

H I S T O R Y

OF

S C O T L A N D.

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PREFACE.

THE volume of the History of Scotland now published embraces the eventful period between the marriage of Mary to Darnley, and the conclusion of the civil war, in 1572, a portion of our national annals which has been so deformed by controversy, that there is scarcely a single event in it of any importance, which has not been questioned, or distorted to suit the peculiar views of the antagonists or defenders of the Queen of Scots.

Under these circumstances, the Author, without adopting any preconceived notions, or espousing any favorite theory, has endeavoured to separate the truth from the tissue of fiction, passion, and

prejudice with which it has been obscured, and to put the reader in possession of a clear and authentic narrative of the facts. To attain this, he has examined with much care and labour, the Scottish, Domestic, and Foreign, correspondence, in the State Paper Office; and the authorities upon which this volume is founded are derived almost exclusively from the original letters of Elizabeth and Mary, of Burghley, Randolph, Leicester, Knox, Murray, Morton, and other actors in those dark and troubled times, which are preserved in that great national depository. At the same time he has consulted the rich original stores of the British Museum, and has availed himself of some valuable letters, preserved at Florence amongst the private archives of the House of Medici, in possession of the Grand Duke of Tuscany. These,

which form part of the interesting manuscript collections of Prince Labanoff relating to the life of Mary Queen of Scots, were most liberally and politely communicated to the Author by that nobleman.

An access to such materials has enabled the Author to add many new facts to this portion of Scottish history—as well as to throw new light upon the proper inferences derivable from what had been already established. In proof of this he may refer to the elucidation of the conspiracy for the murder of Riccio, and the clear implication of Elizabeth, Cecil, and the leaders of the protestants, in that deed, to the new details upon the death of Darnley, to the escape of Mary from Lochleven, one of those rare cases in which truth is found to assume the brilliant colours of romance, to

the assassination of Murray and Lennox, to the plot of Elizabeth, Mar, and Morton, for having Mary put secretly to death in Scotland, and to other parts of the volume.

But whilst he ventures to point out this, and to express a hope that in this and in the succeeding volume, which will terminate his labours, there is a nearer approach to truth than has yet been made, the Author is desirous of expressing his high respect for the labours of the eminent men who have preceded him, whose works, considering the imperfect materials they possessed are worthy of the highest praise.

HAMPSTEAD,

July 23rd, 1840.

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