

CHAP. IV.

ROBERT BRUCE.

 CONTEMPORARY PRINCES.

King of England.
Edward II.

Kings of France.
Philip IV.
Lewis X.
Phillip V.
Charles IV.

Popes.
Clement V.
John XII.

A DEEP and general panic seized the English, after the disastrous defeat at Bannockburn. The weak and undecided character of the king infected his discontented nobility, and the common soldiers, having lost all confidence in their officers, became feeble and dispirited in themselves. "A hundred English would not hesitate," says Walsingham, "to fly from two or three Scottish soldiers, so grievously had their wonted courage deserted them."¹ Taking advantage of this dejection, the king, in the beginning of autumn,² sent Douglas and Edward Bruce across the eastern marches, with an army which wasted Northumberland, and carried fire and sword through

¹ Walsingham, p. 106.

² It was before the 10th of August. *Rotuli Scotiæ*, 8, Edw. II, m. 9, p. 129.

the principality of Durham, where they levied severe contributions. They next pushed forward into Yorkshire, and plundered Richmond, driving away an immense body of cattle, and making many prisoners. On their way homeward they burnt Appleby and Kirkwold, sacked and set fire to the villages in their route, and found the English so utterly dispirited, that their army reached Scotland, loaded with spoil, and unchallenged by an enemy.¹ Edward, indignant at their successes, issued his writs for the muster of a new army to be assembled from the different wapentachs of Yorkshire, commanded ships to be commissioned and victualled for a second Scottish expedition, and appointed the Earl of Pembroke to be governor of the country between Berwick and the river Trent, with the arduous charge of defending it against the reiterated attacks, and, to use the words of the royal commission, “the burnings, slaughters, and inhuman and sacrilegious depredations of the Scots.”² These, however, were only parchment levies; and before a single vessel was manned, or a single horseman had put his foot in the stirrup, the indefatigable Bruce had sent a second army into England, which ravaged Redesdale and Tynedale, again marking their progress by the black ashes of the towns and villages, and compelling the miserable inhabitants of the border countries to surrender their whole wealth, and to purchase their lives with great sums of money.³ From

¹ Chron. Lanercost, apud Tyrrel, vol. iii. p. 262.

² Rotuli Scotiæ, 8. Edw. II. m. 8, dated 10th August, 1314.

³ Chron. Lanercost, in Tyrrel, vol. iii. p. 262.

this they diverged in their destructive progress into Cumberland, and either from despair, or from inclination, and a desire to plunder, many of the English borderers joined the invading army, and swore allegiance to the Scottish king.¹

Alarmed at these inundations, and finding little protection from the inactivity of Edward, and the disunion and intrigues of the nobility, the barons and clergy of the northern parts of England assembled at York; and having entered into a confederacy for the protection of their neighbourhood against the Scots, appointed four captains to command the forces of the country, and to adopt measures for the public safety. Edward immediately confirmed this nomination, and, for the pressing nature of the emergency, the measure was not impolitic; but these border troops soon forgot their allegiance, and, upon the failure of their regular supplies from the king's exchequer, became little better than the Scots themselves, plundering the country, and subsisting themselves by every species of theft, robbery,² and murder.

Robert wisely seized this period of distress and national dejection, to make pacific overtures to Edward,

¹ Rotuli Scotiæ, 9. Edw. II. m. 4, pp. 152, 153.

² Rotuli Scotiæ, 8. Edw. II. m. 6, p. 137, 10th January, 1314. Walsingham, p. 110. Lord Hailes has stated, that Edward assembled a parliament at York in 1314, and quotes the *Fœdera*, vol. iii. pp. 491, 493, for his authority. This must be an error; as these pages prove that no parliament was then assembled, nor is there any writ for a parliament in Rymer in this year at all. Walsingham, p. 106, says, indeed, that the king held a great council at York immediately after his flight from Bannockburn.

and to assure him, that having secured the independence of his kingdom, there was nothing which he more anxiously desired, than a firm and lasting peace between the two nations. Negotiations soon after followed. Four Scottish ambassadors met with the commissioners of England, and various attempts were made for the establishment of a perpetual peace, or at least of a temporary truce, between the rival countries; but these entirely failed, owing, probably, to the high tone assumed by the Scottish envoys, and the termination of this destructive war appeared still more distant than before.¹ Towards the end of this year, so glorious to Scotland, the unfortunate John Baliol died in exile at his ancient patrimonial castle of Bailleul, in France, having lived to see the utter demolition of a power which had insulted and dethroned him. He had been suffered to retain a small property in England, and his eldest son appears to have been living in that country, and under the protection of Edward, at the time of his father's death.²

In addition to the miseries of foreign war and intestine commotion, England was now visited with a grievous famine, which increased to an excessive degree the prices of provisions, and, combined with the frequent and destructive visitations of the Scots, reduced the kingdom to a very miserable condition. A parliament, which assembled at London in Janu-

¹ Rotuli Scotiæ, 8. Edw. II. m. 8, p. 131. York, 18th September, 1314. See also m. 8, pp. 132, 133, 6th October, 1314.

² Fœdera, vol. iii. p. 506, 4th January, 1315.

