

ASSASSINATION OF JAMES I.*

A. D. 1437.

JAMES I. was a prince worthy of a better age, and a more enlightened and civilized kingdom than was Scotland in the fifteenth century. His well known imprisonment in England had not been without its advantages to himself individually, for the greatest care had been bestowed on his education. In him, after two feeble reigns, and two regencies equally inactive, the House of Stuart produced a sovereign as distinguished for his mental as for his personal accomplishments—"a man of science and learning," says an historian, "an excellent poet, a master of music; illustrious in every personal virtue, free from any personal vice; his very amusements adorned his character—his hours of leisure being frequently dedicated to elegant writing and miniature painting, to mechanical arts, and to the cultivation of the garden and the orchard."

The tragedy which deprived Scotland of this able and excellent sovereign is one of the most melancholy in our national history. The delay of redress for sundry inroads committed by the English, and probably a desire to prevent any treasonable confederacies among his nobility, induced

* Appendix to Pinkerton's History of Scotland; Bishop Nicolson's Historical Libraries; Buchanan's History of Scotland; Sir James Balfour's Annals; Drummond of Hawthornden's History; Memorabilia of Perth; Noble's History of the Stuarts; History of the House of Stuart; Duff's History of Scotland; Maitland's History; Account of the Death of James I. printed for the Maitland Club.

James to undertake a war against England. With almost incredible alacrity he summoned an army, consisting of nearly 200,000 men, according to the statements of some writers, besides a considerable number of followers and retainers. This unwieldy assemblage, however, even supposing that the number is greatly exaggerated, was ill armed and undisciplined, consisting of men who were courageous and savage enough in their own peculiar mode of warfare, but unfit to endure a campaign against a less numerous and well disciplined force.

The Castle of Roxburgh, so fatal to the son and successor of James, had been for a considerable time in the possession of the English—a circumstance which had caused considerable uneasiness to the Scots. The recovery of this important fortress, then held by Sir Ralph Grey, was the primary object of James, and against it he led his unwieldy army in person. The King sat down before it, and began the assault without success. For fifteen days the valiant governor of the castle kept the Scottish force at bay, and James was at length compelled to abandon the siege, dismiss his army, and return. The causes of this sudden movement and retreat of the King are variously related by our historians. With a vanity too peculiar to our early writers they pretend that the Castle of Roxburgh was almost recovered by James, notwithstanding the bravery of Sir Ralph Grey, when his queen arrived suddenly with the tidings of a formidable conspiracy formed against him. Insinuations are even made against the Queen that this report was a mere invention on her part, because she was disposed to favour the English. The King, according to those writers, suddenly raised the siege, fearing the reality of the plot, and that his commanders had been corrupted by English gold; but these accounts seem to have originated chiefly in the melancholy events which marked the termination of the life of James on the following year. That

there was a conspiracy formed against the King will be immediately seen, but if he had been aware of it he would have been more secure with his army than he was after its dispersion.

James retired to Perth, and held his court in the Monastery of the Dominicans or Black Friars, founded in 1231 by Alexander II. This religious establishment, plundered and destroyed at the Reformation, and no vestige of which now remains, was situated in the street still called the Blackfriars' Wynd. It became the residence of the Scottish sovereigns when they held their courts at Perth, after the demolition of the castle, the site of which was towards the north end of the narrow street called the Skinnergate; in its church several Parliaments were held, and in it the national ecclesiastical councils often assembled. James had resolved to celebrate the festival of Christmas in Perth, and when on his journey thither a Highland woman, who pretended to be a soothsayer, but who in reality was acquainted with the designs of the conspirators, appeared before the King and his attendants a few miles from Edinburgh. Her wild and singular attitude astonished James. "My Lord and King," she exclaimed, "if you pass over this water [the Frith of Forth at the Queensferry], you will never return alive." James was startled at her language, more especially as at that moment an old prediction occurred to his recollection, that the King of Scotland would be slain that year. He ordered one of his retinue to ride to the woman, and ask the meaning of her mysterious intimation, but to this person she merely repeated what she had said to the King, persisting in her declaration that if he passed the *Scotish Sea*, as the Frith of Forth was often anciently designated, he would never return alive. She was asked who gave her this information, and she replied that she received it from a man named Hubert, most probably a domestic in the service of the King. The intimation

of the woman was unfortunately disregarded. "Sire," said the attendant to James when he joined the King, "men would smile if your Majesty regarded yon woman's language, for she is evidently a drunken fool, and knows not what she says." The King and his retinue passed on, and arrived in safety at the Dominican Monastery in Perth.

Many omens were afterwards recollected of the King's approaching fate, and many popular traditions are recorded; but the observation of a writer is too true, that "the worst omen was his rigorous administration, which had created many enemies, among whom the conspiracy spread like a fire among combustible materials." Sir James Balfour states that about the end of 1436 a fearful comet, like a fiery sword, was seen in the sky, as if hovering between Edinburgh and Perth; and it may be here observed that, if we are to credit the popular chroniclers of the times, the appearance of fiery swords in the air seems to have been very common in the early history of Scotland. The same analyst gravely remarks that in 1436 a sow brought forth a dog in Perth. An eclipse also happened during the day, which lasted three hours. During the continuance of this eclipse it was as dark as midnight, and these hours were long remembered in Scotland as the *Black Hours*. As a remarkable prodigy we are informed that the frost was so intense during that winter, as to freeze ale and wine into solid substances, and these commodities were sold in that state by weight. Two of the most ridiculous traditions, doubtless improvements on some of the former, are, that a calf was seen with a head exactly resembling that of a horse, and a sow littered pigs with dogs' heads. Absurd as these traditions are, they were religiously believed by the common people after the King's death as so many supernatural indications of his approaching fate.

But it is now necessary to introduce the conspirators. Sir Robert Graham, uncle of Malise Earl of Strathearn.

had been imprisoned by James in 1425, when he took summary vengeance on the family of the Duke of Albany, but the cause, unless he was suspected of being connected with Albany's practices, is not accurately known. In a Parliament held in 1424, a statute was enacted to ascertain the lands which belonged to the crown at the decease of Robert I., and James was authorized to demand the production of all charters and writs of tenure. The King turned his attention to the earldom of Strathearn, and under the pretence that it was a male-fee he gave it, in 1426, to his uncle Walter Earl of Athole and Caithness, grand-uncle to Malise, who was thus divested of the earldom, for his liferent. This nobleman, who was at that time approaching his seventieth year, was the son of Robert II. by Euphemia Ross, the second queen of that monarch; and his grandson, Sir Robert Stuart, was in great favour with James, who gave him the appointment of private chamberlain in the court. As a recompence to Malise, the King assigned to him the earldom of Menteith.

Sir Robert Graham, whose hatred to James was inveterate, beheld the divestment and transfer of his nephew's dignity with furious rage, yet it can hardly be conceived that this alone could have induced him to project the murder of the King. Whatever were his motives, he began to intrigue with the Earl of Athole and his grandson, both of whom were not without ambition, using the dotage of the one, and the inexperience of the other, to promote his own desperate projects of revenge. He intimated, that after the King was despatched the crown would be given of right to Sir Robert Stuart. The latter was thus flattered by the prospect of a throne, and his grandfather Athole was no less attracted by the prospect of seeing his family elevated to the crown.

Graham soon found a number of desperate adventurers to aid him in this conspiracy, and after his plans were ma-

tured, he made it his business to pervert and misrepresent every act of the King. He inflamed the people by false statements of the proceedings of James, while he aggravated the discontentment of the nobles, who were already irritated at their diminished power and influence. In 1434, shortly after Graham had been released from his imprisonment, a meeting of the principal nobility was held, most probably to consider the conduct of James, who was then proceeding vigorously in his plans to humble their feudal greatness. Sir Robert Graham attended this meeting, and expressed himself in the most outrageous manner. It was maintained that the execution of Albany and his sons had originated in the avarice of the King to possess their estates, and no measured language was employed to describe the greedy covetousness by which it was alleged James oppressed and impoverished the kingdom. "My Lords," said Graham, at the conclusion of a long harangue, "if you will firmly support me in what I shall say to the King, I will demand redress in your presence, and I trust in God we shall be satisfied." His proposal was readily confirmed, and the nobles present bound themselves to support him.

The next Parliament was fixed for the accomplishment of this plan, and Graham in the meanwhile was not idle. The Parliament met in 1435, and, relying on the promises of support he had received, this bold conspirator conducted himself in the most daring manner. He rose with a furious countenance, and advancing to the royal seat, he laid his hand on James, and exclaimed—"I arrest you in the name of the estates of your realm now assembled in this Parliament; for, as your subjects are bound and sworn to obey you in the administration of the laws, in like manner you are compelled to defend your people, to govern by the laws, so that you do not wrong them, but defend and maintain them in justice." Then appealing to the peers, he asked—"Is it

not thus as I say?" But astonished at his boldness, and probably awed by the presence of James, they maintained a profound silence, not venturing to appear as the abettors of this daring act. The King immediately ordered Graham to prison, and exasperated at seeing himself deserted by those who had pledged themselves to support him, he retorted a severe sarcasm as he was led out in custody. It does not appear that James endeavoured to ascertain who were connected with this exploit, but it farther confirmed him in his resolution to crush the power of the nobility. Graham was soon after ordered into banishment, and he retired to the solitary fastnesses of the Highlands, revolving in his mind desperate enterprises. As his estates were forfeited he proceeded to renounce his allegiance, and he sent the King a mortal defiance, declaring that for his alleged tyranny he would destroy him, his wife, and children, whenever he had an opportunity. This defiance elicited a proclamation from James, offering a large reward to any one who would bring Graham alive or dead into his presence. Nothing daunted by this proclamation this audacious rebel took advantage of the King's absence at Roxburgh Castle to correspond with some of the discontented nobility, and he voluntarily offered to assassinate James and place the crown on the head of Sir Robert Stuart. Athole and his grandson had before this time engaged in the conspiracy, and it is said the aged Earl was the more easily induced to embark in it from the prediction of a Highland seer in the district of Athole whom he had consulted on the subject, and who had assured him that before his death he would be crowned before a great concourse of people. The chief conspirators were Graham, Athole, Sir Robert Stuart, and one of the King's domestics whom they had bribed to furnish them with information of the movements of James.

The Dominican Monastery at Perth, in which the King was residing at the festival at Christmas 1436, was on this

occasion honoured by a brilliant assemblage of Scottish beauty, and bright eyes were there mixing in the dance and gracing the amusements which were soon to be suffused with tears. The Queen and her ladies resided also in the Monastery, and James, unconscious of his fate, moved among them with his usual gallantry. One of his attendant knights, remarkable for his personal accomplishments, received from him the soubriquet of *King of Love*. James was one evening playing with him at some amusing game, when he indulged in a sportive satire on his new title. "Sir King of Love," said he, "it is not long since I read a prophecy spoken some time ago, which set forth that this year a king should be slain in this land; and well ye wot, Sir Alexander, there are no kings in this realm but you and I. Let me therefore counsel you to be wary, for I let you know that under God I shall take care of my own safety sufficiently, being under your Kingship, and in the service of Love."

Shortly after the above circumstance the King was in his own apartment, conversing with some ladies and several of his friends on various subjects. A favourite squire drew near, and whispered to the King—"In sooth, my Liege, I verily dreamt last night that Sir Robert Graham had slain your Majesty." It is not improbable that this was intended as a timely hint to James, but the squire was sharply reproved by the Earl of Orkney—the same nobleman who founded the chapel at Roslin, who commanded him to be silent, and to tell no such tales in the royal presence. Yet it made some impression on James, who instantly recollected one of his own dreams, in which he thought a serpent and a toad furiously assailed him in his own private apartment, and that he had nothing to defend himself against the reptiles except a pair of tongs he found in the chimney. So great was the reverence in which the devoted King was held, that thrice did Christopher Chambers, the domestic whom

the conspirators had bribed, attempt to approach the royal presence and make a full disclosure, but as often he failed from irresolution, accident, or a sense of pity towards his associates.

At length a night was fixed for the accomplishment of the conspiracy, which happened to be Ash Wednesday, or the first day of Lent, 1437-8, being the night of the 20th of February. The leaders had previously met; Sir Robert Graham had returned from his retreats in the Highlands, and had arrived in the neighbourhood of Perth, where he met Athole and his grandson. A speech is reported to have been delivered by Athole, in which he recited his previous exploits, and his pretensions to the crown, of which he maintained both he and his grandson had been unjustly deprived. "It is truly simple," said Athole, "in him who now oppresses us and usurps our throne to think that deeply-rooted injuries are likely to be forgotten by the bestowal of contemptible favours, and that I would calmly submit to the title of Earl, when I should have been King myself, and receiving his homage. By his tyrannical justice, if he is not hated he is not beloved, but has become an object of terror to his people, who now obey him through their poverty and great grievances, not from affection; and he himself even feareth that some will do that to him which he knows right well he deserveth. Let us then resolve our doubts; our purposes are honour and revenge; our feelings towards him are mutual. Divine Providence seems to favour us, having induced him to dismiss his army, and to come to the very place where our designs must succeed."

The eventful night at length arrived on which this tragedy was to be consummated. Sir Robert Graham was lurking in the neighbourhood of the Dominican Convent, receiving occasional information of the proceedings within from Christopher Chambers, the perfidious domestic. The leader of the conspiracy was supported by a number of

armed men; but it appears from the confession of Chambers, that many, if not the whole of them, were ignorant of the enterprise, until they had unwittingly become parties with the regicide, inasmuch as Graham simply pretended to them that his motive for attacking the Convent was to carry off a young lady of the court to whom Stuart was attached, and whom he designed to marry the following day. The Earl of Athole and his grandson attended the King that evening, which was spent in more than ordinary hilarity, in reading, singing, piping, playing on instruments, and other amusements, both before and after supper. During the prolonging of these recreations the woman who had before warned James of his danger, when on his journey from Edinburgh to Perth near the Queensferry, knocked at the gate of the Convent, and demanded admission. She had followed the court to Perth, and knew that this was the night fixed for the execution of the conspiracy. She was admitted into the court-yard of the Convent, and crossed to that quarter of the building inhabited by James and his retinue. Having discovered the door, she designed to force her way into the King's presence, but it was shut. She knocked till the door was opened by a domestic, who demanded her business at such a late hour of the night. "Let me in," she replied, "for I have something to say, and to tell the King. I am the woman who not long ago desired to have spoken with him when on the road to Perth." The earnestness of the woman astonished the domestic, and he proceeded to inform the King. Supposing that it was some frivolous affair, James was not inclined to stop his amusements, and simply said—"Let her come to-morrow." When this was intimated to the woman, she sorrowfully replied—"Well, it will repent you all that you will not let me speak now to the King." This called forth a jest from the domestic, who hastily shut the door, and the woman departed.

Some time after supper, the amusements of the court having been kept up till a late hour, James called for the parting cup, and every one present drank before retiring to rest. Athole's grandson was the last who quitted the King's presence, and he left the door of the apartment open—a precaution needless on his part, as he had previously contrived to destroy the lock. It appears that a door of one of the rooms opened into a garden, for about midnight the conspirators had laid down planks of wood and hurdles, by which they might be able to get over the ditch which surrounded the garden near the outer wall. By this way they entered the Convent, and shortly after midnight, when the court had retired to rest, Graham with three hundred Highlanders of Athole was in possession of the house, having entered without being observed, or meeting the slightest interruption.

James was in his own apartment, and was standing before the fire-place in a kind of undress, gaily conversing with his Queen and a few of her ladies, when suddenly he heard a loud noise in the court-yard proceeding from the clashing of armour and armed men, and the flashes of torches from without glared through the room. Immediately he suspected treason; the warnings he had received instantly recurred to him, and his thoughts naturally reverted to the ferocious criminal who had insulted him by renouncing his allegiance, and sending him a mortal defiance. Astonishment and terror were depicted in the countenances of the ladies, and as the noise waxed louder they clung to each other, surrounding the King. Recovering their composure, the Queen and the ladies rushed to the door, which they found open, and the bolts destroyed. The King, without arms or attendants, besought them to keep the door fast as long as they could, while he examined to see if escape were practicable. He found the windows so strongly barred as to preclude any possibility of escape from them, and he

had no time to attempt the wrenching of the bars, for the tumult and clashing of armour every moment increased. Heavy footsteps were already heard in the gallery leading to the King's apartment, and the violence without too clearly indicated the intentions of the assailants.

When the King found it impossible to escape by the windows, he seized the fire tongs, and after a desperate exertion succeeded in lifting a plank from the floor, which covered a kind of square vault or cellar of narrow dimensions. Through this aperture he dropped himself, and the flooring was carefully replaced. He found himself in a disagreeable room, full of dust, from which he could not escape, for by a sad fatality he had caused a small square window, through which he could have easily passed, to be built up three days previously, on account of the tennis-balls entering it when that game was played in the garden. Yet even in this place he might perhaps have been safe, if his own impatience had not betrayed him.

As soon as the conspirators had possessed themselves of the Convent, their object was to rush to the King's apartment, and tradition affirms that they were shown it by Athole's grandson, who only little more than an hour before had left the presence of James with every profession of regard. A page named Walter Straiton, who was in the act of carrying a cup of wine for the King and Queen, seeing them consulting among themselves, he loudly exclaimed, *Traitors! Traitors!* and hastened to secure the door. The unfortunate page was stabbed to the heart by one of the conspirators, who all simultaneously ran along the gallery towards the apartment with axes, swords, and other weapons. The cries of the page, however, had warned the inmates of the approach of the assassins. The King was at this time in the cellar under the floor, and the ladies ran towards the outer door. The bolts, of rude construction in those days, had been previously despoiled or removed, but

Lady Catherine Douglas, of the House of Douglas, performed an act worthy of being known to latest posterity. This noble lady thrust her arm into the bolt, while the other ladies attempted by their pressure to secure the door. But the delicate arm-bone was in a moment broken by the violence of the assassins, who burst open the door, and scrupled not to trample down and wound several of the fair defenders.

The ferocious appearance of the conspirators alarmed the helpless ladies, who fled from them with loud cries of terror and lamentation. Several attendants, whom the noise had called together, and who offered resistance, were killed, and among them fell Patrick Dunbar, a brother of the Earl of March. The conspirators were now in the apartment under which the King was concealed. They found the Queen stretched on the floor, incapable of imploring protection. A villain wounded her, and would probably have murdered her, but a son of Sir Robert Graham interposed, exclaiming—"What! shame on yourself! What will you do to the Queen? She is a woman. Let us go and seek the King." Leaving the Queen in that situation, with her hair dishevelled, and her dress from their rudeness hanging loose about her, they proceeded to search every corner of the apartment. But their search was vain, and it is remarkable that they never recollected the cellar below the floor. Some of them proceeded to the adjoining rooms, while others went to the more remote apartments. Every place was diligently explored—"in the litters," says a contemporary writer, "under the presses, the forms, the chairs, and all other places, long they busily sought the King."

At length a temporary quietness ensued, and James, supposing that the conspirators had left the Convent, called for sheets to draw him out of the place of his confinement. The ladies with considerable exertion removed the plank, and were proceeding to extricate the King, when one of

them, Elizabeth Douglas, fell into the place. At this unfortunate moment Christopher Chambers happened to pass along the gallery, and his eyes caught the ladies standing over the elevated plank. He sought his associates, to whom he said—"Sirs, wherefore stand we thus idle and lose our time, when the object of our search is hid? Come on with me, and I shall soon discover where the King is." He entered the apartment with a torch, and though the noise of his approach had caused the ladies hastily to replace the board, he carefully examined the floor. He soon perceived that a plank had been broken up, and lifting it, he held the torch in the aperture, and beheld the King and the lady. "Sirs," he loudly cried, "the bridegroom is found for whom we have been searching and carolling all night long."

This fatal discovery, at least accelerated if not caused by the impatience of James, was no sooner known than the conspirators speedily assembled. They broke up the floor, and one of them, named Sir John Hall, leaped into the cellar with a dagger in his hand. The King grappled him by the shoulders, and dashed him on the ground. A brother of this Hall descended and aimed at the King, but the blow was parried, and he was also seized by the neck and thrown down. Yet in vain did James attempt to wrest a dagger from either. Although standing above them, and they were stunned by the fall, they held fast their weapons. In the struggle the King cut his hands severely, which rendered him less capable of farther defence. If James had succeeded in obtaining a dagger, he would not only have sold his life at the dearest rate, but in all probability he would have been able to parry their attacks until the alarm had been given, and the citizens of Perth had risen to his rescue.

Sir Robert Graham now entered the apartment, and instantly sprung into the cellar. Weary and faint by his former struggles, weaponless, and profusely bleeding at the

hands, James appealed to him for mercy, as farther resistance was vain. But Graham ferociously raised his dagger, and pointed it at the King's heart. "Thou cruel tyrant," he said, "never didst thou show mercy to those of thine own blood, nor to any gentleman who came in thy way; expect no mercy now." "Then," entreated the King, "I implore thee, for the salvation of my soul, to let me have a confessor." "No," replied the assassin, "no other confessor shalt thou have but this dagger." Graham plunged his weapon into the King's body, and the unhappy monarch fell, imploring mercy, and offering half his kingdom for his life. Struck with remorse, the assassin relented for a moment, and would have withdrawn, when the other conspirators exclaimed from above—"We shall abide by thee faithfully if thou slay him, but if thou come up here, we swear thou wilt die by our hands." When Graham heard this, he and the two Halls fell upon the King and murdered him under circumstances of the most aggravated cruelty. They repeatedly stabbed him in various parts of his body after he was dead, and in his breast there were no fewer than sixteen mortal wounds.

Thus fell James I. of Scotland—one of the most accomplished princes of his time—in the forty-fourth year of his age, and the thirty-first of his nominal though only the thirteenth of his actual reign. After murdering the King the conspirators sought the Queen to put her to death, but she had escaped. The alarm was now given in Perth, and the citizens rushed into the monastery, unhappily when it was too late, to defend and rescue their sovereign. Their loud threats of vengeance dismayed the regicides, who consulted their safety by flight in every direction. They were pursued, but they effected their escape, with only one man slain and another wounded, to the fastnesses of the Highlands, bitterly regretting that they had not killed the Queen.

The body of the unfortunate James was buried in the church of the magnificent Carthusian Monastery, or Charter-house, at Perth—a Monastery which he and his Queen had founded in 1429, but of which no vestige is now to be seen. The tomb of James, as well as those of his Queen Joanna, and of Margaret, mother of James V., also buried in the same church, was destroyed when the Charter-house was demolished at the Reformation. It may be noticed, however, that a flat tombstone with two figures in outline, supposed to be James I. and his Queen, was discovered some years ago, and is now to be seen inserted in the wall of one of the divisions of St John's Church at Perth.

It is not accurately known by what means the leaders of this atrocious conspiracy were apprehended. Every writer admits that the murder of the King excited the greatest indignation throughout the kingdom, and even those with whom James was unpopular deplored his fate and deemed the act execrable. So anxious were the people to bring the conspirators to justice, that every baron and chief in the kingdom united in endeavouring to take them. Within a month after the murder they were all in custody. Those first apprehended were Sir Robert Stuart and the domestic Chambers, who were secured, it is said, by Robertson of Strowan—a fact extremely probable, as they both took refuge in that chieftain's district, and in commemoration of it the ancient Family of Strowan have ever since borne a *wild man chained*, lying under the escutcheon of their arms. The others were taken in various places.

The conspirators were carried to Edinburgh and imprisoned in the Castle. Punishments were prepared for them, and a series of tortures devised, which even at this distance of time, notwithstanding the atrocity of their crime, excite a shudder, and sufficiently indicate the barbarism of the age. They were speedily condemned to be hanged, drawn, and quartered, in Edinburgh. Sir Robert

Stuart and Christopher Chambers were first led to execution. A scaffold was erected in the High Street, and a wooden cross of considerable height was placed in the centre. They were both bound to this cross almost naked, and in presence of a great concourse of spectators. The executioner stood before them with a pair of iron pincers or tongs, with which he repeatedly twisted their bodies, and pulled off pieces of their flesh in the most excruciating manner, the blood gushing forth from the ghastly wounds. Yet they endured these torments with great fortitude, and Sir Robert Stuart, who now saw the folly of his ambition to wear a crown, and that of his grandfather Athole, said to the executioner—"Do whatsoever you please, for we are guilty, and well deserve much more than this painful death." They were next compelled to descend from the scaffold, and were led through the streets of Edinburgh, the same tortures being repeated during their progress by the executioner. They were then brought before the Council House, in the vicinity of St Giles's Church, and were made to ascend the scaffold, where they stood nearly two hours a public spectacle, receiving no sympathy from the people. After this they were again carried through the city, till they came to a spot where two high poles had been erected with cross beams, for some mechanical purpose. Here the executioner tied ropes below their arm-pits, and suspended them. While thus hanging, they made a confession of their guilt—Sir Robert Stuart professing the utmost penitence, but Christopher Chambers justified the conspiracy, and all the circumstances of the King's death. They were finally carried to the place appointed for execution, where Stuart was drawn asunder by four horses, and his companion beheaded and quartered. But the statement of Stuart having been drawn asunder by horses is on the authority of Sir James Balfour, for others allege that he was hanged, beheaded, and quartered. His head was sent

to Perth, and placed on a conspicuous part of the city prison. The head and right hand of Christopher Chambers were fixed on a spear and set up in Edinburgh.

The next leader in the conspiracy brought to punishment was the Earl of Athole, the grandfather of Sir Robert Stuart, who had been apprehended by the Earl of Angus. This nobleman, then in his seventieth year, was arraigned and condemned, though he persisted in declarations of his innocence, in the presence of Antony de Santo Vito, Bishop of Urbino, at that time Papal Legate in Scotland. The traditionary narrative of his punishment proves in a remarkable manner the barbarism of the Scots. As the festival of Easter was at hand, the cross-like gibbet on which his grandson had been tortured was from a religious feeling removed, as unbecoming the commemorations preceding that great and solemn festival of the Church, and instead of it a pillar was set up, to which he was tied. Three successive days the punishment of this nobleman was prolonged, and it is hardly credible that at his age he was able to endure the tortures inflicted on him. At first he was placed naked in a cart, over which an engine like a crane was placed, and he was at certain intervals hoisted in the air by ropes and pulleys. The ropes being loosened, he was always suddenly let down with great violence, the motion of the excruciating torture causing a relaxation of the joints. In this manner Athole was dragged along the High Street and the Canongate. On the second day he was tied to the pillar, and a red-hot iron crown placed upon his head, with this inscription—"The King of all Traitors!" This was to fulfil the prediction of the Highland soothsayer that he would be crowned king before a great concourse of people. A contemporary writer, however, denies the fact of the red-hot iron crown, and says it was one of *paper*, on which the word *traitor* was written thrice. Athole was then placed upon a hurdle, and drawn

at the horse's tail through the streets. The third day closed his sufferings. He was led out to the scaffold, where a scene of no ordinary cruelty was exhibited. While he was alive he was stretched naked on the scaffold; his bowels were cut out and thrown into a fire; his heart was roasted, and cast to the dogs; and he was beheaded and quartered. His hoary head was placed on a spike in a prominent part of the city, encircled with a mock iron crown, and his quarters were set upon posts in Perth, Stirling, Glasgow, and Aberdeen. This was the revenge of the Queen Joanna, and it was a fearful revenge for a woman. That Athole was concerned in the conspiracy is undeniable, but as he was not a personal actor in it, the tortures inflicted on him were revolting and infamous. His age ought at least to have sheltered him from the torture. His royal birth and near relationship to the murdered King, also, ought to have saved him from being exhibited in this ignoble manner, and arrayed in the mock insignia of royalty.

The most active and important conspirator was now to be punished. This was Sir Robert Graham, the contriver of the whole plot, and the first who plunged his dagger into the breast of James. He was removed to Stirling, where he was brought to trial. This ferocious regicide had the hardihood to tell his judges that there was no law to put him to death, for he had committed no crime, but had slain his own mortal enemy, which might be proved by his letters to the King some years before, sealed with his own seal, wherein he had sent his defiance, and renounced his allegiance for reasons in his opinion most satisfactory. He contended that if they acted equitably towards him they would immediately set him at liberty, because he had done to the King what the King intended to do to him if he had apprehended him. Perceiving that this reasoning was treated with contempt by his judges, he uttered a bold invective both against them and the King, which was long re-

membered in Scotland. He was immediately condemned, and the sentence was inflicted in the town of Stirling in a manner more revolting than the punishment of his associates.

Graham was placed in a cart, in the centre of which a pole of seven or eight feet in height was placed, and to the top of this pole he was, as it were, transfixed by the right hand, the dagger being driven through it with which he slew the King. In this manner he was drawn through the town. After enduring this torture the executioners separated his hand from his body, and burnt it before his face. He was then nailed to the pole in a state of complete nudity, and a second time drawn through the town. During this progress two executioners continually cut and gashed his body, pinching his legs, thighs, arms, and shoulders, with instruments of red-hot iron. In the midst of those revolting tortures Graham conducted himself with the greatest courage and resolution. "This that ye are doing to me," he exclaimed, "being against the law, is another proof of your immeasurable tyranny. The world will henceforth mention the Scots as brutal barbarians, when the painful and tyrannical tortures are known which you have inflicted on me, and which it is hardly possible to endure. I doubt not, if you continue your wanton tortures on my wretched body, that the very pain will constrain me to deny and blaspheme my Maker. But if I do, I declare before God, the great and chief Judge of all mankind at the universal doom, that you have been the cause of the loss of my soul."

The sight was too much for human nature to endure, and some peers, who attended to see the punishment of the criminal duly inflicted, ordered him to be taken down. But this was more barbarous than the cruelties he had previously suffered. Covered with blood, and disfigured by frightful wounds, a rough mantle of the coarsest manufac-

ture was thrown over his bleeding body, and he was cast into a nauseous and horrid dungeon in a state of insensibility. In the meanwhile some of the inferior sort of the conspirators were hanged and quartered, after whom Graham was brought out to execution. When carried to the scaffold he was placed on his feet, and the coarse mantle thrown over him, which, having adhered to his flesh, had stopped his bleeding wounds, was torn from his body, and the blood flowed anew. So excruciating was the pain caused by this act, that Graham fell down in a swoon, from which he did not recover for some time. When he revived, he said that the tearing of the mantle from his body was more intensely painful than any of the other tortures he had endured. His son, who was one of the conspirators, was now brought out, and was beheaded and quartered before his eyes. He was then beheaded, his heart thrown into a fire, and his body quartered and sent to the four principal towns in the kingdom. His head was placed over the West Port Gate of Edinburgh.

Such was the punishment of the murderers of James I., and notwithstanding their atrocious guilt, it may be placed on the same level with the tortures practised by the most ferocious and barbarous nations. It was characteristic of a country which a French writer of that age says was *more abundant in savages than cattle*, and of a people whose penury and barbarism the French, according to Froissart, witnessed not without a shudder.

With respect to Sir Robert Graham, the tortures he endured seem to have procured for him little sympathy from the common people. He was long remembered with abhorrence in a popular rhyme to this effect—

“ Sir Robert Graham,
Who slew our King,
God gave him shame.”