

Albany. The sovereign was treated with the greatest harshness ; at times, being actually in fear of his life, he found himself compelled to affix his signature and authority to papers which gave the falsest views of the real state of affairs ; and it is curious to trace how completely the voice of the records was prostituted to eulogize the conduct of Albany and his friends. The monarch was made to thank him in the warmest terms for his delivery from imprisonment ; and the abettors of the duke in his treasonable assumption of the supreme power, were rewarded, under the pretence of having hazarded their lives for the protection of the king.¹

At the request of the three estates, the king, upon the plea of its being improper for him to expose his person to continual danger in defence of his realm against its enemies, was recommended to intreat the Duke of Albany to accept the office of lieutenant-general of the kingdom, with a suitable provision to meet the great expenses which he must incur in the execution of its important duties. By conferring this high office upon his brother, the sovereign was in reality compelled to be the instrument of superseding his own authority, and declaring himself unworthy of the

¹ It is evident, indeed, that the whole of the acts of this parliament, 2d December, 1482, the charters which passed the great seal, and the various deeds and muniments which proceeded from the great officers of the crown, ought to be viewed with the utmost suspicion by the historian. They are not only the depositions of parties in their own favour, but they are the very instruments by which they sacrificed the public good, and the liberty of the lieges, and the property of the crown, to their own aggrandisement ; and amid such a mass of intentional misrepresentation and error, it would be vain to look for the truth.

crown. But this was not all. The extensive earldom of Mar and Garioch was deemed a proper remuneration for the services of the lieutenant-general in freeing his sovereign from imprisonment, and the principal offices in the government appear to have been filled by his supporters and dependants.¹ Nor did he neglect the most likely methods of courting popularity. Privileges were conferred on the provost and magistrates of the capital ; the burgesses of the city were lauded for their fidelity in delivering the king from imprisonment ; the office of heritable sheriff within the town was conferred upon their chief magistrate ; and his rights in exacting customs, and calling out the trained bands and armed citizens beneath a banner presented to them on this occasion in token of their services, and denominated the Blue Blanket, were considerably extended.²

Sensible of the strong spirit of national hostility which still existed between the two countries, and the jealousy with which many regarded his intimacy with Edward the Fourth, the lieutenant-general issued his orders to the lieges to make ready their warlike accoutrements, and prepare for hostilities. But nothing was farther from his real intentions than war. He meant only to strengthen his popularity by the enthusiasm with which he knew such a measure

¹ Acts of the Parliament of Scotland, p. 143. Mag. Sig. x. 32. December 2, 1482. The expressions employed in the royal charter are evidently dictated by Albany himself. It is granted to him "for the faith, loyalty, love, benevolence, brotherly tenderness, piety, cordial service, and virtuous attention," manifested in freeing the king's person from imprisonment.

² Inventory to the City Chartulary, i. 33.

would be received by a large proportion of the country, whilst, at the same time, he privately renewed his treasonable intrigues with the English monarch. A secret treaty was negotiated between the commissioners of Edward and the Earl of Angus, Lord Gray, and Sir James Liddal, the friends and envoys of the duke, by which it was agreed that, from this day forth, there should be good amity, love, and favour, between the King of England, and a high mighty prince, Alexander, Duke of Albany, and between the subjects of either prince dwelling within the one realm and the other. By another article in the same treaty, the King of England and the Scottish ambassadors engaged to Albany, that they would not only preserve inviolate the truce between the two kingdoms, but, if need be, would assist him in the conquest of the crown of Scotland "to his proper use," so that he in his turn, and the nobles of Scotland, might do the King of England great service against his enemy the King of France. Another stipulation provided, that, upon the assumption of the crown of Scotland by the duke, he should instantly and for ever annul the league between that country and France; that he should never in all time coming pretend any right or title to the town and castle of Berwick; that he should restore to his lands and dignity in Scotland the banished Earl of Douglas; and after he is king, and at freedom as to marriage, proceed to espouse one of the daughters of King Edward. In the event of Albany dying without heirs, Angus, Gray, and Liddal, the three ambassadors, engaged for themselves, and their friends

and adherents, to keep their castles, houses, and strengths, from James, now King of Scots, “and to live under the sole allegiance of their good and gracious prince, the King of England.” In return for this treasonable sacrifice of his country, Edward, on his part, undertook to further the views of Albany in his conquest of the crown of Scotland, by sending his brother, the Duke of Gloucester, and his cousin, the Earl of Northumberland, with such aid of archers and men-at-arms as was thought necessary for the emergency. For the present, three thousand archers were to be furnished, paid and provisioned for six weeks; and, in case there should happen “a great day of rescue,” or any other immediate danger, Edward promised that the Duke of Albany should be helped by an army, through God’s grace, sufficient for his protection.¹

The contradiction and errors of our popular historians, and the deficiency of authentic records, have left the period immediately succeeding this convention between Edward and Albany in much obscurity. Its consequences seem to have been much the same as those which followed the intrigues of Angus;² and it is evident, that although the duke, in his endeavours to possess himself of the crown, was assisted by Athole, Buchan, Gray, Crichton, and others of the most powerful nobility in Scotland, another and a still stronger party had ranged themselves on the side of the king, incited to this more by their detestation of the schemes of Albany, by which the integrity and independence of their country as a separate kingdom

¹ Rymer *Fœdera*, vol. xii. pp. 173, 174, 175. ² *Supra*, p. 274.

were wantonly sacrificed, than by any strong affection for the person of their sovereign. The measures, too, of the duke appear to have been rash and precipitate. He accused the sovereign of countenancing a conspiracy to take him off by poison, and he retaliated by a violent but abortive attempt to seize the king, which greatly weakened his faction, and united in still stronger opposition to his unprincipled designs the friends of order and good government.¹ By their assistance, the monarch, if he did not regain his popularity, was at least enabled to make a temporary stand against the ambition of his brother, who, convinced of the ruin which was on the eve of overwhelming him, besought and obtained a timely reconciliation.

In a parliament which was assembled at Edinburgh in the conclusion of the eventful year 1482, Albany was compelled to acknowledge his manifold treasons, and to lay down his office of lieutenant-governor of the realm.² He was, however, with singular weakness and inconsistency upon the part of the government, permitted to retain his wardenship of the marches; and whilst he and his adherents, the Bishop of Moray, with the Earls of Athole, Buchan, and Angus, were discharged from approaching within six miles of the royal person, he was presented by the sovereign and the parliament with a full pardon for

¹ Lesley de Rebus Gestis Scotorum, p. 313. Original Letter James III. to Arbuthnot. Caledonia, vol. ii. p. 602.

² Indentura inter Jacobum Tertium et Ducem Albanie Alexandrum ejus fratrem. 16th March, 1482. MS. Gen. Register House, Edinburgh.

all former offences, and permitted to retain his dignity and his estates unfettered and unimpaired. At the same time the duke delivered a public declaration, authenticated under his hand and seal, in which he pronounced it to be a false slander that the king had ever meditated his death by poison ; he promised from thenceforth to discontinue his connexion with Angus, Athole, Buchan, and the rest of his faction, “ not holding them in dayly household in time to come ;” and he engaged to give his letters of manrent and allegiance to the sovereign under his seal and subscription, and to endure for the full term of his life. By the same agreement, the most powerful of his supporters were deprived of the dignities and offices which they had abused to the purposes of conspiracy and rebellion. The Earl of Buchan was degraded from his place as great chamberlain, which was bestowed upon the Earl of Crawford, deprived of his command of deputy-warden of the middle marches, and, along with Lord Crichton and Sir James Liddal, who appear to have been considered the most dangerous of the conspirators with England, was banished from the realm for the space of three years. Angus was compelled to remove from his office of great justiciar on the south half of the water of Forth, to lose his stewardry of Kirkcudbright, his sherifffdom of Lanark, and his command of the castle of Trief ;¹ whilst John of Douglas, another steady associate of Albany, was superseded in his sherifffdom of Edinburgh. The whole conspiracy, by which no-

¹ MS. Indenture, as quoted above.

thing less was intended than the seizure of the crown, and the destruction of the independence of the country, was acknowledged with an indifference and effrontery which adds a deeper shade of baseness to its authors, and punished by the government with a leniency which could only have proceeded from a want of confidence between the sovereign and the great body of his nobility. The causes of all this seem to have been a weakness in the party opposed to Albany, and a dread in the king's friends lest, if driven to despair, this ambitious and unprincipled man might yet be able to withstand or even to overcome them. But the result of so wavering a line of policy, was the same here as in other cases where half measures are adopted. It discouraged for the time the patriotic party, which, having the power in their own hands, did not dare to employ it in the punishment of the most flagrant acts of treason which had occurred since the time of Edward Baliol; and, by convincing Albany of the indecision of the government, and the manifest unpopularity of the king, it encouraged him to renew his intercourse with England, and to repeat his attempt upon the crown.

Accordingly, soon after the dissolution of the parliament, he removed to his castle of Dunbar, which he garrisoned for immediate resistance; he provisioned his other castles; summoned around him his most powerful friends and retainers, and dispatched into England Sir James Liddal, whose society he had so lately and so solemnly forsworn, for the purpose of renewing his league with Edward, and requesting his assistance against his enemies. In

consequence of these proceedings, an English envoy, or herald, named Blue Mantle, was commissioned to renew the negotiations with Albany; and this indefatigable intriguer soon after repaired to England.¹ At his desire, an English force invaded the Border, and advancing to Dunbar, was admitted into that important fortress by Gifford of Sheriffhall, to whom it had been committed, for the purpose of being delivered into the hands of his ally, King Edward. The duke himself remained in England, busy in concerting his measures with Douglas and his adherents for a more formidable expedition; and his friend Lord Crichton, one of the most powerful and warlike of the Scottish barons, engaged with the utmost ardour in concentrating his party in Scotland, and fortifying their castles for a determined resistance against the sovereign.²

At this critical moment happened the death of Edward the Fourth; an event which materially weakened the party of the duke, and contributed eventually to his total discomfiture. Its effects, however, were not immediately fatal; and Richard the Third, who usurped the throne, and with whom, when Duke of Gloucester, we have seen Albany preserving an intimate correspondence, received the renegade at court with much courtesy and distinction. In the meantime, his repeated conspiracies excited, as was to be expected, a very general indignation in Scotland. A parliament assembled, in which

¹ Processus Foris facture Ducis Albanie. Acts of the Parliament of Scotland, vol. ii. p. 147.

² Processus Foris facture Domini de Crechtoun. Ibid, pp. 154, 164.

he was again summoned to answer to a charge of treason ; and upon non-compearance, the proof of the fact being clear and notorious to the whole country, the three estates found him guilty of the crime laid to his charge, declaring that his life, lands, offices, and all other possessions, were forfeited to the king. Lord Crichton, Sir James Liddal, Gifford of Sheriffhall, and a long list of their adherents, experienced a similar fate ;¹ whilst the monarch of England, surrounded by difficulties, and threatened with daily plots in his own kingdom, evinced an anxiety to cultivate the most amicable relations with Scotland, and granted safe-conducts to Elphinston, Bishop of Aberdeen, and the Earl of Crawford, as ambassadors from James,² with the object of renewing the truces, and arranging the best measures for the maintenance of peace upon the Borders.

At the same time there arrived at court, as ambassador from Charles the Eighth of France, who had lately succeeded to the throne of that kingdom, Bernard Stewart, Lord Aubigny. This eminent person, whose Scottish descent made him peculiarly acceptable to the king, was received with high distinction, and the ancient league between France and Scotland was renewed by the Scottish monarch with all possible solemnity.³ Soon after, an embassy, which consisted of the Earl of Argyle, and Schevez, Archbishop of St Andrews, with the Lords Evandale, Fleming, and Glammis, proceeded to France,

¹ Acts of the Parliament of Scotland, vol. ii. pp. 152, 154, 164.

² Rymer, vol. xii. p. 207. Appendix I.

³ Crawford's Officers of State, p. 45.

and in their presence, Charles the Eighth, then only in his fourteenth year, by his royal signature and oath, confirmed and ratified the league, and consented to grant the most prompt assistance to his ally for the expulsion of the English from the kingdom, and the reduction of his rebellious subjects.¹

So far the treasonable conspiracy of Albany had been completely defeated by the energy of the king, and the co-operation of his nobility; and James, shaking off that indolent devotion to literature and the fine arts, which he was now convinced had too much intruded upon his severer duties as a sovereign, collected an army, and laid siege to the castle of Dunbar, which had been delivered by Albany to the enemy, and strongly garrisoned with English soldiers.² Meanwhile, Albany and Douglas, although courteously received by the English king, soon discovered that it was his determination to remain at peace with Scotland; and, with the desperate resolution of making a last struggle for the recovery of their influence, they invaded Scotland, at the head of a small force of five hundred horse, and pushed forward to Lochmaben, under the fallacious idea that they would be joined by some of their late brothers in conspiracy, and by their own tenantry and vassals, who were numerous and powerful in this district. It was St Magdalene's day,³ upon which an annual fair was held in the town, and a numerous concourse of neighbouring gentry, along with a still greater assemblage of merchants, hawkers, and la-

¹ Lesley de Rebus Gestis Scotorum, p. 311.

² Ferrerius, p. 397.

³ 22d July.

bourers, were met together, all of whom, according to the fashion of the times, carried arms. On the approach of Albany and Douglas at the head of a body of English cavalry, it naturally occurred to the multitude, whose booths and shops were full of their goods and merchandise, that the object of the invaders was plunder; and with a resolution whetted by the love of property, they threw themselves upon the enemy. The conflict, however, was unequal, and on the point of terminating fatally for the brave burghers and peasantry, when a body of the king's troops, of which the chief leaders were Charteris of Amisfield, Crichton of Sanquhar, and Kirkpatrick of Kirkmichael, along with the Laird of Johnston, and Murray of Cockpule, advanced rapidly to the rescue of their countrymen, and attacked the English with a fury which broke their ranks, and decided the contest.¹ After a grievous slaughter and complete dispersion of their force, the Duke of Albany escaped from the field by the fleetness of his horse; but Douglas, more aged, and oppressed by the weight of his armour, was overtaken and made prisoner by Kirkpatrick, who, proud of his prize, carried him instantly to the king.² His career had, as we have seen, been such as to claim little sympathy. It was that of a selfish and versatile politician, ever ready to sacrifice his country to his personal ambition. But his noble

¹ Acts of the Parliament of Scotland, vol. ii. p. 173. Mag. Sigill' xi. 77. Aug. 10, 1484.

² Acta Domin. Concilii, 19th Jan., 1484. Mag. Sigill. xi. 72. July 9, 1484.

figure, his venerable aspect and grey hairs, moved the compassion of the king; and he whose treason had banished him from Scotland, who for nearly thirty years had subsisted upon the pay of its enemies, and united himself to every conspiracy against its independence, was permitted to escape with a punishment whose leniency reflects honour on the humanity of the sovereign. He was confined to the monastery of Lindores, where, after a few years of tranquil seclusion, he died,—the last branch of an ancient and illustrious race, whose power, employed in the days of their early greatness in securing the liberty of the country against foreign aggression, had latterly risen into a fatal and treasonable rivalry with the crown. It is said, that, when brought into the royal presence, Douglas, either from shame or pride, turned his back upon his sovereign, and on hearing his sentence, muttered with a bitter smile, “He who may be no better, must needs turn monk.”¹ His associate, Albany, first took refuge in England, and from thence passed over to France, where, after a few years, he was accidentally slain in a tournament.²

Two powerful enemies of the king were thus removed; and instead of a monarch who, like Edward the Fourth, encouraged rebellion amongst his subjects by intrigue and invasion, the Scottish king found in Richard the Third, that calm and conciliatory disposition, which naturally arose out of his terror for the occurrence of foreign war, before he had consolidated

¹ Hawthornden, *Hist.* p. 150. Hume's *Douglas and Angus*, p. 381.

² Anselme, *Histoire Genealogique*, iv. p. 529.

his newly-acquired power. To him, tranquillity, and popularity with the great body of his nobility and of his people, were as necessary as to James ; and had the Scottish aristocracy permitted their developement, the government of either country would have been conducted upon the principles of mutual friendship and unfettered intercourse. An embassy, consisting of the Earl of Argyle, the chancellor, Lord Evandale, Whitelaw, the secretary to the king, and the Lord Lyle, were received with great state by Richard at Nottingham ; and having conferred with the English commissioners, the Archbishop of York, the Chancellor of England, and the Duke of Norfolk, they determined upon a truce for three years, which was to be cemented by a marriage between the heir of the Scottish crown, James, Duke of Rothsay, now a boy in his fourteenth year, and Lady Anne, niece of the King of England, and daughter to the Duke of Suffolk.¹ By one of the articles of this truce, the castle of Dunbar, then in the possession of the English, having been delivered to them by Albany, and for recovery of which the King of Scotland had made great preparations, was to enjoy the benefit of the cessation of hostilities for six months ; after the expiration of which period, James was to be permitted to recover it, if he was able, by force of arms.

At the same time that this public embassy took place, the purport of which was openly declared, and appears in the public records, much secret intercourse was carried on between Richard the Third and the

¹ Rymer Fœdera, vol. xii. pp. 236, 244, 250.

Scottish nobility and clergy, in which the names occur of several barons who took a prominent part against the king in the subsequent rebellion. From the brief and cautious manner in which the passports for such persons are worded, it is impossible to point out the subjects of their private negotiation, but there seems strong ground to presume that the aristocratic faction, which had been for a long time opposed to the king, and which gave him its lukewarm support solely for the purpose of crushing the desperate treasons of Albany, had now begun to intrigue with England.

From the time of the rising at Lauder, the execution of the favourites, and the subsequent imprisonment of the sovereign, many of the Scottish nobles must have been sensible that they had subjected themselves to a charge of treason, and that the monarch only waited for the opportunity of returning power to employ it in their destruction. The blood of his favourites, shed with a wantonness and inhumanity which nothing could justify, called aloud for vengeance; and however devoted to the indolent cultivation of the fine arts, or enervated by the pursuit of pleasure and the society of the female sex, the character of James partook somewhat of the firmness and tenacity of revenge which distinguished his grandfather James the First; and it was evident that his return to liberty, and the free exercise of his prerogative, would bring a fearful day of reckoning to the conspirators at Lauder. The instances of the Douglasses, the Livingstons, and the Boyds, some of whom, previous to their trial and execution, had stood in far

more favourable circumstances than most of the present nobles, must to them have been full of warning and instruction, and it was natural for those who felt the treacherous and unstable ground on which they stood, to endeavour to strengthen their faction by a secret negotiation with England. To what extent Richard listened to such advances, does not appear ; but there seems to be little doubt that, on the meeting of parliament in the commencement of the year 1485, a large proportion of the Scottish aristocracy had persuaded themselves that the security of their lives and their property was incompatible with the resumption of his royal authority by the monarch whom they had insulted and imprisoned : on the other hand, it is very evident, that by whatever various motives they were actuated, a more numerous party, consisting both of the clergy and of the barons, had attached themselves to the interests of the sovereign ; and whilst many must be supposed to have been influenced by the selfish hope of sharing in the plunder and confiscation which invariably accompanied the destruction of a feudal faction, a few perhaps were animated by a patriotic desire to support the authority of the crown, and give strength and energy to the feeble government of the country. Such appear to have been the relative situations of the two great factions in the state on the opening of the parliament in the commencement of the year 1485 ; and most of its acts seem to have been wisely calculated for the good of the community.

It was resolved to dispatch an embassy to the court

of England, for the purpose of concluding the marriage between the Duke of Rothsay and the niece of Richard. Provisions were adopted for the maintenance of tranquillity throughout the realm, by holding justice ayres twice in the year ; the king's highness was advised to call a part of the lords and head men of his kingdom, who were to bring to trial and execution all notorious trespassers and offenders, without remission or respite ; and Schevez, the Archbishop of St Andrews, was to be dispatched on an embassy to the court of Rome, having instructions to procure the papal confirmation of the alliances which had been concluded between Scotland and the kingdoms of France and Denmark. Other matters of importance, affecting mutually the rights claimed by the crown, and the authority maintained by the see of Rome, were intrusted to the same diplomatist. It was to be reverently submitted to the holy father, that the king, having nominated his " tender clerk and counsellor," Alexander Inglis, to the bishopric of Dunkeld, requested the papal confirmation of his promotion as speedily as possible ; and the ambassador was to declare determinately, that his sovereign would not suffer any other person, who had presumed to procure his promotion to this bishopric contrary to the royal will, to enter into possession. An earnest remonstrance was directed to be presented to the pope, requesting, that on the decease of any prelate or beneficed clergyman, his holiness would be pleased to delay the disposition to such dignities for six months, in consequence of the distance of the realm of Scotland

from the holy see, within which time the king's letter of supplication for the promotion to the vacant benefice of such persons as are agreeable to him, may reach the pontiff,—a privilege which, it was remarked, the sovereign considered himself entitled to insist upon, since the prelates of his realm had the first vote in his parliament, and were members of his secret council. In the same parliament, an act of James the Second, which made it treason for any clerks to purchase benefices in the court of Rome, the presentation to which belonged to the crown, was directed to be rigidly carried into execution; and all persons who maintained or supported any ecclesiastics who had thus intruded themselves into vacant sees, were ordered to be punished by the same penalties of proscription and rebellion as the principal offenders. Some homely provisions regarding the extortion of ferrymen, who were in the habit of taking double and treble freight, and a regulation concerning the coinage, concluded the subjects which upon this occasion occupied the wisdom of parliament.¹

It was within four months after this, that Richard the Third was cut off in the midst of his unprincipled, but daring and energetic career, by a revolution, which placed Henry, Earl of Richmond, upon the throne of England, under the title of Henry the Seventh. That a faction in Scotland supported the Earl of Richmond, we have the authority of his rival Richard for believing;² but who were the individuals

¹ Acts of the Parliament of Scotland, vol. ii. p. 171.

² Fenn's Letters, vol. ii. p. 326.

to whom the king alluded, and to what extent their intrigues had been carried on, there are no authentic documents to determine. The plot of Richmond, as it is well known, was fostered in the court of France, and Bernard Stewart, Lord Aubigny, commanded the body of French soldiers which accompanied Henry to England. Aubigny was, as we have seen, of Scottish extraction, and nearly related to the Earl of Lennox.¹ He had been ambassador to the Scottish court in the year 1484; and it is by no means improbable, that, to further the plot for the invasion of England by the Earl of Richmond, Aubigny, an able politician, as well as an eminent military leader, had induced that party of the Scottish lords, who were already disaffected to the king, to make a diversion by invading England, and breaking the truce between the kingdoms. The impetuosity of Richard, however, hurried on a battle before any symptoms of open hostility had broken out, and when the death of the usurper, on the field of Bosworth, had placed the crown upon the head of Henry, this monarch became naturally as desirous of cultivating peace as he had formerly been anxious to promote a war. Yet with this change of policy, the connexion of the English monarch with the faction

¹ Bernard Stewart, Lord Aubigny, and John Stewart of Derneley, first Earl of Lennox, were brothers' children. Mathew, Earl of Lennox, to whom Aubigny left his fortune, was the son of the first earl. By his sisters, the Ladies Elizabeth, Marion, Janet, and Margaret Stewart, the Earl of Lennox was connected by marriage with the Earl of Argyle, Lord Crichton of Sanquhar, Lord Ross of Halkhead, and Sir John Colquhoun of Luss. Douglas, vol. ii. p. 95, 96.

of the Scottish barons which were opposed to the government of James, and had embraced the quarrel of the Earl of Richmond against Richard, remained as entire and intimate as before ; and when many of the same nobles, who had conspired with France against Richard, began to form plots for the destruction of their own sovereign, it is by no means improbable that they looked for support to their friend and ally the King of England. The extraordinary caution with which Henry carried on his diplomatic negotiations, has rendered it exceedingly difficult for succeeding historians to detect his political intrigues, but there are some circumstances which go far to create a presumption that the designs of James's enemies were neither unknown nor unacceptable to him.

In the meantime, however, the accession of Henry seemed, at first, to bring only a continuance of the most friendly dispositions between the two kingdoms. Within a month after the death of Richard, the English monarch made overtures for the establishment of peace between the two kingdoms, and appointed the Earl of Northumberland, who was warden of the marches, to open a negotiation with such envoys as James might select.¹ Accordingly, Elphinston, Bishop of Aberdeen, Whitelaw, the king's secretary, with the Lords Bothwell and Kennedy, and the Abbot of Holyrood, were dispatched as ambassadors ; and after various conferences, a three years' truce was agreed on, preparatory to a final pacification,

¹ Rymer, vol. xii. p. 285—316.

whilst the Earl of Angus and the Lord Maxwell were appointed wardens of the middle and western marches. Upon the part of England, the Earl of Northumberland and Lord Dacres were nominated to the same office on the eastern and western Borders, whilst overtures were made for a marriage between James, Marquis of Ormond, James's second son, and the Lady Katherine, daughter of Edward the Fourth, and sister-in-law to King Henry.

Soon after this, James was deprived, by death, of his queen, the Lady Margaret, daughter to Christiern, King of Denmark, a princess whose virtues were of that modest and unobtrusive character which make little figure in history, and to whom, if we may believe the report of his enemies, the king was not warmly attached.¹ The aspersions, indeed, which were so unsparingly poured upon the memory of this monarch by the faction which dethroned and destroyed him, and the certain falsehood of some of their most confident accusations, render the stories of his alienation from his queen, and his attachment to other women, at best extremely doubtful. It is certain, however, that before a year of grief had expired, the royal widower began to think of another marriage, which should connect him more intimately in

¹ The period of her death, Pinkerton, vol. i. p. 324, complains, has not been mentioned by the Scottish historians. We are enabled, however, to approximate very nearly to the exact time, by the expression used in a charter in the Morton Chartulary, dated 16th October, 1486, which mentions her as at that time "nuper defuncta."

the bonds of peace and affectionate intercourse with England. The princess upon whom he had fixed his affections, was the Queen-Dowager of England, the widow of Edward the Fourth, and the mother-in-law of Henry the Seventh ; but before this union could be effected, a conspiracy broke out, the materials of which had been long collecting strength and virulence, and of which the effects were as fatal as the history is obscure and complicated.

We have already had occasion to remark, that since the period of the conspiracy at the bridge of Lauder, in which a great body of the Scottish nobles rose against the sovereign, imprisoned his person, usurped the administration of the government, and, without trial or conviction, inflicted the punishment of death upon his principal favourites and counselors, the barons engaged in that enterprise had never been cordially reconciled to the king, and were well aware that they lived with a charge of treason hanging over their heads—that they held their estates, and even their lives, only so long as their party continued in power. Nearly five years had now elapsed since the execution of Cochrane, and in that interval some changes had occurred, which were quite sufficient to alarm them. Since that period, the character of the king had undergone a material change ; he had attached to his interest some of the wisest of the clergy, and not a few of the most powerful of his nobility ; he had preserved peace with England,—had completely triumphed over the traitorous designs of his brother Albany and the Earl of Douglas,—had

maintained his alliance with France, Flanders, and the northern courts of Europe, unbroken,—had supported with great firmness and dignity, his royal prerogative against the encroachments of the see of Rome,—and had made repeated endeavours to enforce the authority of the laws, to improve the administration of justice, and restrain the independent and ruinous power of the feudal nobility, by the enactments of his parliament, and the increasing energy and attention with which he devoted himself to the cares of government. It has indeed been the fashion of some of our popular historians to represent the character of this unfortunate prince as a base admixture of wickedness and weakness, but nothing can be more untrue than such a picture. The facts of his reign, and the measures of his government, demonstrate its infidelity to the original, and convince us that such calumnies proceeded from the voice of a faction desirous to blacken the memory of a monarch whom they had deserted and betrayed. But, even admitting that the full merit of the wise and active administration of the government which had lately taken place, did not belong to the king, it was evident to his enemies that their power was on the decline, and that their danger was becoming imminent. The character of the monarch, indeed, was far from relentless or unforgiving; and the mildness of the punishment of Albany, and the benevolence of the sentence against Douglas, might have inspired them with hope, and promoted a reconciliation, but they knew also that there were many about the royal

person who would advise a different course, and to whom the forfeiture, and the expectation of sharing in their estates, would present an inviting prospect.

On consulting together, they appear to have come to the resolution to muster their whole strength at the ensuing parliament, to sound the disposition of the king and his party towards accepting their submission, and encouraging a coalition ; and when they had warily estimated the comparative strength of their own faction, and that of the monarch, to form their plan, either of adherence to the government, and submission to the king, or of a determined rebellion against both. In the meantime, however, the death of the queen, and the treachery of those to whom the keeping and education of the heir apparent was intrusted, enabled them to usurp an influence over his mind, which they artfully turned to their own advantage.

To gain the prince to favour their designs against his father, and to allure him to join their party, by the prospect of an early possession of the sovereign power, was a project which had been so frequently and successfully repeated in the tumultuous transactions of Scotland, and other feudal kingdoms, that it naturally suggested itself to the discontented nobles ; and it was no difficult task for such crafty and unscrupulous intriguers to work upon the youthful ambition of his character. James, Duke of Rothsay, was now in his fifteenth year ; his disposition was aspiring and impetuous, and, although still a boy, his mind seems to have been far beyond his

years. It was easy for them to inflame his boyish feelings against his father, by the same false and unfounded tales with which they afterwards polluted the popular mind, and excused their own attacks upon the government; and previous to the meeting of the parliament, it is evident that they had succeeded in estranging the affections of the son from the father, and producing in his mind a readiness to unite himself to their party. Whilst such had been the conduct of the faction which opposed itself to the government, the king, shaking off the love of indolent retirement which he had too long encouraged, mustered his friends around him, consulted with his most confidential officers, and resolved that the proceedings of the ensuing parliament should be conducted with an energy and a wisdom which should convince his enemies that they had mistaken his character.

Such appears to have been the relative position of the monarch, and the faction of the discontented nobles, at the period of the meeting of parliament, on the 13th of October, 1487.¹ On that day, a more numerous assemblage of the nobles attended than for many years had been seen in the Scottish parliament; and, although the barons who were inimical to the king, were pleased to find that they mustered in very formidable strength, it was thought expedient to make overtures to the sovereign for an amicable adjustment of all disputes and grievances which had existed

¹ Acts of the Parliament of Scotland, vol. ii. p. 176.

between them, upon condition that a full pardon and remission should be granted for their past offences, to all such barons, as had made themselves obnoxious to the laws, by treason, rapine, or other offences. To such a proposition, however, the party of the sovereign, too confident in their own power, gave an absolute denial. They brought in an act of parliament, which declared, that for the purpose of re-establishing justice and tranquillity throughout the realm, which, in consequence of the delay of inflicting "sharp execution upon traitors and murderers, had been greatly broken and distressed, the king's highness had acceded to the request of his three estates, and was determined to refuse all applications for remission or pardon of such crimes, or of any similar offences, for seven years to come." In return for the readiness with which the king had obeyed the wishes and counsel of his three estates, the lords spiritual and temporal, with the barons and freeholders, gave their faithful promise, that, in all time coming, they should cease to maintain, countenance, or stand at the bar with traitors, men-slayers, thieves, or robbers, always excepting that they must not be prevented from taking part in "sober wise," with their kin and friends, in the defence of their honest actions. They engaged also to assist the king and his justices to bring all such offenders to justice, that they might "underly" the law; and when, in consequence of the strength of the party accused, the coroner was unable to make his arrestment, they promised to co-operate with him, with their armed vassals and household, in apprehending the delinquent.

Other acts were passed at the same time, to which it is unnecessary to refer; but the proceedings were amply sufficient to convince the barons, whose rebellion against the sovereign had made them liable to a charge of treason—that extreme measures were meditated against them. The parliament was then continued to the 29th of January; and it was intimated by the sovereign, that a full attendance of the whole body of the prelates, barons, and freeholders, would be imperiously insisted on, it having been resolved, that all absent members should not only be punished by the infliction of the usual fine, but in such other method as the king was wont to adopt to those who disobeyed his orders, and incurred his high displeasure.

In the interval, an important negotiation took place between the Bishops of Exeter and Aberdeen, who met at Edinburgh, and agreed that the present truce subsisting between the kingdoms, should be prolonged to the 1st of September, 1489. It was determined also, that the proposed marriage between the King of Scots and the Princess Elizabeth, widow of Edward the Fourth, should take place as soon as the preliminaries could be settled, in a diet to be held at Edinburgh, whilst the peace between the two countries should be further cemented by the marriage of James's second son, the Marquis of Ormond, to the Lady Catherine, third daughter of Edward the Fourth, and of James, Prince of Scotland and Duke of Rothsay, to another daughter of the same royal line.¹ These royal alliances were interrupted by a

¹ Rymer *Fœdera*, vol. xii. p. 329.

demand of the Scottish monarch. As a preliminary, he insisted upon the surrender of the town of Berwick, which for so long a period had been the property of Scotland, and the rich emporium of its trade. To this last condition, Henry would by no means consent.¹ He was well aware of the extreme importance of this Border fortress, as commanding a frontier against the Scots; and so high a value did he set upon its continuing in the possession of England, that, from the moment that James had pertinaciously required its restoration, all serious thoughts of the proposed alliances were at an end; and the politics of the English monarch, instead of being animated by the desire of a friendly union with the king, became infected with a partiality for the faction of his discontented nobles.

Nor had these barons, during this interval, been idle. They had consolidated their own strength; appointed various points of rendezvous for their armed vassals and retainers, and put their castles into a posture of defence. They had prevailed on some of the prelates and dignified clergy to join their party, whose affections the king had alienated by his severe reprobation of their proceedings, in purchasing the nomination to vacant benefices at the papal court. They had completely corrupted the principles of the king's eldest son, the Duke of Rothsay, and prevailed upon him to lend his name and his presence to their treasonable attack upon the government; and although it cannot be asserted upon conclusive historical evi-

¹ 10th Feb. 1487. Rotuli Scot., vol. ii. p. 483.

dence, there is some reason to believe that the conspiracy was countenanced at least, if not fostered and supported, at the court of Henry the Seventh.

In the meantime, the parliament, which had been prorogued to the month of January, again assembled,¹ and was attended in great force by both factions. Aware of the intrigues which were in agitation against him, and incensed at the conduct of his enemies in working upon the ambition, and alienating from him the affections, of his son and successor, James proceeded to adopt very decided measures. He brought forward his second son, created him Duke of Ross, Marquis of Ormond, Earl of Edirsdale, and Lord of Brechin and Novar, and by accumulating upon him these high titles, appeared to point him out as his intended successor in the throne. He strengthened his own party by raising the Barons of Drummond, Crichton of Sanquhar, Hay, and Ruthven, to the dignity and privileges of lords of parliament; he procured the consent of the three estates to the immediate departure of an embassy to the court of England, for the purpose of making a final agreement regarding his own marriage and that of the prince his son; with instructions to the ambassadors that they should insist either on the delivery of the castle and the city of Berwick into the hands of the Scots, or upon its being cast down and destroyed. He appointed the Earls of Crawford and Huntley to be justices on the north half beyond the Forth; and from the Lords Bothwell, Glamis, Lyle,

¹ Acts of the Parliament of Scotland, vol. ii. p. 180.

and Drummond, directed the parliament to select two justices for the southern division of the kingdom. With regard to the rights, which he contended belonged to the crown, in disposing of vacant benefices,—rights which interfered with those ecclesiastical privileges claimed by the court of Rome as part of its inalienable prerogative, the conduct of the monarch was to a high degree spirited and consistent. He had united the priory of Coldingham to the royal chapel at Stirling, a measure which the potent Border family of the Humes affected to consider as an interference with their patronage, but upon what ground is not apparent. They made it a pretext, however, for joining the ranks of the discontented nobles; opposed the annexation in a violent and outrageous manner, and attempted to overturn the act of the king by an appeal to the court of Rome.¹ The monarch, in the first instance, interdicted all persons from presenting or countenancing such appeals, under penalty of the forfeiture of life, lands, and goods; and finding this warning insufficient, he directed summonses to be issued against the offenders, ordaining them to stand their trial before a committee of the parliament, and abide the sentence of the law.² Aware also that there would be some attempt at interference on the part of the court of Rome, it was declared by the parliament, that the king was bound to preserve that ancient privilege which had been conferred upon his progenitors by a

¹ Acts of the Parliament of Scotland, vol. ii. p. 179.

² Ibid, p. 182.

special bull, and by which the Scottish monarchs were not obliged to receive any legate or messenger of the court of Rome within their realm, unless a direct communication were first made to the king and his council as to the object of their journey, and the nature of the message with which they were intrusted, so that it might be perfectly understood, before they were permitted to enter the kingdom, that they brought no communication contrary to the will of the sovereign or the common prosperity of his realm. If, therefore, it was said, any such legate happened to be now on his journey, or hereafter arrived, the parliament recommended that messengers should be immediately sent to the Borders to prohibit him from setting his foot within the kingdom, until he first explained to his highness the cause of his coming.¹ In the same parliament, and with a like resolute spirit, the king obtained an act to be passed, which insisted on his right to nominate to vacant benefices as an inalienable prerogative of his crown, and in which his determination was declared, to keep his clerk, Mr David Abercromby, unvexed and untroubled in the enjoyment of the deanery of Aberdeen, notwithstanding any attempt to the contrary by persons who founded their title of interference upon a purchase or impetration of this ecclesiastical preferment at the court of Rome.

The parliament was then adjourned to the fifth of May, and the members dispersed; but the quiet was of short continuance, and the materials of civil com-

¹ Acts of the Parliament of Scotland, vol. ii. p. 183.

motion, which had been so long pent up in the bosom of the country, in consequence of the strong and determined measures adopted by the king, at length took fire, and blazed forth into open rebellion. In the severity of the late acts of Parliament, the Earls of Argyll and Angus, the Lords Lyle, Drummond, and Hailes, Blacater, Bishop of Glasgow, and many other powerful barons who had joined their party, saw clearly the measures which were intended for their destruction, and determined, ere it was too late, to convince their enemies, that their power was more formidable than they anticipated. They accordingly concentrated their forces. The young prince, already estranged from his father, and flattered with the adulation of a party which addressed him as king, issued from Stirling castle,¹ the governor of which, James Shaw of Sauchie, had early joined the conspiracy, and placed himself at the head of the insurgent army, whilst James, who had unfortunately permitted his most powerful friends and supporters to return to their estates after the dissolution of the parliament, found himself almost alone amidst a thickening tumult of revolt and violence, which it was impossible to resist. Cut to the heart also, by seeing his own son at the head of his enemies, the king formed the sudden resolution of retiring from the southern provinces of his kingdom, which were occupied chiefly by his enemies, to those northern districts, where he could still rely on the loyalty of his subjects, and the support of a large body of his nobility. Previous to this,

¹ Acts of the Parliament of Scotland, vol. ii. pp. 211, 223.

however, he dispatched the Earl of Buchan, along with Lord Bothwell and the Bishop of Murray, on an embassy to Henry the Seventh, to solicit the assistance of that monarch, and procure the presence of a body of English troops to overawe his rebellious subjects, and defend him against the imminent dangers with which he was surrounded.¹ He at the same time deprived Argyle of the office of chancellor, and conferred that dignity upon Elphinston, Bishop of Aberdeen, one of the ablest and most faithful of his counsellors ; and anxious to detach his son from the party of the rebels, and to save him from incurring the penalties of treason, he sent proposals to the misguided youth, in which the severity of the king and the affection of the father were kindly and judiciously blended. But all was in vain. From the moment of his leaving Stirling, and placing himself at the head of their party, the rebels boldly declared, that James the Third, having forfeited the affections of his people, oppressed his nobility, and brought in the English to subdue the nation, had forfeited the crown, and ceased to reign. They then proclaimed his son as his successor, under the title of James the Fourth, and in his name proceeded to carry on the government. The Earl of Argyle was reinstated in his office of chancellor ;² a negotiation was opened with the court of England ; and Henry, who had looked coldly on the father, in consequence of his insisting upon the restoration of Berwick, did

¹ Rymer Fœdera, vol. xii. p. 334.

² Mag. Sigill. x. 122. Feb. 18, 1487.

not scruple to treat with the son as King of Scots, and to grant passports for his ambassadors, the Bishops of Glasgow and Dunkeld, the Earl of Argyle, the Lords Lyle and Hailes, with the Master of Hume.¹

The alarm of the king at the boldness and success of such measures was very great. He was surrounded on all sides by his enemies, and in daily risk of being made a captive by his son. It was absolutely necessary, therefore, to hasten his retreat to the north; but before his preparations were completed, the rebels advanced upon Edinburgh, his baggage and money were seized at Leith, and the monarch had scarcely time to throw himself into a ship belonging to Sir Andrew Wood, and pass over to Fife, when he heard that the whole southern provinces were in arms.² The disaffection, however, had reached no farther, and James, as he proceeded towards Aberdeen, and issued orders for the array of Strathern and Angus, had the gratification to find himself within a short time at the head of a numerous and formidable army. His uncle, Athole, with the Earls of Huntley and Crawford, and a proud assemblage of northern barons, joined his standard. Lord Lindsay of the Byres, a veteran commander of great talent and devoted loyalty, who had served in the French wars, assembled a body of three thousand footmen and a thousand horse. The old baron, who led this force in person, was mounted on a grey courser of great size and spirit. On meeting the king, he dis-

¹ Rymer Fœdera, vol. xii. p. 340.

² Acts of the Parliament of Scotland, vol. ii. p. 202.

mounted, and placing the reins in the hand of his sovereign, begged him to accept of the best war-horse in Scotland. "Only sit well," said the blunt old soldier, "please your grace, and his speed will outdo all I have ever seen either to flee or follow." The present was highly valued by the monarch, but it was thought ominous at the time, and led to fatal results. Soon after this the king was met by Lord Ruthven at the head of a thousand gentlemen well mounted and clothed in complete armour, a thousand archers, and a thousand infantry with half long swords and habergeons.¹ As he advanced, his forces daily increased. The Earls of Buchan and Errol, the Lords Glammis, Forbes, and Kilmaurs; his standard-bearer, Sir William Turnbull; the Barons of Tullibardin and Pourie; Innes of Innes, Coless of Balnamoon, Somer of Balyard, and many other loyalists, incensed at the unnatural rebellion, and commiserating the condition of the country, warmly espoused his cause, so that he soon found himself at the head of a well-appointed army of thirty thousand men, with which he instantly advanced against the rebel lords.²

He found them stationed with the prince his son, at Blackness, near Linlithgow; but the sight of his subjects arrayed in mortal conflict against each other, and commanded by the heir to his throne, affected the benevolent heart of the monarch, and induced him to listen to the advice of the Earls of Huntley and Errol, who earnestly besought permission to

¹ Pitscottie, History, p. 140. Ferrerius, p. 400.

² Acts of the Parliament of Scotland, vol. ii. p. 202.

attempt an accommodation. A negotiation was accordingly opened, and certain articles of agreement were drawn up and corroborated by the royal signature, which, if we may believe the suspicious evidence of the conspirators themselves, were violated by the king, who suffered himself to be overruled by the stern councils of the Earl of Buchan.¹ Irritated at such undue influence, the Earl Marshal, along with Huntley, Errol, and Lord Glamis, deserted the royal camp, and retired to their respective estates; whilst Buchan, who perhaps wisely dreaded to lose an opportunity of extinguishing the rebellion which might never again occur, attacked the prince's army, and gained an advantage, which, although magnified into a victory, appears to have been little else than a severe skirmish, too undecided to deter the prince and his associates from keeping the field in the face of the royal army.² The odious sight of civil bloodshed, however, created in both armies an indisposition to push the battle to extremities, and the monarch, whose heart sickened at the prospect of protracted rebellion, again, by the mediation of his uncle, the Earl of Athole, made proposals for an amicable adjustment of the grievances for the redress of which his opponents were in arms. Commissioners were accordingly appointed, and a pacification agreed on, remarkable for the leniency of its stipulations, and the tenderness with which the royal parent demeaned himself towards his son. It will be remembered that James was at the head of an army flushed

¹ Acts of the Parliament of Scotland, vol. ii. pp. 202, 210.

² Ibid. vol. ii. p. 204.

with recent success,—that he had been grossly calumniated by the rebellious subjects whom he was now willing to admit to pardon,—that his son, a youth in his sixteenth year, had usurped his name and authority of king,—that they had filled his kingdom with confusion and bloodshed ; under such circumstances, the conditions agreed on contradict in the strongest manner the representations of the popular historians regarding the character of this unfortunate prince. It was stipulated, that the royal estate and authority of the sovereign should be maintained, so that the king might exercise his prerogatives, and administer justice to his lieges, throughout every part of his realm ; that his noble person should at all times be in honour and security ; and that such prelates, earls, lords, and barons, as were most noted for wisdom, prudence, and fidelity, should be kept around him. All those persons whom the prince had hitherto admitted to his confidence, and whose evil councils had done displeasure to the king, were to make honourable amends to the monarch, by adopting a wise and discreet line of conduct, under the condition that full security was to be given them for their lives, honours, and estates. The king engaged to maintain the household of the heir apparent, and support the lords and officers of his establishment in befitting dignity, provided they were honourable and faithful persons, distinguished for wisdom and fidelity, under whose directions my lord the prince might become obedient to his royal father, and increase in that dutiful love and tenderness which ought ever to be preserved

between them. On these conditions, the king declared his readiness to forgive and admit to his grace and favour all the prince's friends and servants against whom he had conceived any displeasure, whilst his highness the prince intimated his willingness to dismiss from his mind all rancorous feelings against the lords spiritual and temporal who had adhered to the service of their sovereign in this time of trouble. In conclusion, it was agreed by both parties, that all feuds or dissensions which at that moment existed between various great lords and barons, and more especially between the Earl of Buchan and the Lord Lyle, should be composed and concluded; so that our sovereign lord and his lieges might once more live in peace, justice, and concord, and tranquillity be re-established throughout the realm.¹

Whatever causes led to this pacification, it is evident that the terms offered to the prince and his rebellious party were far too favourable, and that the humanity which dictated so feeble and insecure a compromise was little else than weakness. The king was then in circumstances, which, if properly turned to advantage, must, in all probability, have given him a complete triumph over a conspiracy, whose ramifications had spread throughout the kingdom. Under the pretence of the redress of grievances partly ideal, partly true, but principally of their own creation, a faction of his prelates and nobles had withdrawn their allegiance from their sovereign, seduced the affections of the prince, and attempted to overturn

¹ Acts of the Parliament of Scotland, vol. ii. p. 210.

the government of the country by force of arms. To have entered into terms with such offenders upon any other basis than a full and unconditional surrender, was the extremity of folly ; but instead of this, James, in his anxiety to avoid a mortal contest, which, after the advantage at Blackness, the insurgent lords would scarcely have hazarded, permitted the son who had usurped his kingly name and prerogative, and the subjects who had defied the authority of the crown and the laws of the realm, to negotiate, with arms in their hands, on a footing of equality. No petition for forgiveness, no expression of penitence, was suffered to escape ; the prince spoke throughout, not as a son conscious that he had offended, but as a sovereign transacting a treaty with his equal. The pacification of Blackness was, in truth, a triumph to the faction of the discontented nobles ; and it required little penetration to foresee, that the tranquillity which was established on such a foundation, could not be of any long duration : it was a confession of weakness, pronounced at a time when firmness at least, if not severity, were the only guides to the permanent settlement of the convulsions which now agitated the kingdom.

Unconscious, however, of the dangers which surrounded him, and trusting too implicitly to the promises of the insurgents, James retired to Edinburgh, dismissed his army, and permitted the northern lords, upon whose fidelity he had the greatest dependence, to return to their estates. He then proceeded to reward the barons to whose zeal he had been chiefly

indebted, and who had distinguished themselves in the conflict at Blackness. The Earl of Crawford was created Duke of Montrose; Lord Kilmaurs was raised to the rank of Earl of Glencairn; Sir Thomas Turnbull, his standard-bearer, Sir Andrew Wood, the Lairds of Balnamoon, Lag, Balyard, and others of his adherents, received grants of lands; and the king weakly and fondly imagined, that if any bitter feelings were yet cherished in the bosoms of his son and his nobles, the mediation of the French monarch, to whom he had lately dispatched ambassadors, and the interference of the holy see, to which a mission had been also directed, might effectually remove them.¹ Nothing, however, could be more vain than such anticipations. The monarch had scarcely time to reorganize his court, and take up his residence within his castle of Edinburgh, when he was informed that his son, and the same fierce and ambitious faction, had resumed their schemes of insurrection, and assembled in more formidable numbers than before. It may be doubted, indeed, whether they had ever dispersed; and it is difficult to account for the infatuation of the monarch, and those by whose advice he acted, when we find them consenting to the dismissal of the royal army at the very moment the rebels continued to retain their arms.

The king, however, had a few powerful friends around him, and these urged him, ere it was too late, to reassemble his army without a moment's delay. The Duke of Montrose, the Earls of Menteith and Glencairn, the Lords Erskine, Graham, Ruthven,

¹ Mag. Sigill. x. 69. May 18, 1488. Ibid. ix. 77, same date. Ibid. xii. 365. June 25, 1492.

and Lord Lyndsay of the Byres, immediately collected their followers ; and such was the popularity of the royal cause, that within a short time the royal army mustered in sufficient strength to take the field against the insurgents. Summonses were rapidly forwarded to the northern lords, and it was at first determined that, till these reinforcements joined the army, the sovereign should remain at Edinburgh, and avoid the risk of a battle. But this resolution, undoubtedly the wisest that could be adopted, was abandoned. It was suggested that Stirling would be a more convenient rendezvous for the northern chiefs and clans ; and, abandoning his strong castle of Edinburgh, the monarch advanced to this town, and attacking the prince his son, who was encamped in the neighbourhood, drove him across the Forth, and after dispersing this portion of the rebels, demanded admittance into his castle of Stirling.¹ This, however, was peremptorily refused him by Shaw of Sauchie, the governor, who had joined the prince ; and before time was given him to decide whether it would be expedient to lay siege to the fortress, intelligence was brought that his enemies had pressed on from Falkirk, and occupied the high level plain above the bridge of the Torwood.² Upon hearing this, James immediately advanced against them, and encountered the insurgent army on a track of ground known at the present day by the name of Little Canglar, which is situated upon the east side of a small brook called Sauchie Burn, about two miles from Stirling, and one mile

¹ Mag. Sigill. xii. 64. 9th January, 1488.

² Pitscottie, History, p. 141.

from the celebrated field of Bannockburn, where Bruce had defeated Edward. Although inexperienced in war, James was not deficient in courage. By the advice of Lord Lyndsay, with other veteran soldiers, the royal army, much inferior in numbers to the insurgents, was drawn up in three divisions. The first, consisting of such of the northern clans as had arrived before the battle, was commanded by the Earls of Athole and Huntley, forming an advance of Highlandmen armed with bows, long daggers, swords, and targets; in the rear division were the westland and Stirlingshire men, commanded by the Earl of Menteith, with the Lords Erskine and Graham; whilst the king himself led the main battle, composed of the burghers and commons.¹ He was splendidly armed, and rode the tall grey horse which had lately been presented to him by Lord Lyndsay. On his right this veteran soldier, with the Earl of Crawford, commanded a noble body of cavalry, consisting of the chivalry of Fife and Angus; whilst Lord Ruthven, with the men of Strathern and Stormont, formed his left wing, with a body of nearly five thousand spearmen. Against this array, the rebel lords, advancing rapidly from the Torwood, formed themselves in three battles. The first division, which was led by the Lord Hailes and the Master of Hume, was composed of the hardy spearmen of East Lothian and the Merse.² Lord Gray commanded the second line, which was formed of the fierce Galwegians, and the more disciplined and

¹ Nimmo's Stirlingshire, p. 226. Lesley's Hist. p. 57.

² Ferrerius, p. 400. Buch. b. xii. c. 61. Pitscottie, Hist. p. 142.

hardy Borderers of Liddesdale and Annandale, men trained from their infancy to arms, and happy only in a state of war. In the main battle was the principal body of the lords who had conspired against the king, and at their head the young prince himself, whose mind, torn between ambition and remorse, is said to have sought for comfort in issuing an order, that no one should dare, in the ensuing conflict, to lay violent hands upon his father.¹

The battle commenced by showers of arrows, which did little execution, as the bow, although lately more encouraged amongst the Highland troops, was never a favourite or formidable weapon with the nation. In the charge with the spear, however, the royalists drove back the enemy's first line and gained a decided advantage, but it lasted only till the advance of the Borderers, who attacked with such steady and determined valour, that they not only recovered the ground which had been lost, but made a dreadful slaughter, and at last compelled the Earls of Huntley and Menteith to retreat in confusion upon the main battle, commanded by the king. The conflict, however, was continued for some time with great obstinacy, and James's forces, although inferior in number to the insurgents, made a desperate stand. They at last, however, began to waver, and the tumult and slaughter approached the spot where the king had stationed himself. The lords who surrounded his per-

¹ Pinkerton, i. p. 234, has represented the conflict which followed these dispositions as a brief skirmish, hurried to a conclusion by the timidity and flight of the king. Of this, however, there is no evidence.

son, implored him not to run the risk of death or captivity, which must bring ruin upon their cause, but to leave the field whilst there was yet a chance of safety. To this advice James consented, not unreluctantly, if we may believe his enemies; and whilst his nobles obstinately protracted the battle, the monarch spurred his horse, and fled at full speed through the village of Bannockburn. The precaution, however, which was intended to secure his safety, only hastened his destruction. On crossing the little river Bannock, at a hamlet called Milltoun, he came suddenly upon a woman drawing water, who, alarmed at the apparition of an armed horseman, threw down her pitcher, and fled into the house.¹ At this noise the horse, taking fright, swerved in the midst of his career, and the king, losing his seat and falling heavily, was so much bruised by the concussion and the weight of his armour, that he swooned away. He was instantly carried into a miller's cottage hard by, whose inmates, ignorant of the rank of the sufferer, but compassionating his distress, treated him with great humanity. He was placed on a bed; cordials, such as their poverty could bestow, were administered, and the unhappy monarch at length opened his eyes, and earnestly required the presence of a priest, to whom he might confess before his death. On being questioned regarding his name and rank, he incautiously answered, "Alas! I was your sovereign this morning;" upon which the poor woman

¹ The cottage called Beaton's Mill, where the king was murdered, is still pointed out to the traveller; and the great antiquity and thickness of the walls corroborates the tradition.

rushed out of the cottage, wringing her hands, and calling aloud for a priest to come and confess the king. By this time a party of the straggling soldiers of the prince's army had reached the spot, and one whose name is not certainly known, but whom some historians assert to have been an ecclesiastic named Borthwick, in Lord Gray's service, hearing the woman's lamentation, announced himself as a priest, and was admitted into the cottage. He found the monarch lying on a flock-bed, with a coarse cloth thrown over him, in an obscure corner of the room, and kneeling down, enquired with apparent tenderness and anxiety how it fared with him, and whether with medical assistance he might yet recover. The king assured him that there was hope, but in the meanwhile besought him to receive his confession, upon which the ruffian bent over him, under pretence of proceeding to discharge his holy office, and drawing his dagger, stabbed his unresisting victim to the heart, repeating his strokes till he perceived life to be completely extinct. The atrocity of the deed seems to have had the effect of throwing over it a studied obscurity, so that, although it is asserted that the murderer carried off with him the body of his sovereign, his movements were never certainly traced, and his name and person are to this day undiscovered. A body, however, ascertained to be that of James, was afterwards found in the neighbourhood, and interred with royal honours, beside his queen, in the Abbey of Cambuskenneth.¹

¹ Ferrerius, p. 400. Lesley's History, p. 57. Mag. Sigill. xiii. 251. 6th April, 1496.

After the flight of the king, the battle was neither long nor obstinately contested. Anxious to save their army, and dispirited by a vague rumour of the death of their master, the royalist leaders retired upon Stirling, and were not hotly pursued by the prince, who is said to have been seized with sudden and overwhelming remorse on being informed of the melancholy fate of his father. Dazzled, however, by his accession to the throne, and flattered by the professions of devotedness and affection of his party, these repentant feelings for the present were evanescent, although they afterwards broke out with a strength which occasionally embittered his existence. In the battle the loss was on neither side very great, although the Earls of Glencairn and Bothwell, with the Lords Erskine, Semple, and Ruthven, were amongst the slain in the royalist party. The army of the insurgent nobles passed the night upon the field, and next day fell back upon Linlithgow, when the lords permitted their vassals to disperse, and began anxiously to consult regarding the measures which it was necessary to adopt for the immediate administration of the government.¹

Thus perished in the prime of life, and the victim of a conspiracy headed by his own son, James the Third of Scotland; a prince whose character appears to have been misrepresented and mistaken by writers of two very different parties, and whose real disposition is to be sought for neither in the mistaken

¹ Ferrerius, p. 400.

aspersions of Buchanan, nor in the vague and indiscriminate panegyric of some later authors. Buchanan, misled by the attacks of a faction, whose interest it was to paint the monarch whom they had deposed and murdered, as weak, unjust, and abandoned to low pleasures, has exaggerated the picture by his own prejudices and antipathies; other writers, amongst whom Abercromby is the most conspicuous, have, with an equal aberration from the truth, represented him as almost faultless. That James had any design, similar to that of his able and energetic grandfather, of raising the kingly power upon the ruins of the nobility, is an assertion not only unsupported by any authentic testimony, but contradicted by the facts which are already before the reader. That he was cruel or tyrannical is an unfounded aspersion, ungraciously proceeding from those who had experienced his repeated lenity, and who, in the last fatal scenes of his life, abused his ready forgiveness to compass his ruin. That he murdered his brother is an untruth, emanating from the same source, contradicted by the highest contemporary evidence, and abandoned by his worst enemies as too ridiculous to be stated at a time when they were anxiously collecting every possible accusation against him. Yet it figures in the classical pages of Buchanan; a very convincing proof of the slight examination which that great man was accustomed to bestow upon any story which coincided with his preconceived opinions, and flattered his prejudices against monarchy. Equally unfounded was that imputation, so strongly

urged against this prince by his insurgent nobles, that he had attempted to accomplish the perpetual subjection of the realm to England. His brother Albany had truly done so; and the original records of his negotiations, and of his homage sworn to Edward, remain to this day, although we in vain look for an account of this extraordinary intrigue in the pages of the popular historians. In this attempt to destroy the independence of the kingdom, it is equally certain that Albany was supported by a great proportion of the nobility, who now rose against the king, and whose names appear in the contemporary muniments of the period; but we in vain look in the pages of the *Fœdera*, or in the rolls of Westminster and the Tower, for an atom of evidence to show that James, in his natural anxiety for assistance against a rebellion of his own subjects, had ceased for a moment to treat with Henry the Seventh as an independent sovereign. So far, indeed, from this being the case, we know that, at a time when conciliation was necessary, he refused to benefit himself by sacrificing any portion of his kingdom, and insisted on the re-delivery of Berwick with an obstinacy which in all probability disgusted the English monarch, and rendered him lukewarm in his support.

James's misfortunes, in truth, are to be attributed more to the extraordinary circumstances of the times in which he lived, than to any very marked defects in the character or conduct of the monarch himself, although both were certainly far from blameless. At this period, in almost every kingdom in Europe with

which Scotland was connected, the power of the great feudal nobles and that of the sovereign had been arrayed in jealous and mortal hostility against each other. The time appeared to have arrived in which both parties seemed convinced that they were on the very confines of a great change, and that the sovereignty of the throne must either sink under the superior strength of the greater nobles, or the tyranny and independence of these feudal tyrants receive a blow from which it would not be easy for them to recover. In this struggle another remarkable feature is to be discerned. The nobles, anxious for a leader, and eager to procure some counterpoise to the weight of the king's name and authority, generally attempted to seduce the heir apparent, or some one of the royal family, to favour their designs, bribing him to dethrone his parent or relation by the promise of placing him immediately upon the vacant throne. The principles of loyalty, and the respect for hereditary succession, as established by the laws of the country, were thus diluted in their strength, and weakened in their conservative effects ; and from the constant intercourse, both commercial and political, which existed between Scotland and the other countries of Europe, the examples of kings resisted or deposed by their nobles, and monarchs imprisoned by their children, were not lost upon the fervid and restless genius of the Scottish aristocracy. In France, indeed, the struggle had terminated under Louis the Eleventh in favour of the crown ; but the lesson to be derived from it was not

the less instructive to the Scottish nobility. In Flanders and the states of Holland, they had before them the spectacle of an independent prince deposed and imprisoned by his son ; and in Germany, the reign of Frederic the Third, which was contemporaneous with our James the Third, presented one constant scene of struggle and discontent between the emperor and his nobility, in which this weak and capricious potentate was uniformly defeated.¹

In the struggle in Scotland, which ended by the death of the unfortunate monarch, it is important to observe, that although the pretext used by the barons was the resistance to royal oppression and the establishment of liberty, the middle classes and the great body of the people took no share. They did not side with the nobles, whose efforts on this occasion were entirely selfish and exclusive. On the contrary, so far as they were represented by the commissaries of the burghs who sat in Parliament, they joined the party of the king and the clergy, by whom very frequent efforts were made to introduce a more effectual administration of justice, and a more constant respect for the rights of individuals, and the protection of property. With this object laws were promulgated, and

¹ “ Although,” says Eneas Sylvius, in his address to the electoral princes, “ we acknowledge Frederic to be our emperor and king, his title to such an appellation seems to be in no little degree precarious ; for where is his power ? You give him just as much obedience as you choose, and you choose to give him very little.” “ *Tantum ei parietis quantum vultis, vultis enim minimum.*” A sentence which might be applied with equal if not greater force to Scotland.

alternate threats and exhortations upon these subjects are to be found in the record of each successive parliament; but the offenders continued refractory, and these offenders, it was notorious to the whole country, were the nobility and their dependants. The very men whose important offices ought, if conscientiously administered, to have secured the rights of the great body of the people—the justiciars, chancellors, chamberlains, sheriffs, and others—were often their worst oppressors; partial and venal in their administration of justice; severe in their exactions of obedience; and decided in their opposition to every right which interfered with their own power. Their interest and their privileges, as feudal nobles, came into collision with their duties as servants and officers of the government; and the consequence was apparent in the remarkable fact, that, in the struggle between the crown and the aristocracy, wherever the greater offices were in the hands of the clergy, they generally supported the sovereign; but wherever they were intrusted to the nobility, they almost uniformly combined against him.

When we find the popular historians departing so widely from the truth in the false and partial colouring which they have thrown over the history of this reign, we may be permitted to receive their personal character of the monarch with considerable suspicion. James's great fault seems to have been a devotion to studies and accomplishments which, in this rude and warlike age, were deemed unworthy of his rank and dignity. He was an enthusiast in music, and took

great delight in architecture, and the construction of splendid and noble palaces and buildings; he was fond of rich and gorgeous dresses, and ready to spend large sums in the encouragement of the most skilful and curious workers in gold and steel; and the productions of these artists, their inlaid armour, massive gold chains, and jewelled-hilted daggers, were purchased by him at high prices, whilst they themselves were admitted, if we believe the same writers, to an intimacy and friendship with the sovereign which disgusted the nobility. The true account of this was probably, that James received these ingenious artisans into his palace, where he gave them employment and took pleasure in superintending their labours—an amusement for which he might have pleaded the example of some of the wisest and most popular sovereigns. But the barons, for whose rude and un-intellectual society the monarch showed little predilection, returned the neglect with which they were unwisely treated, by pouring contempt and ridicule upon the pursuits to which he was devoted. Cochrane the architect, whose genius in an art which, in its higher branches, is eminently intellectual, had raised him to favour with the king, was stigmatized as a low mason. Rogers, whose musical compositions were fitted to refine and improve the barbarous taste of the age, and whose works were long after highly esteemed in Scotland, was ridiculed as a common fiddler or buffoon; and other artists, whose talents had been warmly encouraged by the sovereign, were treated with the same indignity. It would be absurd,

however, from the evidence of such interested witnesses, to form our opinion of the true character of his favourites, as they have been termed, or of the encouragement which they received from the sovereign. To the Scottish barons of this age, Phidias would have been but a marble-cutter, and Apelles no better than the artisan who stained their oaken wainscot. The error of the king lay, not so much in the encouragement of ingenuity and excellence, as in the indolent neglect of those duties and cares of government, which were in no degree incompatible with his patronage of the fine arts. Had he possessed the energy and powerful intellect of his grandfather—had he devoted the greater portion of his time to the administration of justice, to a friendly intercourse with his feudal nobles, and a strict and watchful superintendence of their conduct in the offices intrusted to them, he might safely have employed his leisure in any way most agreeable to him ; but it happened to the monarch, as it has to many a devotee of taste and sensibility, that a too exquisite perception of excellence in the fine arts, and an enthusiastic addictedness to the studies intimately connected with them, in exclusion of the performance of ordinary duties, produced an indolent refinement, and fastidious delicacy of mind, which shrunk from common exertion, and transformed a character originally full of intellectual and moral promise, into that of a secluded, but not unamiable misanthropist. Nothing can justify the king's inattention to the cares of government, and the recklessness

with which he shut his ears to the complaints and remonstrances of his nobility ; but that he was cruel, unjust, or unforgiving—that he was a selfish and avaricious voluptuary—or that he drew down upon himself, by these dark portions of his character, the merited execration and vengeance of his nobles, is a representation founded on no authentic evidence, and contradicted by the uniform history of his reign and of his misfortunes.

By his queen, Margaret, daughter to Christiern, King of Denmark, James left a family of three children, all of them sons ; James, his successor, a second son, also named James, created Marquis of Ormond, and who afterwards became Archbishop of St Andrews, and John, Earl of Mar, who died without issue. The king was eminently handsome ; his figure was tall, athletic, and well proportioned ; his countenance combined intelligence with sweetness, and his deep brown complexion and black hair resembled the hue rather of the warmer climates of the south, than that which we meet in colder latitudes. His manners were dignified, but somewhat cold and distant, owing to his reserved and secluded habits of life. He was murdered in the thirty-fifth year of his age, and the twenty-eighth of his reign.