

## THE RAID OF RUTHVEN.

A.D. 1582.

THE word *raid* has a peculiar import in Scottish history. Though its plain signification is *an inroad*, or a *hostile and predatory incursion*, conducted by persons on horseback, it reminds us of those daring exploits so prominent in our national records, when law and government were set at defiance, and public or private factions chose their own methods of furthering their ambition, or of gratifying their revenge. Of the many exploits of this description to which

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\* Pitcairn's Criminal Trials; History of the Earls of Gowrie; History of Perth.

the attention of the reader is directed in these narratives, the *Raid of Ruthven* is not the least celebrated.

It is hardly necessary to apprize the reader that for some centuries before the accession of James VI. to the crown of England, and especially during the reigns of the five sovereigns of that name, and of his mother Queen Mary, the government of Scotland was of the most wretched description. Faction succeeded faction, and conspiracy followed conspiracy; the sovereign was often a prisoner in the hands of some powerful combination led by one or more of the more influential nobility; and when he was freed from the domination of one faction it was only to fall into the snares of their rivals, who retaliated without mercy the supposed injuries they had received when their opponents were in power. The faction who held the King for the time generally administered the laws, such as they were, according to their own caprices, interests, or resentments; the usual executions, banishments, penalties, or forfeitures ensued, all of which were retaliated or revoked when the other party predominated. Meanwhile, the Highland chiefs and the Border troopers committed whatever depredations they pleased against their feudal opponents, often incited to this kind of predatory warfare by those who kept the sovereign as a prisoner, and as often stirred up by the love of plunder or of revenge.

The *Raid of Ruthven* was partly a political and partly a religious enterprise, and chiefly resulted from two causes—a private quarrel between the Duke of Lennox and the Earl of Arran, and by the intrigues of the clergy of that period. The inclination of James VI. for favourites had been early manifested, and the two noblemen just named were the rival candidates for the King's exclusive confidence. Esme Stuart, Duke of Lennox, was the cousin-german of Lord Darnley, the King's father, and James Stewart, Earl of Arran, had been elevated to that dignity

by a series of intrigues and crimes, to the exclusion of the House of Hamilton, to whom the earldom of Arran belonged. Lennox, who is deservedly described by Robertson as gentle, humane, and candid, and as the only amiable favourite whom James ever adopted, was eventually driven from Scotland by a faction who accused him of being a Papist, and an emissary of Rome; while Arran is represented as a being of "a prou'd and arrogant mynd, and thocht na man to be his equal."

A powerful party was soon formed, one of the chief leaders of which was William, fourth Lord Ruthven and first Earl of Gowrie, the son of that Lord Ruthven who rose from a bed of sickness to murder the unhappy Rizzio in the presence of Mary at Holyrood. Connected with this party were the Earls of Mar, Athole, Rothes, and Glencairn, the Master of Glamis, Lord Lindsay, the Commendators of Dunfermline, Cambuskenneth, Pittenweem, Dryburgh, and Paisley, and other noblemen and gentlemen of distinction; for in the sentence of forfeiture appear the Lords Oliphant and Boyd, the Lairds of Lochleven, Cleish, and Easter Wemyss, the Lord Justice Clerk Bellenden, and the Constable of Dundee. There are also two *noble ladies*—the Countess of Gowrie and the Countess of Cassillis. The alleged object of this confederacy was the defence of the religion and liberties of the kingdom, but in reality to procure the ruin of Lennox and possession of the King's person.

This confederacy was not managed with such caution as to prevent it from reaching the ears of Lennox, but an apparent reconciliation between him and Arran tended to throw him off his guard, while the party was in secret equally opposed to Arran, whose ruin was also projected, after that of Lennox was accomplished. The hunting season was approaching, and James prepared to participate in a sport of which he was passionately fond. For this

purpose he proceeded to Athole, a district which still possesses peculiar attractions to those who are devoted to the pastimes of the chase, leaving his rival favourites at their respective residences—Lennox at Dalkeith, and Arran at Kinneil near Borrowstounness. It was at this season, while the young monarch was forgetting in the Forest of Athole the feuds of his turbulent subjects, that the confederates resolved to commence their operations against both his favourites.

After enjoying his pastime in Athole the King prepared to return to Edinburgh, and on the 22d of August he was proceeding on his journey thither when he was invited by the Earl of Gowrie to Ruthven Castle, which lay in his way, now called Huntingtower, in the parish of Tippermuir. James had with him only a small number of attendants, but he accepted the invitation, little expecting any design against him, though when he entered the Castle he felt some uneasiness at the number of strangers within it. He thought prudent to conceal his alarm, which would have been increased if he had been aware that the confederated noblemen and gentlemen, upwards of one thousand in number, and well armed, were dispersed throughout the neighbourhood.

During the night no indication of violence appeared, but on the morning when the King summoned his attendants, and was about to leave the apartment, the Master of Glammis stationed himself at the door, and told him he must stay. The King inquired the reason of this interruption, and was informed by the Master that he would know it soon. The associated Lords shortly afterwards appeared, and presented a remonstrance against Lennox and Arran, which James received with the complaisance suitable to his situation. Still he was impatient to depart, and made an effort to leave the room, but was forcibly prevented. Finding himself a prisoner, he expostulated,

entreated, and threatened, and at last burst into tears. The Master of Glammis unmoved, however, fiercely exclaimed to his companions, some of whom were relenting—“No matter for his tears: better children weep than bearded men;”—an expression which James never forgot or forgave. The King was immediately placed under restraint, though personally he was treated with respect; his followers were all dismissed, and no one allowed to have access to him except those of their own party.

This exploit, by no means uncommon in those times, was soon noised abroad, and Arran accompanied by his brother speedily set out to Ruthven Castle with about forty horsemen to escort the King to Edinburgh. He depended much upon his influence with the Earl of Gowrie, to whom he was related, and who had co-operated with him in the prosecution of the Regent Morton. He had proceeded as far as Duplin, when he separated from his followers, whom he left under the charge of his brother, and with two attendants he went to Ruthven Castle. When he arrived at the gate he demanded admission to the King, but the rage of the confederates was so great at the sight of a man odious to them, that instant death would have been the penalty of his rashness if the Earl of Gowrie had not interfered. He was sent a prisoner to Stirling Castle; his followers, under the command of his brother, were attacked and dispersed by the Earl of Mar, and their leader, severely wounded, was committed to the Castle of Duplin.

For six days the King was kept in close confinement, but Lennox, in the meantime, was not idle. He despatched some noblemen in his interest to ascertain if James was detained against his inclination, requesting them to intimate to him that if this was the case, as was strongly rumoured, he would endeavour to set him at liberty. Those personages were only permitted to see the King in the presence

of the confederates, and when they had discharged their message James immediately exclaimed that he was a prisoner, which he desired them to proclaim to all his subjects. The confederates, on the other hand, denied that he was a captive, and, after uttering an invective against both Lennox and Arran, declared that they were resolved to persist in their course at the hazard of their lives and fortunes. The noblemen sent by Lennox were then most unceremoniously ejected from Ruthven Castle.

When the tidings of this exploit reached Edinburgh the utmost excitement prevailed. The influence of Lennox was considerable in the Scottish metropolis, and he employed himself in exerting it to the best advantage among the citizens. The confederates, shortly after the King's captivity, in order to preserve appearances allowed him to proceed to Perth, though vigilantly guarded by their own associates. James now found it necessary to yield to circumstances. More apprehensive for the safety of Lennox than for his own, he agreed to issue an extorted proclamation, setting forth that his residence at Perth was his own free choice, and commanding all associations formed for his rescue to dissolve within six hours after the publishing of the proclamation, under the penalties of treason.

Lennox was by this time at the head of a considerable force, and Sir James Balfour informs us that another and a most powerful association was formed to liberate the King, consisting of the Earls of Huntly, Crawford, Argyle, Montrose, Marischal, Sutherland, and Caithness; Lords Home, Seton, Ogilvy, Maxwell, Herries, Sinclair, Livingstone, and Newbattle, with all the leading gentlemen of Berwickshire and the Lothians. It is impossible to say whether those noblemen coalesced with Lennox, but it is probable that he would have paid little attention to the proclamation issued at Perth, as he knew that the King was a prisoner, and that it had been extorted from him by force, if

he had not received a private letter from James, exhorting him to leave the kingdom before the 20th of September. This letter he communicated to his friends, who advised him to retire to Dumbarton, where they would afterwards meet him and deliberate on his affairs, and whether the rescue of the King should be attempted; but at Dumbarton so many noblemen and others espoused his cause that the confederates became alarmed, and procured an order from James, commanding all the attendants of the Duke of Lennox, with the exception of forty persons, to depart from Dumbarton within twelve hours after notice, and to desist from approaching his residence while he was in Scotland. Lennox lost all hope after this intimation, and sent Lord Herries with two gentlemen to demand assurance of his personal safety if he complied with the order. This unfortunate nobleman was afterwards peremptorily commanded to leave the kingdom. He continued to lurk about Blackness, Dumbarton, Callender, and other places where he could find shelter, hoping that circumstances might alter his affairs, but the hatred of his enemies was implacable. Though often destitute of the common necessaries of life, and even of clothing, he was reluctant to leave Scotland without taking farewell of James. This was denied him, and he at length departed for France, and died at Paris on the following year of a broken heart, as was reported, but not without strong suspicions of being poisoned. James sincerely lamented his death, and ever afterwards showed kindness to his children.

Gowrie and the noblemen concerned in the *Raid of Ruthven*, who still retained possession of the King, began now to discover that all their representations about the public good had no effect in quieting the uneasiness of the people. James was accordingly brought to Edinburgh, and his reception on entering the city was highly characteristic. He was met by the ministers, who formed part of the proces-

sion, and those influential persons made a display of their zeal in the streets by singing a metrical version of the 124th Psalm. A convention of the Estates was called, which of course consisted solely of the associated peers. The King was still as much a prisoner as he had been in Ruthven Castle, and he was obliged to endure repeated insults and mortifications from the now triumphant party; but he was determined to endure the bondage no longer than was necessary, and circumstances occurred which induced him to watch for a favourable opportunity. The principal cause of alarm with the confederated Lords was the dread that negotiations would yet be concluded to associate Queen Mary, then a prisoner in England, with her son in the government. Yet, though they most sedulously guarded James night and day, they could not prevent the access of certain noblemen who were their well known enemies, and to whom the King spoke without reserve, informing them that he was resolved to hazard every thing for the recovery of his freedom.

As the report of the death of the Duke of Lennox had been clearly authenticated, and as Arran was so universally obnoxious that he caused little uneasiness, the confederates guarded the King with less care than when they were daily harassed by the apprehensions that the Duke would suddenly return. James was accordingly enabled to arrange a plan for his escape with the Earls of Argyle, Marischal, Rothies, and Montrose, and he appointed a convention of Estates to be held at St Andrews in May 1583, to which those noblemen were specially summoned. Few of the confederates were then with him, and he contrived to leave Edinburgh, with the intention of making a journey through Fife previous to the meeting. He first proceeded to his palace of Falkland, where he communicated his plans to William Stewart, Captain of the Guard; and it was arranged that he should set out for St Andrews under the pretence of visiting his uncle the Earl of March, while those



noblemen who were privy to his escape were to take up their residence in the castle of that city. A few days before the convention met the King left Falkland, and was joined at Darsie, on his way to St Andrews, by some noblemen and gentlemen who were opposed to the schemes of the confederates. Exulting at having now obtained his liberty, the young King amused himself with hawking by the way, and he arrived at St Andrews without encountering any interruption. Yet his joy almost threw him off his guard, for he slept the first night in St Andrews in one of the inns, where he was nearly surprised by his late keepers. Next day James entered the castle, where he was attended by Montrose, Marischal, and other noblemen. The gates were ordered to be shut, and Captain Stewart was entrusted with the command. A new Privy Council was appointed, and the King acted with the greatest clemency, notwithstanding the insults and provocations he had received. He published a declaration, in which he declared that, though duly sensible of the treasonable attempt upon his person at Ruthven, he was willing to forgive all past offences, if the actors in and defenders of that exploit would show themselves penitent, crave pardon in due time, and not provoke him by any farther unlawful actions to remember that treasonable attempt.

Here properly ends the narrative of the *Raid of Ruthven*. The Earl of Gowrie, the most active of those concerned in it, contrived to be admitted a short time into favour, though not without great difficulty, and after most humbly professing his sorrow for the share he had sustained in the capture of the King. Even Arran was at length admitted into the King's presence, and he was soon able to revenge himself on his numerous and powerful enemies. But some important consequences resulted from the Raid of Ruthven which materially affected Gowrie and others.

Arran had contrived to get the act of indemnity issued

James accompanied by certain conditions which defeated its purpose, and the noblemen concerned in its provisions scrupled not to set it at defiance. Some of them were confined to several districts throughout the country ; but others had left the kingdom according to the tenor of the proclamation against them. The Earl of Mar and the Master of Glamis had retired to Ireland, and some of their associates had retreated to England, in direct violation of the security which they had given to James, that they would not enter England or Ireland without his special permission. Gowrie, finding that his expressions of sorrow for his concern in the Raid of Ruthven did not restore him to favour, now corresponded with his former associates, especially with the Earl of Mar and the Master of Glamis in Ireland, the substance of which was, that they should return, and make a second attempt to secure the person of the King.

A new conspiracy was now formed, of which the Earl of Gowrie was the leader. He had obtained permission to proceed, to France, and under the excuse of finding a vessel to convey him thither he went to Dundee, where he lurked about much longer than the time assigned him for his departure under various pretences. Even about five months after the departure of Mar and Glamis he was found lingering in that town, giving out that he would depart "this day and that day." The time limited for his final departure was the last day of March 1584, and it was intimated to him, and those associates who had disregarded the royal proclamation, that if found after that date they would be punished as rebels.

But it was not Gowrie's intention to leave Scotland. He was busily engaged in preparing for the new enterprise, of which by some means or other James got notice, or at least that Gowrie was corresponding with Mar and Glamis, though Sir James Melville asserts that the whole

matter was arranged before Gowrie was connected with it, and that he would have left the country, though he was 'of nature over slow," but that the "despight" he entertained towards Arran "moved him to stay and take part with them." Gowrie, however, was charged on the 2d of March to leave the kingdom within fifteen days, and a message was despatched to Elizabeth, entreating her to command Mar and Glamis to leave Carrick-Fergus, where they had chosen to reside. Gowrie, nevertheless, contrived to evade and disregard the proclamation, and continued to reside in Dundee, where he arranged the projected enterprise. It was decided that Mar and Glamis, with their adherents, should return from Ireland, and proceed to Stirling, where they would be joined by the Earls of Gowrie and Angus, the latter of whom had been lately recalled from exile, though ordered to confine himself to his own residence in the north. Several other noblemen, particularly the Earl of Bothwell and Lord Lindsay, were connected with this conspiracy, but they took no decided or prominent part. Mustering their forces at Stirling, they were to send a supplication to the King, setting forth the dangers which, according to them, threatened religion and the state. Meanwhile Mar and Glamis were to make themselves masters of Stirling Castle, after being joined by Gowrie and Angus.

Mar and Glamis arrived in Scotland in the month of April, and began to collect their followers, but the vigilance of the government annihilated the confederacy. On the 16th of April, only two days before the intended surprise of Stirling Castle, Gowrie was unexpectedly apprehended by Captain Stewart of the Royal Guard in the house of one William Drummond, a burghess of Dundee. He made considerable resistance, and threatened to hold out the house, but the soldiers were assisted by the people of the town, and Gowrie was compelled to yield.

The apprehension of Gowrie was unknown to Glamis, Mar, and the other leaders, who, in full reliance on his promised assistance, attacked Stirling on the 17th or 18th, and forcibly took possession of the town. They easily secured the Castle, and published a manifesto not very remarkable for its moderation, professing that they were compelled to this conduct on account of the unhappy state of the government; and designating those who were at the Court "an insolent company, manifest and avowed Papists, Atheists, and excommunicated persons, enemies to religion and the state, favourers of the bloody Council of Trent." Intelligence of their bold exploit having reached Edinburgh, a proclamation was speedily issued by James, commanding his subjects to follow him to Stirling with provisions for thirty days, and a few suspected noblemen were placed under restraint. The citizens of Edinburgh evinced a remarkable zeal for the King, and the Town Council even advanced money to pay soldiers who would enlist. It was on the 19th of April that information of the surprise of Stirling Castle was received, and before the 24th, two days after the manifesto of the insurgents had appeared, a considerable army was in readiness to march against them. The tidings of these active preparations soon reached them, but they had already become disheartened by the apprehension of Gowrie, which they imagined was a mere pretence on his part to betray them, as he had done once before. Their friends and followers were more tardy in espousing their cause than they expected, and Elizabeth, who was favourable to the exploit, had neglected to send them a promised supply of money. They had only three hundred men to oppose the royal army commanded by their implacable enemies.

The King, having put his troops in motion, sent out a strong detachment under the command of Captain Stewart who had apprehended Gowrie, and advanced in person to

Stirling. The approach of the royal army struck them with dismay, and finding it impossible to hold out against a superior force, Angus, Mar, and Glamis, abandoned the fortress, and effected their escape into England. The Master of Livingstone was sent to invest the Castle, but the garrison surrendered at the first summons. There were only twenty-eight men in the fortress, and of those the captain and three were executed.

It was now resolved to punish the insurgents, of whom Gowrie was the only one of rank in custody. He had been brought from Dundee by sea to Leith, and committed a prisoner in Edinburgh. The King ordered him to be removed to Stirling, where the Court remained after the recovery of the Castle, and on the 4th of May he was tried before a jury of his countrymen for high treason. There were also tried at the same time two persons engaged in the enterprise, named Archibald Douglas and John Forbes. The trial took place in the edifice built by the Earl of Mar at Stirling near the Castle, popularly called *Mar's Wark*, now used as the Military Hospital. The presiding judge was John Graham of Hallyards. The jury consisted of the Earls of Argyle, Crawford, Montrose, Glencairn, Eglinton, Arran, Marischal, Lords Saltoun, Sommerville, Downe, Livingstone, Drummond, Ogilvy, the Master of Elphinstone, and Sir John Murray of Tullibardine. Of those noblemen, Montrose, Drummond, and Ogilvy, were connected by relationship with the family of Ruthven. Gowrie urged a variety of objections to the charges exhibited against him, which were all overruled, and he was found guilty of "not onlie maist unnaturallie and treasonable committing maist high treasoun in concealing of ane purpos of so wechtie imp rtance, bot also persisting in the said treason, the continuance of his silence, and not declaring of the said purpose, tending to the perill of his Maiestie's lyf and estate ;"—"and thairfoir the senteuce and dome of forfal-

ture wes pronunceit agains the said Erll be the mouth of Robert Scott in Striveling, dempster of the said Court—that the said Erll sald be taen to the skaffald beside the mercat-croce of Striveling, and thair his heid strikkin fra his body, and denounced as a traitour; and that he hes forfaltit and tint all his landis, heretageis, possessionis, takis, stedingis, offices, lyferentis, actionis, debtis, and utheris guidis, movable and unmovable, to be applyit, uptakin, and desponit be our souerane Lord at his pleasour.”

On the evening of the same day, betwixt the hours of eight and nine o'clock, Gowrie walked out to execution. Douglas and Forbes had been executed immediately after sentence. The Earl made a long speech on the scaffold, which was much extolled by his party on account of its piety and resignation. He maintained that all his actions were intended for the benefit of the King, and he concluded by observing, as is usual in such cases, that if he had served God as faithfully as he wished to have done the King, he would not have come to that end. He calmly laid his head upon the block, and it was severed from his body at one stroke. The other parts of the sentence were remitted, and his domestics were allowed to inter his body. “His servants,” says Sir James Balfour, “did sew his head to his body, and incontinently buried the same.” Such was the fate of the first Earl of Gowrie, the chief actor in the *Raid of Ruthven*—an enterprise distinguished by his family name. Historians agree in giving him a high character for ability, yet he nowhere exhibited any thing like superior genius. He appears to have been a nobleman of great irresolution, and only sensible of his rashness when it was too late to retrieve his errors. Others, equally guilty, saved themselves from a similar fate by flight into England—the common retreat of all dangerous leaders in that turbulent age. Some prosecutions followed, but the parties concerned were persons of inferior rank, and were

in no respect remarkable for any conspicuous actions, except being connected with, or “art and part” in, the enterprises attempted by Gowrie, Mar, Angus, and Glammiss.