

CHAP. IV.

JAMES THE FIFTH,

1528 - 1542.

 CONTEMPORARY PRINCES.

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

JAMES the Fifth, who, by this sudden revolution, had been delivered from the thralldom of a successful faction, and invested with the supreme power, was still a youth in his seventeenth year. Even as a boy, he appeared to the discriminating eye of Magnus, Henry's ambassador at the Scottish court, to be brave, manly, impatient of being treated as a child, and possessed of good natural talents. As he grew up, the Douglasses neglected his education, and perverted his disposition by injudicious indulgences. They detected in him a strong propensity to pleasure, which they basely encouraged, under the idea that his mind, becoming enervated by in-

dolence and sensuality, would resign itself to the captivity in which they meant him to remain; but they were not aware of the strength of the character with which they had to deal. It did not, indeed, escape the pollution of such degrading culture; but it survived it. There was a mental vigor about the young king, and a strength of natural talent, which developed itself under the most unfavorable circumstances: he had early felt, with indignation, the captivity to which he was doomed, by the ambition of Angus; but he saw, for some time, no prospect of redress, and he insensibly acquired, by the necessity of his situation, a degree of patience and self-command, which are rarely found at his years. Under the restraint in which he was kept, the better parts of his nature had, for a while, little opportunity to display themselves. But the plot for his escape, and which appears to have been, principally, his own contrivance, having succeeded, he became at once a free monarch, and his true character, to the delight of the nation, was found to be marked by some of the highest qualities which could adorn a sovereign. He possessed a strict love of justice, an unwearied application in removing the grievances and promoting the real interests of his people, and a generosity and warmth of temper, which prompted him, on all occasions, to espouse with enthusiasm the cause of the oppressed. A stranger to pride, easy of access, and fond of mingling familiarly with all classes of his subjects, he seems to have gained their affections by relying

on them, and was rewarded by an appellation, of which he was not unjustly proud, "the King of the Poor."

With regard to the principles which guided his future policy, they arose naturally out of the circumstances in which his mind had been nurtured. The sternest feelings against the Douglasses, to whose ambition he had been made a sacrifice, were mingled with a determination to recover those rights of the crown, which had been forgotten or neglected during his minority, and to repress the power of an overgrown and venal aristocracy. Towards his uncle, Henry the Eighth, he could not possibly experience any other sentiments than those of indignation and suspicion. This monarch, through the exertions of his able minister, Lord Dacre, had introduced into Scotland a secret system of corruption, by which the nobles had become the pensioned agents of the English government, which maintained innumerable informers in the court and throughout the country, and excited such ceaseless commotions and private wars, that every effort for the maintenance of order and good government was defeated. In his uncle, James had latterly seen nothing but a determination to support his enemies, the Douglasses, with the object of degrading Scotland from its rank as an independent kingdom, and, by their aid, administering it according to his pleasure. To destroy this system of foreign dictation, which, since the defeat at Flodden, had been gradually assuming a more serious aspect, was one great

object of the king; and whilst such a design rendered his policy inimical to England, it naturally disposed him to cultivate the most friendly relations with France.

To the success of these designs, however, great obstacles presented themselves; which, although for the moment overlooked by the sanguine mind of the king, soon compelled him to act with moderation. Henry the Eighth, and Francis the First, were now bound together by a strict league, of which the great object was, to humble the power of the emperor, Charles the Fifth; and the French monarch received with coldness every advance which endangered a union, on which the success of his political schemes so mainly depended. Nor was it long of occurring to the Scottish king, that, with a divided nobility, and his finances impoverished by the havoc made in the royal revenues during his minority, it would be wise to pause before he permitted his individual resentment to hurry the nation into a war; and that, in the mean time, it should be his first object to secure his recent elevation by the immediate proscription of his enemies.

He accordingly proceeded from Stirling to Edinburgh, where a proclamation was issued, prohibiting any Douglas, on pain of death, from remaining in the capital, and making it treason to hold intercourse with Angus or his adherents. It was resolved that a parliament should meet in the beginning of September; the important office of

