

HISTORY
OF
SCOTLAND.

CHAP. I.

ROBERT THE SECOND.

CONTEMPORARY PRINCES.

Kings of England.

Edward III.

Richard II.

France.

Charles V.

Charles VI.

Popes.

Gregory XI.

Urban VI.

DAVID THE SECOND, the only son of Robert the First, dying without children, the succession to the throne opened to Robert, the High Steward of Scotland, in consequence of a solemn act of the Parliament, which had passed during the reign of his grandfather, Robert the First, in the year 1318.¹ The High Steward was the only child of the Lady Marjory Bruce, the eldest daughter of Robert the First, and of Walter, the High Steward of Scotland; and his talents in discharging the difficult duties of the office of Regent, had already shown him to be worthy of the crown, to which his title was unquestionable. Previous, however, to his coronation, opposition arose from an unexpected quarter. William, Earl of Douglas, one of the most powerful of the Scottish nobles,

¹ Fordun a Goodal, vol. ii. p. 290.

being at Linlithgow at the time of the king's death, publicly proclaimed his intention of questioning the title of the Steward to the throne; but the motives which induced him to adopt so precipitate a resolution are exceedingly obscure. It is certain that Douglas could not himself lay claim to the throne upon any title preferable to that of Robert; but that the common story of his uniting in his person the claims of Comyn and of Baliol is entirely erroneous, seems not so apparent.¹ Some affront, real or imaginary, by which offence was given to the pride of this potent baron, was probably the cause of this hasty resolution, which, in whatever feeling it originated, was abandoned as precipitately as it was adopted. Sir Robert Erskine, a baron, who, in the former reign, had risen into great power, and then commanded the strong castles of Edinburgh, Stirling, and Dumbarton, instantly advanced to Linlithgow, at the head of a large force. He was there joined by the Earls of March and Moray; and a conference having taken place with Douglas, he deemed it prudent to declare himself satisfied with their arguments, and ready to acknowledge a title which he discovered he had not strength to dispute.² It was judged expedient, however, to conciliate so warlike and influential a person as Douglas, and to secure his

¹ The story is to be found in Bower, the Continuator of Fordun, vol. ii. p. 382, and in the MS. work, entitled, *Extracta ex Chronicis Scotiæ*, fol. 225. It was repeated by Buchanan, attempted to be proved to be erroneous by the learned Ruddiman, and again revived by Pinkerton, in his *History of Scotland*, vol. i. p. 10. See Appendix A.

² Winton, vol. ii. pp. 304 and 514.

services for the support of the new government. For this purpose, the King's daughter, Isabella, was promised in marriage to his eldest son, upon whom an annual pension was settled, and the Earl himself was promoted to the high offices of King's Justiciar on the south of the Forth, and Warden of the East Marches.¹ To the rest of the barons and nobles who supported him, the High Steward was equally generous. The promptitude of Sir Robert Erskine was rewarded by the gift of three hundred and thirty-three pounds, an immense present for that time, whilst the services of March and Moray, and of Sir Thomas Erskine, were proportionably acknowledged and requited.²

This threatened storm having passed, the High Steward, accompanied by a splendid concourse of his nobility, proceeded to the Abbey of Scone, and was there crowned and anointed King, on the 26th of March, 1371, by the Bishop of St Andrews, under the title of Robert the Second.³ To confer the great-

¹ Chamberlain Accounts, vol. ii. p. 26. Ibid. pp. 9, 10.

² Ibid. vol. ii. pp. 26, 27.

“ Et in solucione facta Domino Willelmo Comiti de Douglas, circa contractum matrimoniale inter filium ipsius Comitis, et Isabellam filiam regis, ut patet per literas regis de predicto, et ipsius Comitis de rc. ons^s. super computum, V^c. li :

“ Et in soluc : facto dno. Robto. de Erskine et de dono regis concess : sibi per literam oñs. et cancellat. sr. comptum et ipsius Dni. Roberti de rc. oñs. super computum III^c. xxxiii. li. vi s. viii d.”

³ Acts of the Parliament of Scotland, vol. i. sub anno 1371. It is there stated, that all the barons and prelates took the oaths of homage, except the Bishop of Dunblane and Lord Archibald de Douglas, who only took the oath of fidelity. Yet this seems contradicted by the “ Act of Settlement.”

est possible solemnity on this transaction, which gave a new race of monarchs to the throne, the act of settlement by Robert the First was publicly read, after which, the assembled prelates and nobles, rising in their places, separately took their oaths of homage. The King himself then stood up, and declaring that he judged it right to imitate the example of his illustrious grandfather, pronounced his eldest son, the Earl of Carrick and Steward of Scotland, to be heir to the crown, in the event of his own death. This nomination was immediately and unanimously ratified by consent of the clergy, nobility, and barons, who came forward and took the same oaths of homage to the Earl of Carrick, as their future king, which they had just offered to his father; and upon proclamation of the same being made before the assembled body of the people, who crowded into the abbey to witness the coronation, the resolution of the king was received by continued shouts of loyalty, and the waving of thousands of hands, which ratified the sentence. A solemn deed, reciting these proceedings, was then drawn up, to which the principal nobles and clergy appended their seals, and which is still preserved amongst our national muniments; a venerable record, not seriously impaired by the attrition of four centuries and a half, and constituting the charter by which the house of Stewart long held their title to the crown.¹

¹ Robertson's Index to the Charters, Appendix, p. 11. "Clamore consono ac manu levata in signum fidei dationis." A facsimile of this deed has been engraved, and will be found in the first volume of the Acts of the Parliament of Scotland, sub anno 1371.

