

MARGARET, THE MAIDEN OF NORWAY.

MARGARET, the grand-daughter of Alexander, and grand-niece to Edward the First, who had been solemnly acknowledged heir to the crown in 1284, was in Norway at the time of the king's death. A parliament, therefore, assembled at Scone, on the 11th of April, 1286, and a regency, consisting of six guardians of the realm, was, by common consent, appointed.¹ The administration of the parts of Scotland to the north, beyond the Frith of Forth, was intrusted to Fraser, Bishop of St Andrews, Duncan, Earl of Fife, and Alexander, Earl of Buchan. The government of the country to the south of the Forth, was committed to Wishart, the Bishop of Glasgow, John Comyn, Lord of Badenoch, and James, the High Steward of Scotland.²

Nothing but the precarious life of an infant now stood between the crown of Scotland, and the claims of other powerful competitors, whose relationship to the royal family, as it raised their hopes, encouraged them to collect their strength, and gave a legal sanction to their ambition. Edward the First of England, whose near connexion with the young Queen of Scotland, and the heretrix of Norway, made him her natural protector, was at this time in France. On being informed of the state of confusion into which

¹ Winton, vol. ii. p. 10. Fordun a Goodal, vol. ii. p. 138.

² Fordun a Hearne, p. 951.

the death of Alexander was likely to plunge a kingdom which had been for some time the object of his ambition, the project of a marriage between the young queen and his son the Prince of Wales, was too apparent not to suggest itself. But this monarch, always as cautious of too suddenly unveiling his purposes as he was determined in pursuing them, did not immediately declare his wishes. He contented himself with observing the turn which matters should take in Scotland, certain that his power and influence would in the end induce the different parties to appeal to him, and confident that the longer time which he gave to these factions to quarrel among themselves, and embroil the country, the more advantageously would this interference take place. The youth of the King of Norway, father to the young Princess of Scotland, was another favourable circumstance for Edward. Eric was only eighteen. He naturally looked to Edward, the uncle of his wife, for advice and support, and, fearful of trusting his infant and only daughter, scarce three years old, to the doubtful allegiance of so fierce and ambitious a nobility as that of Scotland, he determined to keep her for the present under his own eye in Norway.

Meanwhile a strong party was formed against her, amongst the most powerful of the Scottish barons. They met (Sept. 20, 1286) at Turnberry, the castle of Robert Bruce, Earl of Carric, son of Robert Bruce, Lord of Annandale and Cleveland. Here they were joined by two powerful English barons, Thomas de Clare, brother of Gilbert, Earl of Gloucester, and

Richard de Burgh, Earl of Ulster.¹ Thomas de Clare was nephew to Bruce's wife, and both he and his brother, the Earl of Gloucester, were naturally anxious to support Bruce's title to the crown, as the descendant of David Earl of Huntingdon, brother of King William the Lion.² Nor was the scheme in any respect a desperate one, for Bruce already had great influence. There assembled at Turnberry, Patrick, Earl of Dunbar, with his three sons; Walter Stewart, Earl of Menteith; Bruce's own son, the Earl of Carric, and Bernard Bruce; James, the High Steward of Scotland,³ with John his brother; Angus, son of Donald the Lord of the Isles, and Alexander his son. These barons, whose influence could bring into the field the strength of almost the whole of the west and south of Scotland, now entered into a bond, or covenant, by which it was declared, that they would thenceforth adhere to and take part with one another, on all occasions, and against all persons, saving their allegiance to the King of England, and also their allegiance to him who should gain the kingdom of Scotland by right of descent from King Alexander, then lately deceased.⁴ Not long after this, the number of the

¹ *Fœdera*, vol. ii. p. 488.

² Gough, in his *Additions to Cambden's Britannia*, vol. i. p. 265, mentions, that Gilbert, Earl of Gloucester, brother of Robert de Brus's wife, having incurred the resentment of Edward the First, was dispossessed of all his lands; but the king afterwards restored him, and gave him his daughter in marriage. The convention at Turnberry was probably the cause of Edward's resentment.

³ James, the High Steward, married Cecilia, daughter of Patrick, Earl of Dunbar. Andrew Stewart's *Hist. of Stuarts*, p. 16.

⁴ The original is alluded to by Dugdale, vol. i. p. 216.

