

BATTLE OF POICTIERS—ESCAPE OF
DOUGLAS.*

A. D. 1356.

A NARRATIVE of the famous battle between the French and the English, in the vineyards of Maupertuis near Poitiers, does not fall within the plan of the present work, but it is worthy of notice on account of an amusing anecdote related by Fordun, and which Lord Hailes admits has “the appearance of truth.” In this battle, fought on the 19th of September 1356, there were a considerable number of Scottish soldiers, who, during a momentary tranquillity at

* Annals of Scotland; Fordun's Scotichronicon; Home's History of the Douglasses.

home, crowded to the standard of the French monarch King John. Lord Douglas offered his services, and was received with distinguished honours. The French were defeated, and great carnage was made of the Scots. Lord Douglas was wounded, and forced off the field by his surviving companions, but one of his followers, Archibald Douglas, the illegitimate son of the celebrated Sir James Douglas, slain in Granada by the Saracens, fell into the hands of the English.

This gentleman happened to be arrayed in armour more sumptuous than the other Scottish prisoners of rank, and it was supposed by the English that he was a powerful nobleman. Late in the evening after the battle, when the victors were about to strip him of his armour, Sir William Ramsay of Colluthie, also a prisoner, happened to be present. Fixing his eyes on Archibald Douglas, and affecting to be in a furious passion, he exclaimed—"You cursed, damnable murderer, how comes it, in the name of mischief, that you are thus proudly decked out in your master's armour? Come hither, and pull off my boots!" Douglas, who understood the project, approached in a trembling attitude, knelt, and pulled off one of Ramsay's boots, and the knight immediately taking it up, beat the pretended lacquey with it in a violent manner. The English bystanders, astonished at Ramsay's conduct, interposed and rescued Douglas, and asked the former how he dared to maltreat a nobleman of rank? "What," exclaimed Ramsay, "he a nobleman! Why, he is a scullion and a base knave, and I suppose has killed his master. Go, you villain, to the field of battle, search for the body of my cousin, your master, and when you have found it come back, that I may at least give him a decent burial." He then offered a ransom of forty shillings for the feigned man-servant, which was accepted, and after again cuffing him severely, he cried—"Get you gone; fly."

Douglas carried on the deceit, and was allowed to depart on the pretended search for his master's body. He was soon beyond the reach of his captors.
