

brother, Sir Edward Bruce, at the head of a powerful army, broke in upon Galloway, and commanded the inhabitants to rise and join his banner. Where this order was disobeyed, the lands were given up to military execution; and Bruce, who had not forgotten the defeat and death of his two brothers by the men of this wild district, laid waste the country with fire and sword, and permitted every species of plunder,¹ in a spirit of cruel retaliation, but almost justifiable, according to the sentiments of that age.

Governed by caprice, and perpetually changing his councils, the King of England removed Pembroke from the guardianship of Scotland, and in his place appointed John de Bretagne, Earl of Richmond, and nephew of the late king.² Full power was intrusted to him over all ranks of persons; the sheriffs of Northumberland, Cumberland, Westmoreland, and Lancashire, were commanded to assemble the whole military force of their respective counties, under the orders of the guardian; the Earl of Dunbar, Robert de Keith, Alexander de Abernethy, and several other powerful barons, as well English as Scottish, were enjoined to march along with the English army, and to rescue Galloway from the ravages of Bruce; while orders were issued to the sheriffs of London, for the transporting to Berwick the provisions and military stores requisite for the maintenance of the troops, together with iron, hempen cord, cross-bows, arrows,

¹ Chron. Lanercost, as quoted by Tyrrel, p. 224. Rymer, *Fœdera*, vol. iii. p. 14.

² *Fœdera*, vol. iii. p. 10.

and certain large cross-bows called *balistæ de turno*, employed in the attack and defence of fortified places.¹

At the head of this army, the Earl of Richmond attacked Bruce, and compelled him to retreat to the north of Scotland.² His brother, Edward Bruce, the Earl of Lennox, Sir Gilbert de la Haye, and Sir Robert Boyd, accompanied the king, but Sir James Douglas remained in the south, for the purpose of reducing the forest of Selkirk, and Jedburgh.³ On reaching the Mounth, the name anciently given to that part of the Grampian chain which extends from the borders of the district called the Merns to Loch Rannach, Bruce was joined by Sir Alexander, along with his brother Simon Fraser, with all their power; and from them he learnt, that Comyn, the Earl of Buchan, with his own nephew, Sir David de Brechin, and Sir John Mowbray, were assembling their vassals, and had determined to attack him. This news was the more unwelcome, as a grievous distemper began at this time to prey upon the king, depriving him of his strength and appetite, and for a time lea-

¹ *Fœdera*, vol. iii. pp. 14, 16.

² The MS. Chronicle of Lanercost asserts, that John of Bretagne, with an army, attacked King Robert about Martinmas, put his forces to flight, and compelled him to retreat to the bogs and mountains. No other English historian, however, records this defeat, and neither Barbour nor Fordun say a word of the matter. Ker plausibly conjectures, that Robert only retreated before an army greatly superior to his own; and Barbour represents the king's expedition into the north, not as the consequence of any defeat, but as the result of a plan for the reduction of the northern parts of Scotland.

³ Barbour, p. 162.

ving little hopes of his recovery. As the soldiers of Bruce were greatly dispirited at the sickness of the king, Edward, his brother, deemed it prudent to avoid a battle, and intrenched himself in a strong position near Slaines, on the north coast of Aberdeenshire.

After some slight skirmishes between the archers of both armies, which ended in nothing decisive, provisions began to fail, and as the troops of Buchan daily increased, the Scots retired in good order to Strabogy, carrying their king, who was still too weak to mount his horse, in a litter.¹ From this last station, as Bruce began slowly to recover his strength, the Scots returned to Inverury, while the Earl of Buchan, with a body of about a thousand men, advanced to Old Meldrum, and Sir David de Brechin pushed on with a small party, and suddenly attacked and put to flight some of Robert's soldiers, carelessly cantoned in the outskirts of the town.² Bruce took this as a military affront, and instantly rising from his litter, called for his horse and arms. His friends remonstrated, but the king mounted on horseback, and although so weak as to be supported by two men on each side, he led on his soldiers in person, and instantly attacking the Earl of Buchan with great fury,³ entirely routed and dispersed his army, pursuing them as far as Fivy, on the borders of Buchan. Brechin fled to Angus, and

¹ Barbour, pp. 170, 171.

² Fordun a Hearne, vol. iv. p. 1004. Barbour, p. 172. It is said that the town of Inverury received its charter as a royal burgh from the king after this victory. Stat. Acc. vol. vii. p. 331.

³ Fordun a Hearne, vol. iv. ut supra. Barbour, p. 174.

shut himself up in his own castle of Brechin, which was soon after besieged and taken by the Earl of Athol, whose father had been executed in England. Into Buchan, the territory of Comyn, his mortal enemy, he now marched, and took ample revenge for all the injuries he had sustained, wasting it with fire, and delivering it over to unbridled military execution. Barbour informs us, that for fifty years after, men spoke with terror of the *harrying of Buchan*; and it is singular that, at this day, the oaks which are turned up in the mosses, bear upon their trunks the blackened marks of being scathed with fire.¹

The army of the king now rapidly increased, as his character for success and military talent became daily more conspicuous. His nephew, Sir David de Brechin, having been pardoned and admitted to favour, joined him about this time with his whole force, and pursuing his advantage, he laid siege to the castle of Aberdeen.² Edward was now at Windsor, and, alarmed at the progress of Bruce, he dispatched an expedition to raise the siege of Aberdeen, and commanded the different seaports to fit out a fleet, which should cooperate with his land-forces. But these preparations were too late, for the citizens of Aberdeen, who had early distinguished themselves in the war of liberty, and were warmly attached to the cause of Bruce, encouraged by the presence of his army, and assisted

¹ Statistical Account, vol. xi. p. 420.

² The battle of Inverury was fought on the 22d May, 1308, and Edward's letter for the relief of Aberdeen is dated the 10th July, 1308. *Rotuli Scotiæ*, 1—3. Ed. II. m. 14, p. 55.

