

CHAP. V.

JAMES THE SIXTH.

1586—1587.

 CONTEMPORARY PRINCES.

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| <i>England.</i> | <i>France.</i> | <i>Germany.</i> | <i>Spain.</i> | <i>Portugal.</i> | <i>Pope.</i> |
| Elizabeth. | Henry III. | Rudolph I. | Phillip II. | Phillip II. | Sixtus V. |

ELIZABETH, as has been already hinted, had a great purpose in view, when she concluded this league and sent Archibald Douglas into Scotland. Two months before, her indefatigable minister, Walsingham, had detected that famous conspiracy known by the name of "Babington's plot," in which Mary was implicated, and for which she afterwards suffered. It had been resolved by Leicester, Burghley, and Walsingham, and probably by the Queen herself, that this should be the last plot of the Scottish Queen and the Roman Catholic faction; that the time had come when sufferance was criminal and weak; that the life of the unfortunate, but still active and formidable captive, was inconsistent with Elizabeth's safety and the liberty of the realm. Hence the importance attached to this league, which bound the two kingdoms together, in a treaty offensive and defensive, for the protection of the Protestant faith, and separated the

young King from his mother. Hence the eagerness for the return and pardon of Archibald Douglas, who had sold himself to Elizabeth, betrayed the secrets of Mary, and now offered his influence over James to be employed in furthering this great design for her destruction.

It is now necessary to enter upon the history of this plot, and Mary's alleged connexion with it,—one of the most involved and intricate portions in the history of the two countries. To be clear, and prevent the mind from getting entangled in the inextricable meshes of Walsingham and his informers, it will be proper for a moment to look back. Mary had now been nineteen years a captive; and, upon the cruelty and illegality of her imprisonment during this long and dreary period, there can be but one opinion. She was seized and imprisoned during a time of peace; contrary to every feeling of generosity, and in flagrant violation of every principle of law and justice. On the one hand, it was the right and the duty of such a prisoner to attempt every possible means for her escape; on the other, it was both natural and just that the Catholic party, in England and Scotland, should have combined with France and Spain to deliver her from her captivity, and avenge upon Elizabeth such an outrage on the law of nations as the seizure of a free Princess. But the same party regarded Elizabeth as a heretic, whose whole life had been obstinately opposed to the truth. Some of them went so far as to consider her an illegitimate usurper, whose throne belonged to the Queen of Scots.

They had plotted, therefore, not only for Mary's deliverance, but for the reëstablishment of their own faith in England, and for Elizabeth's deposition; nay, some of them, mistaking fanaticism for religion, against Elizabeth's life. All these conspiracies continued more or less during the whole period of Mary's captivity, and had been detected by the vigilance of Elizabeth's ministers, acting through the system of private spies; one of the most revolting features of an age which regarded craft and treachery as necessary parts of political wisdom. With all these plots, the Queen of Scots had been in some degree either directly or indirectly connected: her rival felt acutely (and such a feeling was the retributive punishment of the wrong she had committed) the misery of keeping so dangerous a prisoner; but up to this time, there seems to have been no allegation that Mary was implicated in anything affecting Elizabeth's life, anything more, in short, than a series of plots continued at different times for her own escape. Nor did Elizabeth very highly resent them. So far at least from adopting the extreme measures to which she had been advised by many of her councillors, she had repeatedly entered into negotiations with her royal captive, in which she held out the hope of her liberty on the one hand; whilst Mary, on the other, promised not only to forsake all connexion with public affairs, and leave the government to her son, but to impart to her good sister the most valuable secret information. These scenes had been so repeatedly begun, and repeatedly broken off, that they had be-

