

THE RAID OF LAUDER.*

A. D. 1482.

A DISPUTE took place between England and Scotland, occasioned most probably by Edward IV. discontinuing to pay the marriage portion of the Princess Cecilia, to whom the eldest son of James III. was betrothed. The Duke of Albany, the King's brother, who had made a remarkable escape from the Castle of Edinburgh, and fled to France, passed over into England, and found Edward's brother, the Duke of Gloucester, afterwards the notorious Richard III., appointed lieutenant-general of the north, and placed at the head of the army against the Scots. This was in 1480, but hostilities did not commence till the following year, when the English army entered Scotland, burnt sixty villages, sailed up the Forth, captured eight vessels, and consigned to the flames the village of Blackness. After this devastation the invaders sought their native shores, but "God revenged their perfidy," says Sir James Balfour, "for many of them being broken and drowned by tempest ere they could gain home." The Scottish admiral, Sir Andrew Wood, also destroyed several of the English ships, and the Borderers carried fire and sword into England.

In 1482 the campaign was renewed, and Edward IV. concluded a treaty with the exiled Duke of Albany, in

* Lindsay's (of Pitscottie) History; Ruddiman's Notes on Buchanan; Sir James Balfour's Annals; Hume's (of Godscroft) History of the Houses of Douglas and Angus.

which, instigated by the Duke of Gloucester, he promised to assist the latter in reducing Scotland, and to maintain him on the throne. The pretended causes of the war were various, but the chief allegations were, that James had seized the Castles of Berwick, Roxburgh, Coldingham, and other fortresses on the Borders, and that he refused to do homage to England.

The English army assembled at Alnwick under the command of the Duke of Gloucester, and amounted to 22,000, or, according to some, 40,000 men. The van was led by Henry Percy, Earl of Northumberland; Gloucester and the Duke of Albany were at the head of the middle division, and several of the English nobility commanded the minor detachments. The first object of attack was Berwick, which had been for some time in possession of the Scots. Thither Gloucester directed his march, and his formidable army appeared suddenly before the town. No resistance was offered by the inhabitants, and the town was immediately seized, but the governor of the castle refused to surrender. Lord Stanley was left with 4000 men to carry on the siege, and Gloucester continued his march to Edinburgh.

When James III. was informed of the movements of the English army, he prepared to defend his kingdom. In the month of July 1482, the royal standard was displayed on the Boroughmuir of Edinburgh, and 50,000 men ranged themselves under the Scottish banner. It ought to be here noticed, that James had already irritated his nobility by an imprudent partiality to favourites, who were persons of humble origin, but whose flatteries were more agreeable than the rude expostulations and independent bearing of his powerful feudal barons. Cochrane, a master mason, who had been introduced to the King on account of his skill in architecture, Rogers, an Englishman, and by profession a musician, were the chief favourites; but these

names were respectable when compared with the other chosen companions of the King. Torphichen, a swordsman or fencing-master, Hommel, a tailor, and a person called Leonard, a smith, were the daily associates of James, on whom he heaped rewards and favours, and who became his only councillors.

It was not to be expected that the haughty nobility of Scotland, who in those days seldom visited the Court except when on urgent business, would behold the neglect of their own order, and the elevation of such individuals, without exasperation. So great was the influence of Cochrane with James, that he was actually permitted to coin money in his own name, called *black money*, the circulation of which often threatened to excite insurrections among the people, who refused what they termed the *Cochrane plack*. When it was represented to him that this species of coin would soon be prohibited, he was wont to reply with haughtiness, that its circulation would cease the day he was hanged—a fate which he considered very improbable.

The discontented nobility attended the King at the Boroughmuir with their retainers, but they had privately resolved to perform some bold deed, and revenge the affronts offered to their rank and influence. James, unsuspecting of their intentions, placed himself at the head of his army, yet he was imprudent to assign the command to Cochrane, whom he had recently created Earl of Mar. The army marched first to Soutra, and then advanced to Lauder, where the whole force encamped for the night, between the parish church and the village. On the following morning a secret council of the peers assembled in a religious edifice opposite Lauder Fort, erected by Edward I. The nobility present were the Earls of Argyle, Angus, Huntly, and Crawford, Lords Home, Fleming, Gray, Drummond, Hailes, and Seton, Lord Evandale the Chancellor, and several of

the bishops. The ostensible object of this meeting was to consider the means to be employed for the defence of the kingdom, and whether they ought to march their retainers to the Borders. They convened early in the morning without the knowledge of the King. Lord Gray opened the debate by relating an expressive and significant fable. "The mice," he said, "consulted respecting the measures they ought to adopt to escape from the cat, their inveterate enemy. It was proposed that a bell should be hung from the cat's neck to give due warning of the animal's approach, but the difficulty was to find a mouse courageous enough to attempt the fastening of the bell." No sooner had this allegory been uttered by Lord Gray than the Earl of Angus exclaimed, "I shall bell the cat"—an emphatic declaration which procured for him the soubriquet of *Bell-the-Cat*, by which this great chieftain of the House of Douglas is distinguished in history. Several of the peers laid their hands on their swords, and expressed their determination to exert themselves against the public enemy. The result of their deliberation was, that the King's person should be secured, and conducted to Edinburgh Castle, and that Cochrane and the other favourites should be put to death.

The council was not kept so secret as to prevent it coming to the knowledge of James, who felt considerable alarm. He rose from his couch, and summoned Cochrane to his presence. The favourite attended, and after consulting with the King he was sent to the assembled peers to observe their movements, and learn the nature of their deliberations. He repaired to the ecclesiastical building in which they were assembled, little anticipating that his death had been already projected. The unfortunate favourite was accompanied by three hundred men, all arrayed in white livery, with black fillets, and armed with battle-axes, that they might be known as the followers of the recently created Earl of Mar. He wore a riding cloak of black

velvet, and a chain of gold around his neck worth five hundred crowns. His hunting horn was ornamented with gold, and his helmet was carried before him richly decorated with that metal. In this pomp he proceeded to the church in which the nobility were assembled, and commanded one of his attendants to knock with great authority. Sir Robert Douglas of Lochleven inquired from within the cause of this rude noise, and was answered by Cochrane—" 'Tis I, the Earl of Mar." He was instantly admitted, and the Earl of Angus advanced towards him, seized the gold chain which encircled his neck, twisting it with such force as nearly to strangle him, and exclaimed, " A rope would become thee better !" or, as related by another authority, " This chain doth not become a man of your condition ; but I shall ere long give you one which will become you far better." Douglas of Lochleven grasped Cochrane's hunting horn, and told him that he had been too long a hunter of mischief. The favourite, finding himself thus roughly handled, said—" My Lords, is this jest or earnest ?" He was answered—" Thou shalt soon find that it is in good earnest ; for thou and thy associates have too long abused the favour of our sovereign. No longer shalt thou enjoy thy greatness, but thou and thy accomplices shall have a merited punishment."

The new made Earl of Mar, who had never been recognised as such by the nobility, was immediately secured, and some persons of distinction were sent to the King's tent, where they diverted his attention by plausible speeches, during which time Cochrane's associates were apprehended. Leonard, Rogers, Torphichen, a gentleman named Preston, and some others, were dragged to the bridge of Lauder—a structure supplanted by the present bridge—and hanged over it in sight of the whole army, who exulted in the fate of those unhappy minions ; and, if we are to credit one authority, the King was a spectator of their execution.

Cochrane appeared last, his hands bound with a rope, which he requested to be exchanged for one of the silken cords of his own tent, but he was answered that he deserved no better. He was led to the bridge, and there put to death with his associates.

Sir John Ramsay of Balmain was the only favourite of the King who escaped the indignant resentment of the peers on this occasion. His life was spared at the earnest request of James, who pleaded for him on account of his youth, he being only eighteen years of age. James himself was seized as a prisoner, and the house in which they placed him under restraint was standing in 1819. He was conveyed from Lauder to the Castle of Edinburgh, without a single murmur on the part of the army, who were all dismissed; and the King was not permitted to act at liberty until he gave ample security that he would not revenge the death of his favourites—a condition to which he assented with the greatest reluctance. The Duke of Gloucester advanced to Edinburgh, and encamped at Restalrig in the vicinity. He found the King a prisoner in the Castle, and the government assumed by a party of the nobility. After various transactions, a new treaty was concluded between James and Edward IV., and the Duke of Gloucester led his army back to England.
