

CHAP. IV.

JAMES THE SIXTH.

1584—1586.

CONTEMPORARY PRINCES.

<i>England.</i> Elizabeth.	<i>France.</i> Henry III.	<i>Germany.</i> Rudolph II.	<i>Spain.</i> Philip II.	<i>Portugal.</i> Philip II.	<i>Popes.</i> Gregory XIII. Sixtus V.
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THE death of Gowrie, and the flight of his fellow-conspirators, left Arran in possession of the supreme power in Scotland, and filled Elizabeth and her ministers with extreme alarm. They knew his unbounded ambition; they were aware of the influence which he possessed over the character of the young King: his former career had convinced them that his talents were quite equal to his opportunities. He combined military experience, and the promptitude and decision which a soldier of fortune so often acquires, with a genius for state affairs, and a ready eloquence, in which all could see the traces of a learned education. To this was added a noble presence and figure, with commanding manners, which awed or conciliated, as he pleased, those whom he employed as the tools of his greatness. Elizabeth suspected, also, and on good grounds, that although he professed a great regard for the reformed religion—declaring his fears

lest the faction of the Queen-mother should regain its influence in Scotland, and seduce the mind of the young monarch from the truth—still these asseverations were rather politic than sincere. For their truth, she and her councillors had no guarantee: and looking to the profligacy of his private life, his bitter opposition to the Presbyterian clergy, and his constant craving after forfeitures and power, they conjectured that his alleged devotion to England, and desire to continue the amity, was rather a contrivance to gain time till he looked about him, than any more permanent principle of action.

All this was embarrassing to the English Queen and her ministers: and there were other difficulties in the way of their recovery of influence in Scotland, to which it was impossible to shut their eyes. They had trusted that the late conspiracy, if successful, would restore Lord Arbroath and Lord Claud Hamilton, to their ancient authority and estates; and that their union with the Earl of Angus, who wielded the immense power of the house of Douglas, would enable them to crush Arran, and destroy the French faction in Scotland. But Arran was now triumphant; and his enmity to the houses of Douglas and Hamilton was deep and deadly. Their restoration, he well knew, must have been his utter ruin. He had brought the Regent Morton to the scaffold; he had possessed himself of the title and estates of the unfortunate Earl of Arran; and as long as he continued in power, Elizabeth foresaw that the exiles would never be permitted to return. She had difficulties,

also, with the faction of the Kirk. They had hitherto been encouraged by England; and had been employed by Burghley and Walsingham, as powerful opponents of the French faction, and the intrigues of the Queen-mother. But Elizabeth had herself no sympathies for the Presbyterian form of Church government: she had often blamed the factious and Republican principles disseminated by its ministers; and now, when the party of the Kirk were no longer dominant, she felt disposed to regard them with coldness and distrust.¹ On the other hand, the young King had avowed his determined enmity to Rome; whilst his opposition was simply to Presbytery as contrasted with Episcopacy. He had formed a resolution to maintain the Episcopal form of government which had been established in Scotland, at all risks, against the attack of its enemies. He was assisted in this great design by Arran, a man not easily shaken in his purposes; and by Adamson Bishop of St Andrew's, whose abilities were of a high order, both as a divine and a scholar: and now that Gowrie was gone, and the other great leaders of the Kirk in exile, there was every probability that James would succeed in his object. It became, therefore, a question with Elizabeth, whether she might not gain more by encouraging the advances of Arran, than she would lose by withdrawing her support from the exiled lords.

Such being her feelings, she resolved to be in no

¹ MS. Letter, St. P. Off., Walsingham to Davison, 17th June, 1584.

hurry to commit herself till she had sent a minister to Scotland, who should carefully examine the exact state of parties in that country. When the conspiracy broke out, Mr Davison had been on his road thither; but he was arrested, on his journey, at Berwick, by letters from Walsingham:¹ and when the French Ambassador, who was resident at the English Court, requested the Queen's permission to repair to Scotland and act as a mediator between the factions, Elizabeth readily consented.² She was the more inclined to choose this moderate course, as the King of France had recently offered to engage in a strict league with England. He had declared his earnest desire to see the three crowns united in perfect amity, and his wishes that the afflicted state of Scotland should be restored to quiet: whilst he had instructed his Ambassador to visit the captive Queen of Scots; to exert himself to the utmost to mitigate the rigour of her confinement, and, if possible, to procure her restoration to liberty.³

In the meantime, Arran and the King, although they professed a firm resolution to maintain pacific relations with England, adopted energetic measures to secure their triumph and complete the ruin of their enemies. A parliament was held at

¹ MS. Letter, St. P. Off., 29th April, 1584, Walsingham to Davison.

² MS. Letter, St. P. Off. Walsingham to Davison, 4th May, 1584. Ibid. same to same, 10th May, 1584.

³ MS. St. P. Off. Draft. Points in the French Ambassador's Letter, 13th May, 1584.

