

CHAP. V.

JAMES THE SIXTH.

1597-8—1600.

CONTEMPORARY PRINCES.

<i>England.</i> Elizabeth.	<i>France.</i> Henry IV.	<i>Germany.</i> Rudolph II.	<i>Spain.</i> Philip II. Philip III.	<i>Portugal.</i> Philip II. Philip III.	<i>Pope.</i> Clement VII.
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HAVING thus continuously traced the establishment in Scotland of this limited Episcopacy, we must look back for a moment on the civil history of the country. This was not marked by any great or striking events. There was no external war, and no internal rebellion or commotion; and the success which had attended all the late measures of the King produced a tranquillity in the country, which had the best effects on its general prosperity. James had triumphed over the extreme license and democratic movements of the Kirk; had restrained the personal attacks of its pulpit; defined, with something of precision, the limits between the civil and ecclesiastical jurisdictions; evinced an anxiety to raise the character and usefulness of the clergy, by granting them a fixed provision; and added consideration and dignity to the Presbyterian polity, by giving it a representation

in the great Council of the country. He had, on the other hand, shown equal wisdom and determination in his conduct to the Roman Catholic earls. None could say that he had acted a lukewarm part to religion. These nobles remained in the country, and had been restored to their estates and honours solely because they were reconciled to the Church. According to the better principles of our own times, he had acted with extraordinary severity and intolerance; but even the highest and hottest Puritan of these unhappy days could not justly accuse him of indifference. He had, moreover, strengthened his aristocracy by healing its wounds, removing or binding up the feuds which tore it, and restoring to it three of its greatest members, Huntly, Angus, and Errol. He had punished, with exemplary severity, the tumult which had been excited in his capital, and read a lesson of obedience to the magistrates and middle orders, which they were not likely to forget. Lastly, he had, in a personal expedition, reduced his Borders to tranquillity; and in his intercourse with England, had shown that, whilst he was determined to preserve peace, he was equally resolved to maintain his independence, and to check that spirit of restless intrigue and interference in which the English Ambassadors at the Scottish Court had, for so many years, indulged with blameable impunity. Sir Robert Bowes, who had long filled that difficult and dangerous office, had recently died at Berwick, a victim apparently to its anxieties; and having undergone, during his devoted services, the same trials of penury and neglect which, with

scarcely one exception, seem to have been the portion of his royal mistress' Ambassadors and diplomatic agents.¹ On the 11th of May he had written to his sovereign, imploring his recall, and lamenting that his decay in health, and weakness in body and estate, unfitted him for farther labour; but his remonstrance was ineffectual: and it was not till nearly six months after, that an order arrived, permitting him to retire, and naming Sir William Bowes as his successor. The release, however, came too late. He was then unable to stand from weakness; and he only reached Berwick to expire.² The duties of his office, in the meantime, devolved upon Mr George Nicolson, his secretary, a man of ability, whose letters contain much that is valuable in the history of the times.

On the arrival of Sir William Bowes at the Scot-

¹ MS. Letter, St. P. Off., Sir Robert Bowes to Sir R. Cecil, 11th May, 1597.

In the last letter but one which Sir Robert Bowes addressed to Cecil from Edinburgh, there is this pathetic passage:—"Her Majesty's gracious compassion taken of me, and of my weakness, is great comfort unto me in my present distress, wherein I now lie, at the seat of God's mercy, and at the point of life, death, sickness, or recovery; in which, as I shall fare, you shall be shortly advertised. For albeit I had intended this day to have entered my journey towards Berwick; yet, by the advice of my friends, and in respect of my weakness disabling me to stand without help, I have agreed to defer this journey until to-morrow." MS. Letter, St. P. Off., Sir R. Bowes to Sir R. Cecil, 31st October, 1597.

² His last letter is written from Berwick to Sir R. Cecil on the 6th of November, 1597. He died on the 16th of the same month. In the St. P. Office is preserved a fly-leaf, with a printed epitaph on Sir R. Bowes, by Mr William Fowler, Secretary to Queen Anne of Denmark.

tish Court, he found the King's mind entirely occupied by one great subject—his title to the English throne after the death of the Queen. On this point the tranquillity from other cares now gave James full leisure for thought; and he evinced an extreme sensitiveness in everything connected with it. Reports of speeches against his right of succession in the English Parliament; books written in favour of the claim of the Infanta; intrigues of pretenders at home; the jealousy with which the Catholics regarded his reconciliation with the Kirk; the suspicion with which the Kirk observed his favour to the Catholics: all these thorny matters perpetually haunted and harassed him. From his observations, the Ambassador dreaded that the royal mind was beginning to be alienated from England; and in his first interview James certainly expressed himself with some bitterness against Elizabeth. The expostulations addressed to him by his good sister, he said, were unnecessarily sharp. She accused him of diminished friendliness, of foreign predilections, of credulity and forwardness; but he must retort these epithets, for he had found herself too ready to believe what was untrue, and to condemn him unheard. It was true that, when he saw other competitors for the Crown of England endeavouring, in every way, to advance their own titles, and even making personal applications to the Queen, he had begun to think it time to look to his just claim, and to interest his friends in his behalf. It was with this view he had required assistance from his people to furnish Ambassadors to various foreign

