

CHAP. II.

ROBERT THE THIRD.

 CONTEMPORARY PRINCES.
Kings of England.

Richard II.

Henry IV.

France.

Charles VI.

Popes.

Benedict XIII.

Innocent VII.

THE remains of Robert the Second were committed to the sepulchre in the ancient Abbey of Scone, and on the 14th August, 1390, being the morning succeeding the funeral, the coronation of his successor, John Earl of Carrick, took place, with circumstances of great pomp and solemnity.¹ Next day, being the Assumption of the Virgin, his wife, Annabella Drummond, Countess of Carrick, a daughter of the noble house of Drummond, was crowned queen; and on the following morning, the assembled prelates and nobles, amidst a great concourse of the people, took their oaths of allegiance, when it was agreed that the king should change his name to that of Robert the Third;

¹ Winton, vol. ii. pp. 361, 362. Fordun a Goodal, vol. ii. p. 418. Chamberlain Accounts, vol. ii. p. 196. The funeral expenses amounted to L. 253, 19s. 9d.

the appellative *John*, from its associations with *Baliol*, being considered ominous and unpopular.

The character of the monarch was not essentially different from that of his predecessor. It was amiable, and far from being wanting in sound sense and discretion ; but the accident which had occasioned his lameness, unfitted him for excelling in those martial exercises which were then necessary to secure the respect of his turbulent nobility, and compelled him to seek his happiness in pacific pursuits, and domestic endearments, more likely to draw upon him the contempt of his nobles, than any more kindly feelings. The name of king, too, did not bring with it, in this instance, that hereditary dignity and honour which, had Robert been the representative of a long line of princes, must necessarily have attached to it. He was but the second king of a new race ; the proud barons who surrounded his throne had but lately seen his father and himself in their own rank ; had associated with them as their equals, and were little prepared to surrender, to a dignity of such recent creation, the homage or the awe which the person on whom it had fallen did not necessarily command by his own virtues. Yet the king appears to have been distinguished by many admirable qualities. He possessed an inflexible love of justice, and an affection for his people, which were evinced by every measure where he was suffered to follow the dictates of his own kind and upright heart ; he was aware of the miseries which the country had suffered by the long continuance of war, and he saw clearly that peace was the

first and best blessing which his government could bestow, and for the establishment and continuance of which almost every sacrifice should be made. The soundness of these views could not be doubted. They were the dictates of a clear and correct thinking mind, which, confined by circumstances to thoughtfulness and retirement, had discovered the most judicious line of policy, when all around it was turbulence and error, and a few centuries later they would have been hailed as the highest virtues in a sovereign.

But Robert wanted that combination of qualities which could alone have enabled him to bring these higher principles into action ; and this is explained in a single word, when it has been said he was unwarlike. The sceptre required to be held in a firm hand, and to restrain the outrages and ensure the respect of a set of nobles so fierce and haughty as those who then domineered over Scotland, it was absolutely necessary that the king should possess somewhat of that fierce energy, and warlike ardour, which distinguished themselves. Irresolution, timidity, and an anxious desire to conciliate the affection of all parties, induced him to abandon the most useful designs, because they opposed the selfishness, or threatened to abridge the power, of his barons ; and this weakness of character was ultimately productive of the most fatal effects in his own family, and throughout the kingdom. It happened also, unfortunately for the peace of the community, that his father had delegated the chief power of the state to his brothers, the Earls of Fife and of Buchan, committing the

general management of all public affairs, with the title of Governor, to the first;¹ and permitting the Earl of Buchan to rule over the northern parts of the kingdom, with an authority little less than regal. The first of these princes had long evinced a restless ambition, which had been increased by the early possession of power; but his character began now to discover those darker shades of crime, which grew deeper as he advanced in years. The Earl of Buchan, on the other hand, was little less than a cruel and ferocious savage, a species of Celtic Attila, whose common appellation of the "Wolf of Badenoch," is sufficiently characteristic of the dreadful attributes which composed his character, and who issued from his lair in the north, like the devoted instrument of the Divine wrath, to scourge and afflict the nations.

On the morning after the coronation, a little incident occurred, which is indicative of the gentle character of the king, and illustrates the rude and simple manners of the times. The fields and inclosures round the monastery had been dreadfully destroyed by the nobles and their retinue, and as it happened during the harvest, when the crops were ripe, the mischief fell heavily on the monks. A canon of the order, who filled the office of storekeeper, demanded an audience of the king, for the purpose of claiming some compensation, but on announcing his errand, was dismissed by the chamberlain with scorn. The mode in which he revenged himself was whimsical and extraordinary. Early on the morning after the coro-

¹ Chamberlain Accounts, vol. ii. pp. 165, 192.

