

CHAP. III.

ROBERT BRUCE.

 CONTEMPORARY PRINCES.
Kings of England.

Edward I.

Edward II.

King of France.

Philip IV.

Pope.

Clement V.

WE now enter upon the history of this great and rapid revolution, and in doing so, it will first be necessary to say a few words upon the early character and conduct of the Earl of Carric, afterwards Robert the First.

This eminent person was the grandson of that Robert Bruce, Lord of Annandale, who was competitor for the crown with John Baliol. He was lineally descended from Isabella, second daughter of David, Earl of Huntingdon, brother of William the Lion. John Baliol, the late King of Scotland, had, as we have already seen, renounced for ever all claim to the throne, and his son Edward was at that time a minor and a captive. Marjory Baliol, the sister of this unfortunate monarch, married John Comyn, Lord of Badenoch. Their son, John Comyn, commonly called the Red Comyn, the opponent of Wallace, and, till the fatal year 1303, the Regent of the kingdom, possess-

ed, as the son of Marjory, Baliol's sister, a right to the throne, after the resignation of Baliol and his son, which, according to the principles on which Edward pronounced his decision, was unquestionable. He was also connected by marriage with the royal family of England,¹ and was undoubtedly one of the most powerful, if not the most powerful subject, in Scotland. Bruce and Comyn were thus the heads of two rival parties in the state, whose animosity was excited by their mutual claims to the same crown, and whose interests were utterly irreconcilable. Accordingly, when Edward gave his famous award in favour of Baliol, Bruce, the competitor, refused to take the oath of homage,² and although he acquiesced in the decision, gave up his lands in the vale of Annandale, which he must have held as a vassal under Baliol, to his son, the Earl of Carric; again, in 1293, the Earl of Carric resigned his lands and earldom of Carric to his son Robert, then a young man in the service of the King of England.³ In the years 1295 and 1296, Edward invaded Scotland, and reduced Baliol, and the party of the Comyns, to an ignominious submission. During this contest, Bruce, the Earl of Carric, and son of the competitor, possessed of large estates in England, continued faithful to Edward. He thus

¹ His wife Johanna, was daughter of William de Valence, Earl of Pembroke. This Earl of Pembroke was son of Hugh de Brienne, who married Isabella, widow of John, King of England, grandfather of Edward the First.

² Leland, Collect. vol. i. p. 540.

³ Ibid.

preserved his estates, and hoped to see the destruction of the only rivals who stood between him and his claim to the throne. Nor was this a vain expectation, for Edward, on hearing of the revolt of Baliol and the Comyns, undoubtedly held out the prospect of the throne to Bruce,¹ and these circumstances afford us a complete explanation of the inactivity of that baron and his son at this period. Meanwhile Baliol and the Comyns issued a hasty order, confiscating the estates of all who preserved their allegiance to Edward. In consequence of this resolution, the rich lordship of Annandale, the paternal inheritance of the Earl of Carric, was declared forfeited, and given by Baliol to John Comyn, Earl of Buchan, who immediately seized and occupied Bruce's castle of Lochmaben, an insult which there is reason to think the proud baron never forgave. Compelled to submit to Edward, the Comyns, and the principal nobles who supported them, were now carried prisoners into England; and, when restored to liberty, it was only on condition that they should join his army in Flanders, and assist him in his foreign wars.²

During the brief but noble stand made by Wallace for the national liberty, Robert Bruce, then a young man of three-and-twenty, was placed in very difficult and critical circumstances. It was in his favour that his rivals, the Comyns, were no longer in the field, but kept in durance by Edward. His father, the Earl of Carric, remained in England, where

¹ See *supra*, p. 107.

² *Rotul. Scotiae*, 30th July. Edward I.

he possessed large estates, and continued faithful in his allegiance to the king. At this time it is important to remark what Walter Hemingford, a contemporary English historian, has said of young Bruce. After mentioning the revolt which was headed by Wallace, he informs us, "that the Bishop of Carlisle, and other barons, to whom the peace of that district was committed, became suspicious of the fidelity of Robert Bruce the younger, Earl of Carric, and sent for him to come and treat upon the affairs of Edward, if he intended to remain faithful to that monarch." Bruce, he continues, did not dare to disobey, but came on the day appointed, with his vassals of Galloway, and took an oath on the sacred host, and upon the sword of St Thomas, that he would assist the king against the Scots, and all his enemies, both by word and deed; and having taken this oath, he returned to his country, and, to give a colour of truth to his fidelity, collected his vassals, and ravaged the lands of William Douglas, carrying the wife and infant children of this knight into Annandale. Soon after this, however, as he returned from a meeting of the Scottish conspirators to his own country, having assembled his father's men of Annandale, (for his father himself then resided in the south of England, and was ignorant of his son's treachery,) he told them, "that it was true he had lately taken a foolish oath at Carlisle, of which they had heard." He assured them that it was extorted by force, and that he not only deeply repented what he had done, but hoped soon to get absolution. Meanwhile he added, "that he

