vassals to meet him at Newcastle, and determined to invade Scotland with great

himself does neither mention the birth of Robert the Second, nor the death of his mother. See Fordun a Hearne, p. 1008, 1009. Winton, too, says nothing of her death.

¹ Rymer, *Fœdera*, vol. iii. p. 620. *Rotuli Scotiæ*, 10. Ed. II. 4th August.

² Chron. Lanercost, apud Tyrrel, vol. iii. p. 267.

strength; but the Earl of Lancaster, to whom the conduct of the enterprise was intrusted, and the barons of his party, having in vain waited at Newcastle for the king's arrival, returned home in displeasure;¹ and the original design of Edward broke down into several smaller invasions, in repelling which, the activity and military enterprise of Sir James Douglas, and the Steward, not only kept up, but materially increased, the Scottish ascendancy. In Douglas, the romantic spirit of chivalry was finely united with the character of an experienced commander. At this time he held his quarters at Linthaughlee, near Jedburgh, and having information that the Earl of Arundel, with Sir Thomas de Richemont, and an English force of ten thousand men, had crossed the Borders, he determined to attack him in a narrow pass, through which his line of march lay, and which was flanked on each side by a wood. Douglas, after having thickly twisted together the young birch trees on either side, so as to prevent escape,² concealed his archers in a hollow way near the gorge of the pass, and when the English ranks were compressed by the narrowness of the road, and it was impossible for their cavalry to act with effect, he rushed upon them at the head of his horsemen, and the archers, suddenly discovering themselves, poured in a flight of arrows, so that the unwieldy mass was thrown into confusion, and took to flight. In the *melée*, Douglas slew Thomas de Richemont with his dagger; and although, from his infe-

¹ Tyrrel, vol. iii. p. 267.

² Barbour, p. 324.

riority of force, he did not venture to pursue the enemy into the open country, yet they were compelled to retreat with great slaughter.¹

Soon after this, Edmund de Cailou, a knight of Gascony, whom Edward had appointed to be governor of Berwick, was encountered by Douglas, as the foreigner returned to England loaded with plunder, from an inroad into Teviotdale. Cailou was killed; and, after the slaughter of many of the foreign mercenaries, the accumulated booty of the Merse and Teviotdale was recovered by the Scots. Exactly similar to that of Cailou, was the fate of Sir Ralph Neville. This proud baron, on hearing the high report of Douglas's prowess from some of De Cailou's fugitive soldiers, openly boasted that he would fight with the Scottish knight, if he would come and show his banner before Berwick. Douglas, who deemed himself bound to accept the challenge, immediately marched into the neighbourhood of that town, and, within sight of the garrison, caused a party of his men to waste the country, and burn the villages. Neville instantly quitted Berwick with a strong body of men, and, encamping upon a high ground, waited till the Scots should disperse to plunder; but Douglas called in his detachment, and instantly marched against the enemy. After a desperate conflict, in which many were slain, Douglas, as was his custom, succeeded in bringing the leader to a personal encounter, and the superior strength and skill of the Scottish knight were again successful. Neville was slain, and his men ut-

¹ Leland, Collect. vol. i. p. ii. p. 547. Barbour, p. 323.

terly discomfited.¹ An old English chronicle ascribes this disaster to "the treason of the marchers;" but it is difficult to discover in what the treason consisted. Many other soldiers of distinction were taken prisoners, and Douglas, without opposition, ravaged the country, drove away the cattle, left the towns and villages in flames, and returned to Scotland. So terrible did the exploits of this hardy warrior become upon the Borders, that Barbour, who lived in his time, informs us, the English mothers were accustomed to pacify their children by threatening them with the name of the "Black Douglas."² Repulsed with so much disgrace in these attempts by land, the English monarch fitted out a fleet, and invaded Scotland, by sailing into the Frith of Forth, and landing his armament at Dunybirstle. The panic created by the English was so great, that the sheriff of the county had difficulty in assembling five hundred cavalry, and these, intimidated by the superior numbers of the enemy, disgracefully took to flight.³

¹ Leland, Collect. vol. i. p. 547. Barbour, p. 309.

² Barbour, p. 310.

³ Lord Hailes, on the authority of Barbour, says, that the Earl of Fife commanded the Scots, along with the Sheriff of the county. Fordun's continuator, Bower, mentions only the sheriff; and as the Earl of Fife was married to a niece of the English king, it is exceedingly improbable that he served against Edward. Barbour mentions, that the English landed to the west of Inverkeithing; and Hailes observes, that as Fordun affirms they landed at Dunybirstle, the discrepancy shows that he did not implicitly follow Barbour. Fordun, however, does not mention the invasion at all. It is Bower; his continuator, whom he means.

Fortunately, however, a spirited prelate, Sinclair, Bishop of Dunkeld, who had more in him of the warrior than the ecclesiastic, received timely notice of this desertion. Putting himself at the head of sixty of his servants, and with nothing ecclesiastical about him, except a linen frock, or rochet, cast over his armour, he threw himself on horseback, and succeeded in rallying the fugitives, telling their leaders that they were recreant knights, and deserved to have their gilt spurs hacked off. "Turn," said he, seizing a spear from the nearest soldier, "turn, for shame, and let all who love Scotland follow me." With this he furiously charged the English, who were driven back to their ships with the loss of five hundred men, besides many who were drowned by the swamping of one of the vessels. On his return from Ireland, Bruce highly commended his spirit, declaring that Sinclair should be his own bishop; and by the name of the King's Bishop, this hardy prelate was long remembered in Scotland.¹

Unable to make any impression with temporal arms, the King of England next had recourse to the thunders of spiritual warfare; and in the servile and interested character of Pope John the Twenty-Second, he found a fit tool for his purpose. By a bull, issued from Avignon, in the beginning of 1317, the pope commanded the observance of a truce between the hostile countries for two years; but the style of this mandate evinced a decided partiality to Eng-

¹ Fordun a Goodal, vol. ii. p. 259.

land. Giving the title of King of England to Edward, he only designated Bruce as his beloved son, "carrying himself as King of Scotland;"¹ and when he dispatched two cardinals as his legates into Britain, for the purpose of publishing this truce upon the spot, they were privately empowered, in case of any opposition, to inflict upon the King of Scotland the highest spiritual censures. In the same secret manner, he furnished them with a bull, to be made public if circumstances so required, by which Robert Bruce and his brother Edward were declared excommunicated persons.² The Holy Father also directed another bull against the order of Minorite Friars, who, by their discourses, had instigated the Irish to join the Scottish invaders, and rise in rebellion against the English government. These attempts to deprive him of his just rights, and to overawe him into peace, were met by a firm resistance on the part of Bruce, who, placed in a trying and delicate situation, evinced, in his opposition to the Papal interference, a remarkable union of unshaken courage, with sound judgment and good temper, contriving to maintain the dignity and independence of his crown, whilst, at the same time, he professed all due respect for the authority of his Spiritual Father, as head of the church. Charged with their important commissions, the cardinals arrived in England at the time when Lewis de Beaumont was about

¹ Rymer, *Fœdera*, vol. iii. p. 594.

² Dated 4th April, 1317.

to be consecrated Bishop of Durham. Their first step was to dispatch two nuncios, the Bishop of Corbeil and Master Aumery,¹ who were intrusted with the delivery of the papal letters to the Scottish king, and with the bulls of excommunication. As Durham lay on their road, Master Aumery and his brother nuncio set out with the bishop elect, and a splendid suite of churchmen and barons, intending to be present at the inauguration. But it proved an ill-fated journey for these sleek sons of the papacy. The Borders at this time were in a wild and disorderly state. Many of the gentry and barons of England, as already noticed, had entered into armed associations for the defence of the marches, against the dreadful and destructive inroads of the Scots; but the habits of loose warfare, the extremities of famine, and the unpopularity of the king's person and government, had, in the course of years, transformed themselves and their soldiers into robbers, who mercilessly ravaged the country.² Anxious in every way to increase the confusions which then distracted the English government, the King of Scotland kept up an intelligence with these marauders, and, on the present occasion, aware of the hostility which was meditated against him by the cardinals, and of their mercenary attachment to his enemy, it seems very probable that he employed two leaders of these broken men, Gilbert de Middleton and Walter Selby, to intercept the nuncios, and make themselves masters of their letters

¹ Rymer, *Fœdera*, vol. iii. p. 661.

² Walsingham, p. 107.

and secret instructions. It is certain that, on the approach of the cavalcade to Rushy Ford, a large body of soldiers, headed by these lawless chiefs, rushed out from a wood near the road, and in a short time made the whole party prisoners; seized and stript of their purple and scarlet apparel the unfortunate churchmen, rifled and carried off their luggage and horses; but, without offering violence to their persons, dismissed them to prosecute their journey to Scotland. The bishop elect, and his brother Henry de Beaumont, were carried to Middleton's castle of Mitford; nor were they liberated from their dungeon till their plate, jewels, and the rich vestments of the cathedral, were sold to raise money for their ransom.¹ Meanwhile, the papal nuncios, in sorry and disconsolate plight, proceeded into Scotland, and arrived at court. Bruce received them courteously, and listened with attention to the message with which they were charged.² Having then consulted with those of his counsellors who were present, upon the proposals, he replied, that he earnestly desired a firm peace between the kingdoms, to be procured by all honourable means; but that as long as he was only addressed as Governor of Scotland, and his own title of King withheld from him, it was impossible for him, without convening his whole council, and the other barons of his realm, to admit the cardinal legates to an interview; nor was it possible for him, before the

¹ Tyrel, Hist. vol. iii. p. 269. Hutchinson's History and Antiquities of Durham, p. 267. 1st Sept. 1317.

² Rymer, p. 662.

Feast of St Michael, to summon any council for this purpose. "Among my subjects," said the king, "there are many bearing the name of Robert Bruce, who share, with the rest of my barons, in the government of the kingdom. These letters may possibly be addressed to them; and it is for this reason, that although I have permitted the papal letters, which advise a peace, to be read, as well as your open letters on the same subject, yet to these, as they refuse to me my title of King, I will give no answer, nor will I by any means suffer your sealed letters, which are not directed to the King of Scotland, to be opened in my presence."

The nuncios upon this endeavoured to offer an apology for the omission, by observing, that it was not customary for our Holy Mother the Church either to do or to say any thing during the dependence of a controversy, which might prejudice the right of either of the parties. "If then," replied Bruce, "my Spiritual Father and my Holy Mother have professed themselves unwilling to create a prejudice against my opponent, by giving to me the title of king, I am at a loss to determine why they have thought proper to prejudice my cause, by withdrawing that title from me during the dependence of the controversy. I am in possession of the kingdom. All my subjects call me king, and by that title do other kings and royal princes address me; but I perceive that my spiritual parents assume an evident partiality amongst their sons.—Had you," he continued, "presumed to present letters so addressed to other kings, you might

have received an answer in a different style. But I reverence your authority, and entertain all due respect for the Holy See." The messengers now requested that the king would command a temporary cessation of hostilities. "To this," replied Bruce, "I can by no means consent, without the advice of my parliament, and especially whilst the English are in the daily practice of spoiling the property of my subjects, and invading all parts of my realm." During this interview, the king expressed himself with great courtesy, professing all respect for his Spiritual Father, and delivering his resolute answers with a mild and placid countenance.¹ The two nuncios, it seems, had taken along with them into the king's presence another papal messenger, who, having come some time before to inform the Scottish prelates of the coronation of the pope, had been refused admission into Scotland. For this person, who had now waited some months without being permitted to execute his mission, the messengers entreated the king's indulgence; but Bruce, although the unhappy envoy stood in the presence chamber, took no notice of him, and changed the subject with an expression of countenance, which at once imposed silence, and intimated a refusal. When the nuncios questioned the secretaries of the king regarding the cause of this severity, they at once replied, that their master conceived that these letters had not been addressed to him, solely because the pope was unwilling to give him his royal titles. The

¹ These interesting particulars we learn from the original letter of the nuncios themselves. Rymer, *Fœdera*, vol. iii. p. 662.

Scottish councillors informed the nuncios, that if the letters had been addressed to the King of Scots, the negotiations for peace would have immediately commenced ; but that neither the king nor his advisers would hear of a treaty, so long as the royal title was withheld, seeing that they were convinced that this slight had been put upon their sovereign through the influence of England, and in contempt of the people of Scotland.¹

Repulsed by Bruce with so much firmness and dignity, the Bishop of Corbeil returned with haste to the cardinals. They had remained all this time at Durham, and ardent as true sons of the church to fulfil their mission, they now determined at all hazards to publish the papal truce in Scotland. For this purpose, the papal bulls and instruments were intrusted to Adam Newton, the Father Guardian of the Minorite Friars of Berwick, who was commanded to repair to the presence of Bruce, and to deliver the letters of his holiness to the King of Scotland, as well as to the Bishop of St Andrews, and the Scottish prelates. Newton accordingly set out for Scotland, but, anticipating no cordial reception, cautiously left the papal bulls and letters at Berwick, until he should be assured of a safe conduct. After a journey of much hardship and peril, the friar found King Robert encamped, with his army, in a wood near Old Cambus, a small town about twelve miles distant from Berwick, busily engaged in constructing warlike en-

¹ Rymer, *Fœdera*, vol. iii. p. 661.

gines for the assault of that city, although it was now the middle of December. Having conferred with Lord Alexander Seton, the seneschal of the king, and received a safe conduct, Newton returned for his papers and credentials to Berwick, and again repaired to Old Cambus. He was then informed by Seton, that Bruce would not admit him to a personal interview, but that he must deliver to him his letters, in order to their being inspected by the king, who was anxious to ascertain whether their contents were friendly or hostile. Newton obeyed, and Bruce, observing that the letters and papal instruments were not addressed to him as King of Scotland, returned them to the friar with much contempt, declaring, that he would on no account obey the bulls, so long as his royal titles were withheld, and that he was determined to make himself master of Berwick. The envoy then publicly declared, before the Scottish barons and a great concourse of spectators, that a two years' truce was, by the authority of the pope, to be observed by the two kingdoms; but his proclamation was treated with such open marks of insolence and contempt, that he began to tremble for the safety of his person, and earnestly implored them to permit him to pass forward into Scotland, to the presence of those prelates with whom he was commanded to confer, or at least to have a safe conduct back again to Berwick. Both requests were denied him, and he was commanded, without delay, to make the best of his way out of the country. On his way to Berwick, the unfortunate monk was waylaid by four armed ruffians, robbed of

his letters and papers, amongst which were the bulls excommunicating the King of Scotland, and after being stript to the skin, turned naked upon the road. "It is rumoured," says he, in a most interesting letter addressed to the cardinals, containing the account of his mission, "that the Lord Robert, and his accomplices, who instigated this outrage, are now in possession of the letters intrusted to me."¹ There can be little doubt that the rumour rested on a pretty good foundation.

Throughout the whole of this negotiation, the pope was obviously the pliant tool of the King of England. Edward's intrigues at the Roman court, and the pensions which he bestowed on the cardinals, induced his holiness to proclaim a truce, which, in the present state of English affairs, was much to be desired; but Bruce, supported by his own clergy, and secure of the affections of his people, despised all papal interference, and succeeded in maintaining the dignity and independence of his kingdom.

Having rid himself of such troublesome opposition, the Scottish king determined to proceed with the siege of Berwick, a town which, as the key to England, was at this time fortified in the strongest manner. Fortunately for the Scots, Edward had committed its defence to a governor, whose severity, and strict adherence to discipline, had disgusted some of the burgeses; and one of these, named Spalding,² who had married a Scotchwoman, was seduced from his allegiance,

¹ Rymer, *Fœdera*, vol. iii. p. 682.

² Harding, in his *Chronicle*, folio 171, tells us, that Spalding, after betraying the town, went into Scotland, and was slain by the Scots.

and determined, on the night when it was his turn to take his part in the watch rounds, to assist the enemy in an escalade. This purpose he communicated to the Marshal, and he carried the intelligence directly to Bruce himself, who was not slow in taking advantage of it.¹ Douglas and Randolph, along with March, were commanded to assemble with a chosen body of men at Duns Park in the evening; and at nightfall, having left their horses at the rendezvous, they marched to Berwick, and, by the assistance of Spalding, fixed their ladders, and scaled the walls. Orders seem to have been given by Bruce, that they should not proceed to storm the town, till reinforced by a stronger body; but Douglas and Randolph found it impossible to restrain their men, who dispersed themselves through the streets, to slay and plunder, whilst, panic-struck with the night attack, the citizens escaped over the walls, or threw themselves into the castle. When day arrived, this disobedience of orders had nearly been fatal to the Scots; for Roger Horsley, the governor of the castle,² discovering that they were but a handful of men, made a

¹ Barbour, p. 334.

² *Rotuli Scotiæ*, 2. Edward II. 19th August. Lord Hailes, vol. ii. p. 78, seems to think it an error in Tyrrel, to imagine that there was a governor of the town, and a governor of the castle. But Tyrrel is in the right. John of Witham was governor or warden of the town, *Rot. Scot.* 2. Edward II. p. 178, 30th Sept. 1317, and Roger of Horsley, governor of the castle, *Rotul. Scotiæ*, p. 175. Maitland, vol. i. p. 490, and Guthrie, vol. ii. p. 254, finding in Rymer, vol. iii. p. 516, that Maurice de Berkeley was governor of the town and castle of Berwick in 1315, erroneously imagine that he continued to be so in 1318.

desperate sally, and all but recovered the city. Douglas, however, and Randolph, who were veterans in war, and dreaded such an event, had kept their own soldiers pretty well together, and, assisted by a young knight, Sir William Keith of Galston, who greatly distinguished himself, they at last succeeded in driving the English back to the castle; thus holding good their conquest of the town, till Bruce came up with the rest of his army, and effectually secured it. The presence of the king, with the men of Merse and Tiviotdale, intimidated the garrison of the castle, which soon surrendered; and Bruce, with that generous magnanimity which forms so fine a part of his character, disdaining to imitate the cruelty of Edward the First, readily gave quarter to all who were willing to accept it. For this we have the testimony of the English historians, Thomas de la More, and Adam Murimuth, although the pope, in his bull excommunicating Bruce, represents him as having seized Berwick by treachery during a time of truce, and charges him, moreover, with having committed a great and cruel slaughter of the inhabitants. Both accusations are completely false.¹ The truce was publicly disclaimed by the king, and the city was treated with uncommon lenity. It was at this time the chief commercial emporium of England, and its plunder greatly enriched the Scottish army. There were also found in it great quantities of provisions and military stores, and Bruce, after having examined the fortifications,

¹ Rymer, *Fœdera*, vol. iii. pp. 708, 709.

determined to make it an exception from his general rule of demolishing all fortresses recovered from the English.¹ In execution of this plan, he committed the keeping of both town and castle to his gallant son-in-law, Walter the Steward; and aware, that from its great strength and importance, the English would soon attempt to recover it, he provided it with every sort of warlike engine then used in the defence of fortified places. Springalds and cranes, with huge machines for discharging iron darts, called balistæ de turno, were stationed on the walls; a large body of archers, spearmen, and cross-bowmen, formed the garrison; and the young Steward was assisted in his measures of defence by John Crab, a Fleming, famous for his skill in the rude engineering of the times.² Five hundred brave gentlemen, who quartered the arms of the Steward, repaired to Berwick, to the support of their chief; and Bruce, having left it victualled for a year, marched with his army into England, and ravaged and laid waste the country. He besieged and made himself master of the castles of Wark and Harbottle, surprised Mitford, and having penetrated into Yorkshire, burnt the towns of Northallerton, Boroughbridge, Scarborough,

¹ Fordun a Goodal, p. 245.

² Barbour, pp. 339, 340. Crab seems to have been a mercenary who engaged in the service of any who would employ him. In 1313, Edward the Second complained of depredations committed by him on some English merchants, to his sovereign, Robert, Earl of Flanders. Fœdera, vol. iii. p. 403. In August 1333, after Berwick fell into the hands of the English, Crab obtained a pardon, and entered into the service of England.

and Skipton in Craven. The plunder in these expeditions was very great, and the number of the captives may be estimated from the expression of an ancient English chronicle, that the Scots returned into their own country, driving their prisoners like flocks of sheep before them.¹

Irritated at the contempt of their authority, the cardinal legates solemnly excommunicated Bruce² and his adherents; whilst Edward, after an ineffectual attempt to conciliate his parliament and keep together his army, was compelled, by their violent animosities, to disband his troops, and allow the year to pass away in discontent and inactivity. Meanwhile, the death of King Edward Bruce in Ireland, and of Marjory, the king's daughter, who left an only son, Robert, afterwards king, rendered some new enactments necessary regarding the succession to the throne. A parliament was accordingly assembled at Scone in December, in which the whole clergy and laity renewed their engagements of obedience to the king, and promised to assist him faithfully, to the utmost of their power, in the preservation and defence of the rights and liberties of the kingdom, against all persons, of whatever strength, power, and dignity, they may be; and any one who should attempt to violate this engagement and ordinance, was declared guilty of treason. It was next enacted, that, in the event of the king's death, without issue male, Robert Stewart, son of the Princess Marjory and of Walter, the Lord

¹ Chron. Lanercost, apud Tyrrel, vol. iii. p. 272.

² Rymer, Fœdera, vol. iii. pp. 707, 711.

High Steward of Scotland, shall succeed to the crown; and in the event of that succession taking place during the minority of Robert Stewart, or of other heir of the king's body, it was appointed, that the office of tutor to the heir of the kingdom shall belong to Thomas Randolph, Earl of Moray, and failing him, to James, Lord Douglas; but it was expressly declared, that such appointment shall cease, whenever it appears to the majority of the community of the kingdom that the heir is of fit age to administer the government in person. It was moreover declared, that since, in certain times past, some doubts had arisen regarding the succession of the kingdom of Scotland, the parliament thought proper to express their opinion, that this succession ought not to have been regulated, and henceforth should not be determined, by the rules of inferior fiefs and inheritances, but that the male-heir nearest to the king, in the direct line of descent, should succeed to the crown; and failing him, the nearest female in the direct line; and failing the whole direct line, the nearest male-heir in the collateral line—respect being always had to the right of blood by which the last king reigned, which seemed agreeable to the imperial law.¹

This enactment having been unanimously agreed to, Randolph and Douglas came forward, and, after accepting the offices provisionally conferred upon them, swore, with their hands on the holy Gospels and the relics of the saints, faithfully and diligently to discharge

¹ Fordun a Goodal, vol. ii. p. 290.

their duty, and to observe, and cause to be observed, the laws and customs of Scotland. After this, the bishops, abbots, priors, and inferior clergy, and the earls, barons, knights, and freeholders, and the remanent members of the community of Scotland, in the same solemn manner took the same oath, and those of the highest rank affixed their seals to the instrument of succession.¹ Having settled this important matter, various other laws were passed, relative to the military power, and to the ecclesiastical and civil government of the kingdom. All men were required to array themselves for war. Every layman possessed of land, who had ten pounds worth of moveable property, was commanded to provide himself with an acton and a basnet, that is a leathern jacket, and a steel helmet, together with gloves of plate, and a sword and spear. Those who were not thus provided, were enjoined to have an iron jack, or back and breast-plate of iron, an iron head-piece, or knapiskay, with gloves of plate; and every man possessing the value of a cow, was commanded to arm himself with a bow and a sheaf of twenty-four arrows, or with a spear.² It was made imperative upon all sheriffs and lords to make inquest into the execution of this law; and in case of disobedience, to cause the recusant to forfeit his movable estate, half to the king, and half to his overlord, or superior. All persons, while on the road to the royal army, were commanded to subsist at their own charges; those who came from places near the rendezvous being

¹ Fordun a Goodal, vol. i. p. 291.

² Regiam Majestatem. Statutes of King Robert the First. See Cartulary of Aberbrothock, p. 283. M'Farlane, Transt.

commanded to bring carriages and provisions along with them, and those from remote parts to bring money; and if, upon the tender of payment, such necessaries were refused, the troops were authorized, at the sight of the magistrates or bailies of the district, to take what was withheld. All persons were strictly prohibited from supplying the enemy with armour or horses, bows and arrows, or any kind of weapons, or to give to the English assistance in any shape whatever, and this under the penalty of being guilty of a capital offence. All ecclesiastics were prohibited from remitting to the papal court any sums of money for the purchase of bulls; and all Scotsmen, who, although possessed of estates in their own country, chose to reside in England, were prohibited from drawing any money out of Scotland,—a clause apparently directed against David de Strabogie, Earl of Athol, who at this time stood high in the confidence of Edward the Second.¹

This weak monarch, when he found that Bruce could not be brought to terms by negotiation, or intimidated by the papal thunders, determined once more to have recourse to arms; and having assembled an army, he crossed the Tweed, and sat down before Berwick.² His first precaution was to secure his camp by strong lines of circumvallation, composed of high ramparts and deep trenches, so as to enable him to resist effectually any attempt of the Scots to raise the siege. He then strictly invested the town from the Tweed to the sea, and at the same time the English fleet entered the estuary of the river, so that the city was

¹ Regiam Majestatem. Stat. Robert I. ² Barbour, p. 342.

beleaguered on all points. This was in the beginning of September, and from the strength of the army and the quality of the leaders much was expected.¹

The first assault was made on the seventh of the month ; it had been preceded by great preparations. Mounds of earth had been erected against that part of the walls, where it was expected there would be the greatest facility in storming. Early on the morning of St Mary's Eve, the trumpets of the English were heard, and the besiegers advanced in various bodies, well provided with scaling ladders, scaffolds, and defences, with hoes and pickaxes for mining, and under cover of squadrons of archers and slingers. The assault soon became general, and continued with various success till noon ; at which time the English ships entered the river, and, sailing up as far as the tide permitted, made a daring attempt to carry the town, from the rigging of a vessel which they had prepared for the purpose. The topmasts of this vessel, and her boat, which was drawn up half-mast high, were manned with soldiers, and to the bow of the boat was fitted a species of drawbridge, which was intended to be dropt upon the wall, and to afford a passage from the ship into the town. The walls themselves, which were not more than a spear's length in height, afforded little defence against these serious preparations ; but the Scots, animated by that feeling of national confidence, which a long train of success had inspired, and encouraged by the presence and example of the Steward, effectually repulsed the enemy on the land side, whilst the ship, which had struck upon a bank, was left dry

¹ Barbour, p. 343.

by the ebbing of the tide; and being attacked by a party of the Scots, was soon seen blazing in the mouth of the river. Disheartened by this double failure, the besiegers drew off their forces, and for the present, intermitted all attack.¹ But it was only to commence new preparations for a more desperate assault. In case of a second failure in their escalade, it was determined to undermine the walls; and for this purpose, a huge machine was constructed, covered from attack by a strong roofing of boards and hides, and holding within its bosom large bodies of armed soldiers and miners. From its shape and covering, this formidable engine was called a sow. To co-operate with the machine, movable scaffolds, high enough to overtop the walls, and capable of receiving large bodies of armed men, were erected for the attack; and undismayed at his first failure by sea, Edward commanded a number of ships to be fitted out similar to that vessel which had been burnt; but with this difference, that in addition to the armed boats, slung half-mast high, their top castles were full of archers, under whose incessant and deadly discharge it was expected that the assailants would drag the ships so near the walls, as to be able to fix their movable bridges on the capstone.² Meanwhile the Scots were not idle. Under the direction of Crab, the Flemish engineer, they constructed two machines of great strength, and similar to the Roman catapult, which moved on frames, fitted with wheels, and by which stones of a large size were propelled with steady aim and immense strength. Springalds were stationed

¹ Barbour, pp. 345, 346.

² Ibid. pp. 351, 352.

on the walls, which were smaller engines, analogous to the ancient balistæ, and calculated for the projection of thick and heavy darts, winged with copper; strong iron chains, with grappling hooks attached to them, and piles of fire fagots, mixed with bundles of pitch and flax, and bound into large masses, shaped like casks, were in readiness; and to second the ingenuity of Crab, an English engineer of great skill, who had been taken prisoner in the first assault, was compelled to assist in the defence. The young Steward assigned, as before, to each of his officers a certain post on the circuit of the walls, and put himself at the head of a chosen reserve, with which he determined to watch, and, if necessary, to reinforce, the various points of attack. Having completed these judicious arrangements, he calmly awaited the attack of the English, which was made with great fury early in the morning of the 13th of September. To the sound of trumpet and war-horns, the various divisions of the English moved resolutely forward; and, in spite of all discharges from the walls, succeeded in filling up the ditch, and fixing their ladders; but after a conflict, which lasted from sunrise till noon, they found it impossible to overcome the determined gallantry of the Scots, and were fairly beaten back on every quarter. At this moment the King of England ordered the sow to be advanced; and the English, aware that if they allowed the Scottish engineers time to take a correct aim, a single stone from the catapult would be fatal, dragged it on with great eagerness. Twice was the aim taken, and twice it failed. The

first stone flew over the machine, the second fell short of it ; the third, an immense mass, which passed through the air with a loud booming noise, hit it directly in the middle with a dreadful crash, and shivered its strong roof-timbers into a thousand pieces. Such of the miners and soldiers who escaped death, rushed out from amongst the fragments ; and the Scots, raising a shout, cried out that the English sow had farrowed her pigs.¹ Crab, the engineer, immediately cast his chains and grappling hooks over the unwieldy machine, and having effectually prevented its removal, poured down burning fagots upon its broken timbers, and soon consumed it to ashes. Nor were the English more fortunate in their attack upon the side of the river. Their ships, indeed, moved up towards the walls at floodtide, but whether from the shallowness of the water, or the faint-heartedness of their leaders, the attack entirely failed. One of them which led the way, on coming within range of the catapult, was struck by a large stone, which damaged the vessel, and killed and mangled some of the crew ; upon which the remaining ships, intimidated by the accident, drew off from the assault. A last effort of the besiegers, in which they endeavoured to set fire to St Mary's gate, was bravely repulsed by the Steward in person ; and at nightfall, the English army, foiled on every side, and greatly disheartened, entirely withdrew from the assault.²

The spirit with which the defence was carried on, may be estimated from the circumstance, that the

¹ Barbour, p. 354.

² Ibid. p. 357.

women and boys in the town, during the hottest season of the assault, supplied the soldiers on the walls with bundles of arrows, and stones for the engines. Although twice beaten off, it was yet likely that the importance of gaining Berwick would have induced the King of England to attempt a third attack, but Bruce determined to raise the siege by making a powerful diversion, and directed Randolph and Douglas, at the head of an army of fifteen thousand men, to invade England. During the presence of her husband at the siege of Berwick, the Queen of England had taken up her quarters near York, and it was the daring plan of these two veteran warriors, by a rapid and sudden march through the heart of Yorkshire, to seize the person of the queen, and, with this precious captive in their hands, to dictate the terms of peace to her husband.¹ Bruce, who, in addition to his great talents in the field, had not neglected to avail himself in every way of Edward's extreme unpopularity, appears to have established a secret correspondence, not only with the Earl of Lancaster, who was then along with his master before Berwick, but with others about the queen's person.² The plan had very nearly been successful ; but a Scottish prisoner, who fell into the hands of the English, gave warning of the meditated attack, and Randolph, on penetrating to York, found the prey escaped, and the court removed to a distance.

¹ " Certe si capta fuisset tunc Regina, credo quod pacem emisset sibi Scotia."—M. Malmesbur. p. 192.

² Walsingham, pp. 111, 112.

Incensed at this disappointment, they ravaged the surrounding country with merciless execution, marking their progress by the flames and smoke of towns and castles, and collecting an immense plunder. The military strength of the country was then before Berwick, and nothing remained but the forces of the church, and of the vassals who held lands by military service to the Archiepiscopal See. These were hastily assembled by William de Melton, the Archbishop of York, and the Bishop of Ely,¹ and a force of twenty thousand men, but of a very motley description, proceeded to intercept the Scots. Multitudes of priests and monks, whose shaved crowns suited ill with the steel basnet,—great bodies of the feudal militia of the church, but hastily levied, and imperfectly disciplined,—the mayor of York, with his train-bands and armed burgesses, composed the army which the archbishop, emulous, perhaps, of the fame which had been acquired in the battle of the Standard, by his predecessor Thurstin, too rashly determined to lead against the experienced soldiers of Randolph and Douglas. The result was exactly what might have been expected. The Scots were encamped at Mitton, near the small river Swale. Across the stream there was then a bridge, over which the English army defiled. Whilst thus occupied, some large stacks of hay were set on fire by the Scots,² and, under cover of a dense mass of smoke which rose between them and the enemy, a strong column of men threw themselves be-

¹ *Rotuli Scotiæ*, vol. i. p. 202. 4th Sept. 13. Ed. II.

² *Harding's Chronicle*, pp. 172, 173.

tween the English army and the bridge. As the smoke cleared away, the English found themselves attacked with great fury both in front and rear, by the fatal long spear of the Scottish infantry ; and the army of the archbishop was in a few moments entirely broken and dispersed.¹ In an incredibly short time, four thousand of the English were slain, and amongst these many priests, whose white surplices covered their armour. Great multitudes were drowned in attempting to recross the river, and it seems to have been fortunate for the English that the battle was fought in the evening, and that a September night soon closed upon the field ; for had it been a morning attack, it is probable that Randolph and Douglas would have put the whole army to the sword. Three hundred ecclesiastics fell in this battle ; from which circumstance, and in allusion to the prelates who led the army, it was denominated, in the rude pleasantry of the times, “ The Chapter of Mitton.” When the news of the disaster reached the camp before Berwick, the troops began to murmur, and the Earl of Lancaster, soon after, in a fit of disgust, deserted the leaguer with his whole followers, composing nearly a third part of the army.² Edward immediately raised the siege, and made a spirited effort to intercept Douglas and Randolph on their return, and compel them to fight at a disadvantage ; but he had to deal with experienced soldiers, whose secret information was accurate,

¹ I. de Trokelowe. p. 45. Hume's Douglas and Angus, vol. i. pp. 69, 70. Barbour, p. 350.

² Ibid. b. xii. p. 359.

and who were intimately acquainted with the Border passes. While he attempted to intercept them by one road, they had already taken another, and leaving their route to be traced, as their advance had been, by the flames and smoke of villages and hamlets, they returned, without experiencing a single check, into Scotland, loaded with booty, and confirmed in their feeling of military superiority. It may give some idea of the dreadful and far-spreading devastation occasioned by this and similar inroads of the Scottish army, when it is stated, that in an authentic document in the *Fœdera Angliæ*, it appears that eighty-four towns and villages were burnt and pillaged by the army of Randolph and Douglas in this expedition. These, on account of the great losses sustained, are, by a royal letter addressed to the tax-gatherers of the West Riding of Yorkshire, expressly exempted from all contribution;¹ and in this list the private castles and hamlets which were destroyed in the same fiery inroad, do not appear to be included.

Bruce could not fail to be particularly gratified by these successes. Berwick, not only the richest commercial town in England, but of extreme importance as a key to that country, remained in his hands, after a siege by an overwhelming army led by the King of England in person; and the young warrior, who had so bravely repulsed the enemy, was the Steward of Scotland, the husband of his only daughter, on whom the hopes and wishes of the nation mainly rested.

¹ Rymer, *Fœdera*, vol. iii. pp. 801, 802.

The defeat upon the Swale was equally destructive and decisive, and it was followed up by another expedition of the restless and indefatigable Douglas, who, about All-Hallow tide of the same year, when the northern borders had gathered in their harvest, broke into and burnt Gilsland and the surrounding country, ravaged Brough-on-Stainmore, and came sweeping home through Westmoreland and Cumberland, driving his cattle and his prisoners before him, and cruelly adding to the miseries of the recent famine, by a total destruction of the agricultural produce, which had been laid up for the winter.¹

It was a remarkable part of the character of Bruce, and one which marked his great abilities, that he knew as well when to make peace as to pursue war; and that, after any great success, he could select the moment best fitted for permanently securing to his kingdom the advantages, which, had he reduced his enemy to extremity, might have eluded his grasp. The natural consequence of a long series of defeats sustained by Edward, was an anxious desire upon his own part, and that of his parliament, for a truce between the kingdoms; ² and as the Scots were satiated with

¹ Hume's Douglas and Angus, vol. i. p. 70.

² Walsingham. "Igitur Rex, sentiens quotidie sua damna cumulari, de communi consilio in treugas jurat biennales, Scotis libenter has acceptantibus, non tamen quia jam fuerant bellis fatigati, sed quia fuerant Anglica præda ditati." Lingard says nothing of the request of the parliament, that Edward would enter into a truce with the Scots, but observes, that the first proposal for a negotiation came from Scotland, and that the demand for the regal title

victory, and, to use the words of an English historian, so enriched by the plunder of England that that country could scarcely afford them more, Bruce lent a ready ear to the representations of the English commissioners, and agreed to a truce for two years between the kingdoms, to commence from Christmas 1319. Conservators of the truce were appointed by England,¹ and, in the meantime, commissioners of both nations were directed to continue their conferences, with the hope of concluding a final peace.

One great object of Bruce in consenting to a cessation of hostilities, was his desire to be reconciled to the Roman See, a desire which apparently was very far from its accomplishment. His holiness, instead of acting as a peace-maker, seized this moment to reiterate his spiritual censures against the King of Scotland and his adherents, in a bull of great length, and unexampled rancour;² and some time after the final settlement of the truce, the Archbishop of York, with the Bishops of London and Carlisle, were commanded by the Pope,—and the order is stated to have proceeded on information communicated by Edward,—to

was waved by Bruce. The truce itself is not published in Rymer, so that there is no certain proof that Bruce waved the regal title; and although, in the document in Rymer, vol. iii. p. 806, Edward, in a letter to the Pope, states, that Bruce made proposals for a truce, the evidence is not conclusive, as Edward, in his public papers, did not scruple to conceal his disasters, by assuming a tone of superiority, when his affairs were at the lowest ebb.

¹ This is the first instance of the appointment of conservators of truce for the Borders. Ridpath, *Border Hist.* p. 265.

² Rymer, *Fœdera*, vol. iii. p. 797.

excommunicate Robert and his accomplices, on every Sabbath and festival-day throughout the year.¹

Convinced by this conduct, that their enemies had been busy in misrepresenting at the Roman court their causes of quarrel with England, the Scottish nobility assembled in parliament at Aberbrothock,² and with consent of the king, the barons, freeholders, and whole community of Scotland, directed a letter or manifesto to the pope, in a strain very different from that servility of address to which the spiritual sovereign had been accustomed.

After an exordium, in which they shortly allude to the then commonly believed traditions regarding the emigration of the Scots from Scythia, their residence in Spain, and subsequent conquest of the Pictish kingdom, to their long line of a hundred and thirteen kings, (many of whom are undoubtedly fabulous,) to their conversion to Christianity by St Andrew, and the privileges which they had enjoyed at the hands of their spiritual father, as the flock of the brother of St Peter, they introduce, in the following striking and energetic language, the unjust aggression of Edward the First :

“ Under such free protection did we live, until Edward, King of England, and father of the present monarch, covering his hostile designs under the specious disguise of friendship and alliance, made an invasion of our country at the moment when it was

¹ Rymer, *Fœdera*, vol. iii. p. 810.

² April 6, 1320. *Fordun a Goodal*, vol. ii. p. 277.

without a king, and attacked an honest and unsuspecting people, then but little experienced in war. The insults which this prince has heaped upon us, the slaughters and devastations which he has committed, his imprisonments of prelates, his burning of monasteries, his spoliations and murder of priests, and the other enormities of which he has been guilty, can be rightly described, or even conceived, by none but an eye-witness. From these innumerable evils have we been freed, under the help of that God who woundeth and who maketh whole, by our most valiant prince and king, Lord Robert, who, like a second Maccabæus, or Joshua, hath cheerfully endured all labour and weariness, and exposed himself to every species of danger and privation, that he might rescue from the hands of the enemy his ancient people and rightful inheritance, whom also Divine Providence, and the right of succession according to those laws and customs, which we will maintain to the death, as well as the common consent of us all, have made our prince and king. To him are we bound, both by his own merit and by the law of the land, and to him, as the saviour of our people, and the guardian of our liberty, are we unanimously determined to adhere; but if he should desist from what he has begun, and should show an inclination to subject us or our kingdom to the King of England, or to his people, then we declare, that we will use our utmost effort to expel him from the throne, as our enemy, and the subverter of his own and of our right, and we will choose another king to rule over us, who will be able to defend us;

for as long as a hundred Scotsmen are left alive, we will never be subject to the dominion of England. It is not for glory, riches, or honour, that we fight, but for that liberty which no good man will consent to lose but with his life.

“Wherefore, most reverend Father, we humbly pray, and from our hearts beseech your Holiness to consider, that you are the vicegerent of Him with whom there is no respect of persons, Jews or Greeks, Scots or English; and turning your paternal regard upon the tribulations brought upon us and the church of God by the English, to admonish the King of England that he should be content with what he possesses, seeing that England of old was enough for seven, or more kings, and not to disturb our peace in this small country, lying on the utmost boundaries of the habitable earth, and whose inhabitants desire nothing but what is their own.”

The barons proceed to say, that they are willing to do every thing for peace which may not compromise the freedom of their constitution and government; and they exhort the pope to procure the peace of Christendom, in order to the removal of all impediments in the way of a crusade against the infidels; declaring the readiness with which both they and their king would undertake that sacred warfare, if the King of England would cease to disturb them. Their conclusion is exceedingly spirited:

“If,” say they, “your Holiness do not sincerely believe these things, giving too implicit faith to the tales of the English, and on this ground shall not

cease to favour them in their designs for our destruction, be well assured that the Almighty will impute to you that loss of life, that destruction of human souls, and all those various calamities which our inextinguishable hatred against the English, and their warfare against us, must necessarily produce. Confident that we now are, and shall ever, as in duty bound, remain obedient sons to you, as God's vicegerent, we commit the defence of our cause to that God, as the great King and Judge, placing our confidence in him, and in the firm hope that he will endow us with strength, and confound our enemies; and may the Almighty long preserve your Holiness in health."

This memorable letter is dated at Aberbrothock, on the 6th of April, 1320, and it is signed by eight earls and thirty-one barons, amongst whom we find the great officers, the high steward, the seneschal, the constable, and the marshal, with the barons, freeholders, and whole community of Scotland.¹

The effect of such a remonstrance, and the negotiations of Sir Edward Mabuisson and Sir Adam de Gordon, two special messengers, who were sent by Bruce to the Papal court, induced his Holiness to delay for some time the reiterated publication of the Papal processes, and earnestly to recommend a peace between the two countries. For this purpose, a meeting took place between certain Scottish and English commissioners, which was attended by two envoys

¹ A fac-simile of this famous letter was engraved by Anderson, in his *Diplomata Scotiae*, Plate 51. Fordun a Goodal, vol. ii. p. 275.

from the King of France, who entreated to be allowed to act as a mediator, and by two nuncios from the Pope. But Edward was not yet sufficiently humbled to consent to the conditions stipulated by his antagonist, and Bruce was the less anxious to come to an agreement, as a dangerous civil insurrection, headed by the Earl of Lancaster, his secret friend and ally, had just broke out in England, and promised to give Edward full employment at home.¹

In the midst of these unsuccessful negotiations for peace, a conspiracy of an alarming and mysterious nature against the life of the King of Scots was discovered, by the confession of the Countess of Strathern, who was privy to the plot. William de Soulis, the seneschal, or high butler of Scotland, Sir David de Brechin, nephew to the king, an accomplished knight, who had signalized himself in the Holy War, five other knights, Sir Gilbert de Malherbe, Sir John Logie, Sir Eustace de Maxwell, Sir Walter de Berklay, and Sir Patrick de Graham, with three esquires, Richard Brown, Hameline de Troupe, and Eustace de Rattray, are the only persons whose names have come down to us as certainly implicated in the conspiracy. Of these, Sir David de Brechin, along with Malherbe, Logie, and Brown, suffered the punishment of treason.² The destruction of all record of their trial renders it difficult to throw any light on the minute details of the conspiracy; but we have the evidence

¹ Rymer's *Fœdera*, vol. iii. pp. 866, 884. Ridpath's *Border History*, p. 267. Rymer, vol. iii. p. 924.

² *Fordun a Hearne*, vol. iv. p. 1010.

of a contemporary of high authority, that the design of the conspirators was to slay the king, and place the crown on the head of Lord Soulis, a lineal descendant of the daughter of Alexander II.; and who, as possessing such a claim, would have excluded both Bruce and Baliol, had the legitimacy of his mother been unquestioned.¹ There is evidence in the records of the Tower, that both Soulis and Brechin had long tampered with England, and been rewarded for their services. In the case of Brechin, we find him enjoying special letters of protection from Edward. In addition to these he was pensioned in 1312, was appointed English warden of the town and castle of Dundee, and employed in secret and confidential communications, having for their object the destruction of his uncle's power in Scotland, and the triumph of the English arms over his native country. It is certain that he was a prisoner of war in Scotland in the year 1315,² having probably been taken in arms at the battle of Bannockburn. In the five years of glory and success which followed, and in the repeated expeditions of Randolph and Douglas, we do not once meet with his name; and now, after having been received into favour, he became connected with, or at least connived at, a conspiracy, which involved the death of the king. Such a delinquent is little entitled to our sympathy. There was not a single favourable circumstance in his case; but he was young and brave, he

¹ Barbour, p. 380, l. 385.

² Rymer, *Fœdera*, vol. iii. p. 311. *Rotuli Scotiæ*, 5. Ed. II. m. 3. *Ibid.* 8. Ed. II. m. 7. dorso.

had fought against the infidels, and the people who knew not of his secret treasons, could not see him suffer without pity and regret.¹ Soulis, who, with a retinue of three hundred and sixty esquires, had been seized at Berwick, was imprisoned in Dumbarton, where he soon after died; and Maxwell, Berklay, Graham, Troupe, and Rattray, were tried and acquitted. The parliament in which these trials and condemnations took place, was held at Scone in the beginning of August, 1320, and long remembered in Scotland under the name of the Black Parliament.²

A brief gleam of success now cheered the prospects of Edward, and encouraged him to continue the war with Scotland. The Earl of Lancaster, who, along with the Earl of Hereford and other English barons, had entered into a strict treaty of alliance with Bruce, and concerted an invasion of England, to be conducted by the King of Scotland in person,³ was defeated and taken prisoner by Sir Andrew Hartcla and Sir Simon Ward, near Pontefract; his army was totally routed, and he himself soon after executed for treason.

¹ Barbour, pp. 381, 382.

² Hailes, misled by Bower in his additions to Fordun, p. 174, who was ignorant of Brechin's connexion with Edward, laments over Brechin, and creates an impression in the reader's mind, that Bruce was unnecessarily rigorous, and might have pardoned him; yet his case, instead of being favourable, as represented by the historian, was peculiarly aggravated. Bruce's generous nature had passed over manifold attempts by Brechin against the liberty of his country. In the conspiracy of Soulis, any extension of mercy would have been weak, if not criminal.

³ *Fœdera, Angliæ*, vol. iii. pp. 938, 939.