

CHAP. II.

DAVID THE SECOND.

 CONTEMPORARY PRINCES.

Kings of England.
Edward III.

Kings of France.
Phillip of Valois.

Popes.
Clement VI.
Innocent VI.
Urban V.

UPON the part of England, the policy of Edward the Third towards Scotland was different from that of his predecessor. There was now no talk of conferring the crown upon Baliol. The persuasion in England seems to have been, that the battle of Durham, and the acquisition of the Border provinces, had decided the fate of Scotland as a conquered country. A conference upon the subject was appointed to be held at Westminster, to which were summoned the prelates and barons of the northern provinces; an English justiciary was appointed for the new kingdom, and the Barons Lucy, Dacre, and Umfraville, were directed to accept the fealty of a people whom, with premature triumph, they believed ready to submit to the yoke of England.¹

It was at this time, when all looked so dark and

¹ Rotuli Scotiæ, 10th Dec. 20 Ed. III. Ibid. vol. i. p. 684. 21 Ed. III. 14th Feb. 1346. Ibid. vol. i. p. 687.

hopeless, that William, Lord Douglas, nephew of the Good Sir James, who had been bred to arms in the wars of France, returned to Scotland. In him the Steward soon found an able assistant. Possessing the high military talents which seemed to have been then hereditary in the family, he soon expelled the English from Douglasdale, took possession of Ettrick Forest, and raising the men of Teviotdale, cleared that district from the invaders.¹

Whilst such was the course of events in Scotland, the English king endeavoured to strike a panic into the few Scottish barons who remained to defend their country, by the trial of the Earls of Menteith and Fife, made prisoners at the battle of Durham. Both were found guilty of treason, on the ground of their having risen in arms against their liege lord, Edward the Third. Menteith was executed, and his quarters, in the savage spirit of the times, parcelled over the kingdom.² The Earl of Fife, after condemnation, had his life spared, from his relationship to Edward the First. These trials were followed by the seizure of all ecclesiastical lands in Scotland belonging to churchmen who were evilly disposed to England, by the resumption into the hands of the crown of all the estates in that country which had been given to English subjects, and by the imposition of additional duties on the commodities exported from Berwick.³ Edward's object in all this was, in

¹ Winton, vol. ii. pp. 269, 270.

² Rotuli Scot. vol. i. p. 689. 6th March, 1346-7; Ayloffé, p. 203.

³ Ibid. vol. i. p. 686.

the impoverished state of his exchequer, to collect funds for payment of the army which it was intended to lead against Scotland. But, fortunately for that country, a new war proved, at this conjuncture, highly unpopular amongst the English barons.¹ Their sovereign, notwithstanding all his efforts, was distressed for money, and engrossed with his ambitious schemes in France. The desire of recruiting his coffers, by the high ransom which he knew must be paid for the Scottish king, and the many noble prisoners, taken at Durham, induced him to postpone his projected invasion of Scotland,² and to enter into negotiations, which concluded in a truce.³ This cessation of hostilities continued, by means of successive prolongations, for six years. But the liberty of the king was a matter of more difficult arrangement. After many conferences, which were protracted from year to year, the conditions demanded by Edward were refused by the Scots; and David revisited his dominions only upon his parole, having left seven youths, of the noblest families in Scotland, as hostages for his return.⁴

During his captivity, a dreadful visitant had appeared in his dominions, in the shape of a pestilence, more rapidly destructive than any hitherto known in modern times. This awful scourge had already, for many years, been carrying its ravages through

¹ Rotuli Scotiae, vol. i. p. 687.

² Rymer's Fœdera, vol. v. pp. 646, 647.

³ Rotuli Scotiae, 15th April, 21 Edward III. p. 694.

⁴ Rymer, vol. v. pp. 724, 727.

Europe, and it now at last reached Scotland.¹ It is a remarkable fact, that when the great European pestilence of the seventh century was at its height, the Picts and Scots of Britain were the only nations who did not suffer from its ravages. But the exemption was now at an end; and, owing to whatever causes, the awful calamity fell with as deadly force on Scotland, as on any other part of Europe.²

Not long after David's return, a commissioner arrived from Edward, who appears to have been intrusted with a secret and important communication to the King of Scotland and Lord William Douglas.³ Although, from the very brief and unsatisfactory document which notices this transaction, much mystery hangs over it, yet enough is discoverable to throw a deep shade upon the character of the Scottish king. Worn out by the prospect of a long captivity, rendered doubly bitter by his present taste of the sweets of liberty, he had agreed to sacrifice the independence of his kingdom to his desire of freedom; and there yet remain in the chapter-house at Westminster two instruments, in which David recognises the King of England as his Lord Paramount, and consents to take the oaths of homage.⁴

¹ Fordun a Goodal, vol. ii. p. 347.

² M'Pherson's Notes on Winton, vol. ii. p. 512. Fordun a Hearne, p. 1039.

³ Rymer's Fœdera, vol. v. p. 737.

⁴ Ayloffie's Calendar of Charters, p. 299.

