

CHAP. V.

1572 - 1574.

Regency of Morton.

CONTEMPORARY SOVEREIGNS.

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| <i>England.</i> | <i>France.</i> | <i>Germany.</i> | <i>Spain.</i> | <i>Portugal.</i> | <i>Pope.</i> |
| Elizabeth. | Charles IX. | Maximilian II. | Philip II. | Sebastian. | Pius VI. |

THE death of Mar, over which there hung some suspicion of poison, threw Killigrew, the English ambassador, into much perplexity,¹ and Burghley, who had received the news as early as the 3d of November, wrote on that day to Walsingham, the English ambassador at the French court, in much anxiety. "The 29th of the last," said he, "the good regent of Scotland is dead, as I think by a natural sickness, and yet the certainty is not known. This will make our causes the worse in Scotland, for I fear the conveyance away of the king; and yet there is care taken for his surety, but I can almost hope for no good, seeing our evils fall by heaps, and why the heaps fall not upon ourselves

¹ MS. Letter, Caligula, B. viii. f. 302. Killigrew to Leicester, begun 28th Oct. finished 31st. Oct. 1572.

personally, I see no cause to the let thereof in ourselves. God be merciful to us * *.”¹

Elizabeth, who felt the importance of the event, and dreaded the success of French money and intrigues in Scotland, lost not a moment in taking measures to preserve her party. She wrote to the Countess of Mar, recommending her to watch over the safety of the young prince, her dear relative, in whose welfare she took the deepest interest, and she sent a flattering letter to the Earl of Morton, in which with unusual condescension, she addressed him as if already regent, calling him her well-beloved cousin, commending the wisdom with which he had governed himself in times past in seasons of great difficulty, and expressing her hope that he and the nobility would take measures for the safety of the young king, and the repose of the realm. For more particulars she referred him to Killigrew, her ambassador, and alluding to the necessity of appointing a new regent, trusted that the election would not disturb the quiet of the country.²

These were politic steps, as Morton was undoubtedly at this time the most able and powerful of the nobility. Even under Mar he had regulated every public measure, and when it was certain that the regent was on his death bed, the whole administration of affairs seems naturally to have devolved

¹ MS. Letter, Vespasian F. vi. fol. 181 d. Burghley to Walsingham, 3 Nov. 1572.

² Copy, St. P. Off. 4th Nov. 1572. Elizabeth to Morton.

on him.¹ He was supported by the great majority of the nobles, by the influential party of the church, and by the friendship of England. Against such influence the Castilians and their friends could do little, and after a feeble opposition, he was chosen Regent in a parliament held at Edinburgh on the 24th of November, and proclaimed next day with the usual solemnity.²

At this parliament Elizabeth's letters to the Scottish nobility were publicly read, and although these were not so decided in their language as her partizans had desired, there can be little doubt that the knowledge of her favour to Morton produced the greatest influence. On informing his royal mistress and her minister Burghley of the late events, Killigrew earnestly advised some more effectual assistance to be sent to the new Regent. He had in vain endeavoured to induce the two factions to refer their controversies to Elizabeth. The Castilians were still confident in the strength of their fortress, and looked to speedy aid from France; Morton on the other hand, although he admitted the desirableness of peace, had invariably asserted, that to storm the castle and utterly subdue the king's enemies would be the only means to establish a firm government, and restore

¹ MS. Letter, Caligula, B. viii. fol. 300. Killigrew to Burghley, and Leicester, 29 6th Oct. 1572.

² Copy, St. P. Off. Killigrew to the Queen, 2 Dec. 1572. See MS. Letter, St. P. Off. 19 Nov. 1572. Noblemen, and others, met at the convention in Edinburgh.

security alike to Scotland and England. But it was evident that this could not be done without some effectual assistance. The regent and the nobles were too poor to maintain any sufficient body of troops on their own resources, and the danger seemed to be, that if not supported by Elizabeth, they would look to France.

“This regent,” said Killigrew, in his letter to Burghley, “is a shrewd fellow, and I fear little Douglas be not come home out of France without some offers to him among others, howbeit hitherto I can perceive nothing at all, for he assureth me still to run the course of England as much as ever regent did. Notwithstanding I see not how he can make war till the parliament be ended, tho he had aid of money, and that for two reasons. The one the parliament is appointed in this town, which cannot well be holden because of the castle if it were war, and the parliament must of necessity be holden for many weighty reasons. The other is the regent’s indisposition, as he is not like to travel for a month or two, but rather to keep his bed or chamber under the surgeon’s care for a disease that hath much troubled him this five or six years.”¹

A few days after the dispatch of this letter, Killigrew made a rapid journey to Berwick to hold a conference with Sir William Drury on Scottish matters, and obtain his advice and assistance. He was recalled suddenly, however, to Edinburgh, by

¹ MS. Letter, St. P. Off. Killigrew to Burghley, Dec. 10th, 1572. Edin.

