

CONFLICT AT LINLITHGOW BRIDGE.*

A.D 1526.

THE royal burgh of Linlithgow and its neighbourhood have been the scene of several remarkable transactions, which are prominently noticed in Scottish history. Among those events of importance was the conflict between the Earls of Lennox and Arran on the 4th of September 1526, during the reign of James V. It began on the plain opposite the Priory of Manuel, but the battle raged chiefly near the bridge over the Avon, which bounds the parish on the west, and divides the county of Linlithgow from Stirling, where there is a field anciently used for military exercises and amusements which bears the name of the *Joisting-haugh*.

* Pinkerton's History of Scotland; Hume of Godscroft's History of the Houses of Douglas and Angus; Pitcairn's Criminal Trials; Anderson's Historical Memoirs of the House of Hamilton; Lindsay of Pitscottie's History; Memorie of the Somervells; Statistical Account of Scotland; Douglas' Peerage of Scotland.

There was at one time a cairn called *Lennox's Cairn*, to which passengers contributed a stone, but this memorial has long disappeared, and the cultivation of the ground has obliterated any recollection of the precise spot.

Shortly after the assumption of the government by James V. the Earl of Angus was allowed, by the intercession of Cardinal Wolsey, to return to Scotland, and he soon contrived to form a considerable party in opposition to the Queen (the mother of James) and the Earl of Arran, who had then the chief direction of public affairs. In a dispute which ensued about the most suitable place for holding a Parliament, Angus did not hesitate to lay siege to the Castle of Edinburgh, whither the King, the Queen-Mother, and the Earl of Arran, had retreated for protection, but the influence of the Scottish bishops procured an accommodation, and it was arranged that the care of the King's person should be transferred to eight peers of Parliament in rotation, of whom were the rival Earls of Arran and Angus.

When it came to the turn of the Earl of Angus to assume the care of the King's person, that nobleman so completely gained the ascendancy over James, that the ancient power of the House of Douglas seemed to have revived after the slumber of nearly a century. The restraint which the King was compelled to endure made him sigh when he beheld his former flatterers turned into his gaolers, and after making several unsuccessful attempts to emancipate himself from his thralldom, he applied to John Stuart, third Earl of Lennox, the grandfather of Lord Darnley, who had been one of the Lords of the Regency in 1524, to attempt to relieve him. That nobleman, who was universally beloved in Scotland, prepared to obey the King's command, and retiring to Stirling he published a manifesto, inviting all loyal subjects to join him in his projected enterprise to rescue their sovereign from the control of an am-

bitious family. He soon found himself at the head of a powerful body of zealous adherents. The Earls of Glencairn, Cassillis, and others, resorted to him from the western counties. Numerous reinforcements arrived from Fife, Forfarshire, Perthshire, and Stirlingshire; a thousand Highlanders joined him as volunteers: the Queen-Mother and Archbishop Beaton of St Andrews, who was also Lord Chancellor, exerted their influence in his favour, and he at length mustered nearly 12,000 men, with whom he took the field, and advanced from Stirling towards Edinburgh.

The Earl of Angus at this crisis made some overtures of reconciliation to his rival the Earl of Arran, offering him a share in the administration, and at the same time intimating that it was the intention of James to declare Lennox the heir to the crown, in prejudice of the rights of the House of Hamilton. This promise, and especially the insinuation respecting the succession to the crown, had the desired effect, and both determined to waive all political and family differences in support of their common cause.

Lennox was the nephew of Arran, and Angus expected that this relationship might induce him to listen to the remonstrances of his uncle, but that hope proved fallacious, and the rage of Lennox was increased when he saw his kinsman and friend appearing as his avowed enemy, in defence of a cause which was to him personally oppressive. The Earl of Arran failed in his negotiations with his nephew, and dispatched a messenger to Angus, who was then at Edinburgh with the King, to prepare for a contest. That nobleman immediately issued a proclamation in the King's name, summoning all men between the ages of sixteen and sixty to join him and follow to the field of battle.

The royal standard was soon unfurled, and James was even compelled to lead the bands of Douglas against his own friends. Pretending indisposition he delayed the march as long as possible, but Angus resolved to proceed

with the utmost expedition, having engaged to meet the Earl of Arran at Linlithgow. He left the King under the care of his brother Sir George Douglas, a gentleman of impetuous passions, whose violence of spirit induced him to utter a threat on this occasion which the King never forgot. James was in the rear following the troops of Angus, who had marched to Linlithgow to form a junction with Arran, when, after passing the village of Corstorphine, the sound of the artillery was heard announcing that the conflict had commenced. Sir George having in vain urged the King to use speed, he at last uttered this unguarded expression—“ Sir, should our enemies vanquish us, we shall tear you in pieces rather than surrender your person.”

Lennox, who was informed of the time and place of the meeting between his uncle Arran and Angus, set out from Stirling with the intention of cutting off the Hamiltons before they could join the latter, but the scouts of his relative got notice of his approach; and Arran, after sending off an express to Edinburgh to hasten Angus and his retainers, seized the bridge across the Avon, little more than a mile westward of the town of Linlithgow. Stationing a strong party to defend this important passage, he took up his position on a rising ground nearly opposite the priory of Manuel or Emanuel. Lennox was obliged to ford the Avon, and his men were considerably fatigued by this exertion, as well as by the labours of the march. Arran sent some gentlemen of the name of Hamilton to his nephew, for whom, notwithstanding their opposition to each other, he retained a great regard, to dissuade him from the prosecution of the enterprise, adding, that if he advanced any farther the Hamiltons must oppose his progress; but Lennox returned an answer, that “ he was determined to advance to Edinburgh in spite of all opposition.” No sooner had this deputation retired, when he divided his

army into three bodies, and prepared to attack the Hamiltons.

The vanguard of Lennox imprudently made too much haste when advancing against their adversaries, who were in possession of the adjacent heights, and were out of breath when they came to close quarters with the Hamiltons. The latter stood their ground, and charged their assailants with such fury as to drive them back to their second line. At this critical moment a detachment of the forces of Angus came up, shouting, *A Douglas! A Douglas!* Immediately the army of Lennox gave way, and a total rout ensued, which was marked by a considerable slaughter.

When the King, who was under the care of Sir George Douglas, first heard the sound of the artillery, he sent forward Sir Andrew Wood of Largo with orders for both parties to cease fighting, and especially to ensure the safety of the Earl of Lennox. Sir Andrew, on his arrival on the field of battle, found the Hamiltons victorious and the army of Lennox discomfited. In one part of the field he descried the Master of Glencairn with about thirty followers maintaining his ground against fearful odds, and he conveyed that young nobleman to a place of safety. In another quarter he found the Earl of Arran weeping bitterly over his expiring nephew Lennox, and exclaiming in anguish —“The wisest, the best, the bravest man in Scotland has fallen this day!” He covered the body with his scarlet cloak, and placed a guard over it to protect it from outrage. During the action, brief as it was, the Earl of Lennox had been wounded and taken prisoner by Hamilton of Bardowie, who, knowing Arran’s regard for him, was providing for his safety when he was met by Sir James Hamilton of Finnart, who killed him on the spot. The Abbots of Melrose and Dunfermline, and several gentlemen, were also killed in

this battle. As some atonement for his cruel deed Hamilton of Finnart afterwards granted to the preaching friars of Glasgow ten merks yearly from the lands of Strathaven, to say prayers and masses for the soul of the Earl of Lennox. He was rewarded by Angus with the captaincy of the Palace of Linlithgow, and with lands in Linlithgowshire, all of which were confirmed in the Parliament held at Edinburgh in November following.

After this success the Earl of Angus prepared to take vengeance on all his enemies, and particularly Archbishop Beaton of St Andrews, against whom the Hamiltons were greatly irritated for having caused Patrick Hamilton, Abbot of Fearn, to be burnt for heresy in the spring of that year. The Archbishop, to avoid their fury, fled to the mountains of Badenoch, where he wandered about in the disguise of a shepherd till he could return in safety, but his Castle of St Andrews and the Abbey of Dunfermline were pillaged. He soon after made peace with Angus and Arran by an affected submission, and by giving to the former a present of two thousand merks, to the latter the Abbey of Kilwinning.

Many now became the vassals of the Douglasses and the Hamiltons to preserve their lives and estates; the country was a prey to all manner of injustice, the favour of Angus being superior to the laws. The Laird of Langthenbar, who had killed MacLellan of Bombie, at the door of St Giles' Church in Edinburgh, walked in the streets as coolly as if he had committed no crime. All the lucrative and influential offices of the court were monopolized by the House of Douglas, whilst Arran, advanced in years, and lamenting bitterly the slaughter of Lennox, retired from public affairs, and spent the remainder of his life on his own estates.

In this condition matters continued till 1527, when an accident occurred which nearly turned the swords of the Douglasses and the Hamiltons against each other. Several

disturbances on the Borders threatened to involve Scotland in a quarrel with England, and Angus prepared to suppress the marauders. The forces of Angus and Arran marched to Edinburgh to attend the King on this projected expedition. It happened that an under groom or assistant in the stables of the Earl of Lennox, who fell at Linlithgow Bridge, resolved to revenge his master's death by the assassination of Sir James Hamilton of Finnart. This man, who had been out of employment since the slaughter of the Earl by Hamilton, was incited to commit this desperate crime either by his devoted attachment to his late master, or from an idea of making himself conspicuous by some notable exploit. He came to Edinburgh, and meeting with an individual who had also been one of the domestic servants of Lennox, he asked him if he had seen Sir James Hamilton recently in that city. The man replied that he had passed him on the street that very day. "Ungrateful wretch!" exclaimed the groom, "how could you behold the bastard of Arran, the murderer of our master, without stabbing him to the heart? Begone, and disgrace me not by your base company." This occurred on the High Street, and hastening down the Canongate to Holyroodhouse, he arrived there during a review of the Hamiltons and Douglasses, which was held in the court-yard in front of the palace. While gazing on the military parade, amid the crowd of idlers whom curiosity had brought thither, he recognized Sir James Hamilton in the ranks at the head of a company of his retainers. During the parade Sir James left his followers, and crossing the court-yard unarmed and unattended, he entered the Palace of Holyrood by a dark staircase near the principal entrance which led to a narrow gallery. The man sprung forward from the crowd, and closely followed the murderer of Lennox, whom he attacked in this narrow gallery. Sir James defended himself as well as he could by parrying the thrusts of his assailant, and holding his

cloak before him, but he at length fell with six severe wounds, none of which, however, proved mortal. The man left him extended on the floor of the gallery, as he thought dead, and mingled with the crowd in front of the palace, concealing his weapon in his pocket ; but the alarm had been given, and the greatest confusion prevailed. The Hamiltons supposed that the deed had been perpetrated by some one connected with the Douglasses, and were preparing to revenge it by a regular assault on their allies, when an order was issued to close the gates of the courtyard that none might escape, and all present were obliged to arrange themselves singly along the walls for the purpose of being searched. By this expedient the assassin was discovered with the bloody knife in his possession. He was instantly seized and conveyed to prison, where he was put to the torture in the hope of discovering if he had any accomplices. But his sufferings had no power over his determined resolution. He declared that the act was his own contrivance, and when his right hand was cut off, he observed with a sarcastic smile, that it was punished less than it deserved for having failed to revenge the murder of his beloved master.

The release of James V. from the control of the Family of Douglas in 1528 is thus narrated by Pinkerton :—
 “ James prevailed on his mother to abandon to him her Castle of Stirling in exchange for the lands of Methven, to be erected into a peerage for her husband. Having thus secured that important fortress as his special property, and appointed confidential officers, he digested his plan, probably by Archbishop Beaton’s assistance, and apprised the peers who were attached to himself and inimical to Angus. The King was now at Falkland, amusing himself with the pleasures of the chase, and Beaton being then unsuspected by the Douglasses, the proximity of residence rendered an intercourse between James and him easy and commodious.

Angus had gone to Lothian on necessary affairs, leaving with the King Sir Archibald his uncle, Sir George his brother, and James of Parkhead, captain of the royal guard. The uncle soon after travelled to Dundee to visit his mistress; the brother to St Andrews to conclude an advantageous lease with the primate; and the guard of one hundred, commanded by Parkhead, was esteemed a sufficient check on the motions of the monarch.

“ James seized the opportunity, ordered preparations for a solemn hunting on the ensuing day at seven in the morning, and pretended to retire early to rest; an example followed by the captain of the guard, after placing the usual watch. The King, disguised as a groom, and attended by two faithful servants, passed to the stables, and mounting fleet horses they reached Stirling by dawn of day, where having commanded the gates to be shut, and no entrance allowed except by the royal order, he retired to the Castle and enjoyed some repose after his fatigue. He afterwards proceeded to a council, consisting of Arran, Argyle, Moray, Eglinton, and the Lords Montgomery, Evandale, Sinclair, and Maxwell.

“ Meanwhile Sir George Douglas having returned to Falkland at eleven o'clock on the preceding evening, was next morning awakened with the dreadful tidings of the monarch's escape. After a vain search, he cried out, *Treason! the King is gone!* A messenger was instantly despatched to Angus, who returned, and they determined to proceed to Stirling. But on their journey a herald met them with a proclamation, enjoining on pain of treason that none of the House of Douglas or its followers should approach within six miles of the court. After some deliberation it was resolved to obey the royal mandate, and the power of the House of Douglas, which had spread like an Alpine torrent after rain, was reduced by the burning sun to its former narrow channel.”

Such was the final result of the conflict at Linlithgow Bridge, and it now only remains to add some notices of the subsequent fate of Sir James Hamilton of Finnart, the murderer of Lennox. He was the illegitimate son of the Earl of Arran, and was consequently a cousin of Lennox. His mother was either a daughter of Lord Boyd or of Boyd of Bonshaw, and he was the ancestor of the Hamiltons of Evandale, Crawfordjohn, Gilkerscleuch, and other branches of that illustrious family. It is worthy of notice that he was the architect of Holyrood Palace at Edinburgh—not, of course, of the present palace, which was the work of Charles II.'s reign, but of the old palace before it was burnt when Cromwell's soldiers were quartered in it, and of which the north-west tower still remains. The noble author of the "Memorie of the Somervells" informs us that Sir James Hamilton by his "father's donation had the lands of Finhard (Finnart) given him in patrimony, by which he was ever designed; although afterwards by his interest at Court, and great trust and favour he had of King James the Fifth, being his treasurer, he purchased in a short time a vast fortune in lands, equal to, if not beyond, the House of Hamilton itself, as was supposed; and for strong and stately houses, being the King's master of works, and the *principal architect of that age*, there was none did equal him for the royal houses, such as the Palace of Holyroodhouse, Linlithgow, Falkland, and some part of the forework of the Castle of Stirling."

It appears that in 1540 Sir James, by the influence of the clergy with the King, had been appointed ecclesiastical judge in all matters of heresy, and he was in such favour with James V. that he was allowed to incorporate part of the royal arms with his own armorial bearings—a distinction which his descendant, the representative of his family, still retains. The acceptance of the office of judge in mat

ters of heresy was, however, fatal to his ambition, and it was reserved for a Hamilton and a kinsman to achieve his ruin.

Sir Patrick Hamilton of Kincavil, an illegitimate son of James Lord Hamilton, father of the Earl of Arran, by a daughter of Witherspoon of Brighthouse, left two sons by his wife Catherine, daughter of Alexander Duke of Albany, namely, James Hamilton of Kincavil, sheriff of Linlithgowshire, and Patrick Hamilton, Abbot of Fearn, who was burnt at St Andrews in 1526 for his attachment to the doctrines of the Reformation. The family of Kincavil continued stedfast in the same religious principles, and incurred the deadly hatred of the supporters of the Roman Catholic hierarchy. One of Kincavil's sons was singled out by the clergy as particularly obnoxious, and it was resolved to make an example of him by visiting him with a fate similar to that of his uncle the martyred Abbot of Fearn. Sir James Hamilton of Finnart would have been the person whose duty it was to pronounce sentence, if this design had not been fortunately prevented.

When Hamilton of Kincavil was informed of the intended prosecution, he resolved to use every exertion to save his son's life, and he sent a younger son with a private message to the King. This gentleman, while hastening to Edinburgh, overtook the King riding early in the morning towards the Queensferry, and falling on his knees he requested an audience of his Majesty, alleging that he had matters of the utmost importance to communicate which were connected with the safety of his royal person. James listened to his statements a few minutes, and not being inclined to return to Edinburgh, he took a signet ring from his finger, and told young Hamilton to show it to his treasurer Kirkaldy, Sir Thomas Erskine his secretary, and Sir Thomas Learmonth the master of his household, whom he

would find at his arrival in Edinburgh sitting in the Exchequer, and freely narrate to them whatever he had to communicate.

Young Hamilton had an interview with those officers of the Court when he arrived in Edinburgh, and accused Sir James Hamilton of Finnart of having frequently boasted to his intimate friends of the proximity of the Hamilton Family to the crown; also that he had hired desperate ruffians to murder the King, and that he had grossly misapplied and embezzled the money placed at his disposal for the erection and repair of the royal palaces and castles. A council was immediately assembled, and the Lord Lyon King-at-Arms was ordered to apprehend Sir James Hamilton of Finnart, which he did that very day, and lodged him in the Castle of Edinburgh. There are no traces in the criminal records of the proceedings against him farther than the prosecution and conviction, but his fate was a merited retribution for his treacherous murder of the Earl of Lennox at the field of Linlithgow Bridge, that atrocious act having been aggravated by the circumstance that the Earl had a few minutes before surrendered himself a prisoner.

When the *Bastard of Arran*, as Finnart was often designated, found himself immured in the prison of Edinburgh Castle, he wrote to the King, who was then at Falkland, requesting permission to defend himself in the royal presence; to which James acceded, and an order was sent for his liberation. When this was put into the hands of the Treasurer and his colleagues, dreading the vengeance of Finnart, whose character for intrigue and tyranny they well knew, they instantly set out for Falkland, and in addition to the charges already preferred against him, they accused Sir James of keeping up a correspondence and conspiring with the banished Earl of Angus against the King's government and person, and they concluded by representing to

James that if he pardoned offences of such magnitude, he would endanger his own and the public safety.

The King returned without delay to Edinburgh, and notwithstanding the powerful intercession made in behalf of Finnart he was brought to trial, and accused of "determining to break up the King's chamber door to slay him, and that he had private conferences with the Douglasses, declared enemies of the state." The jury, composed of barons and country gentlemen, some of whom it is said were his personal enemies, found him guilty, and he was condemned to death. James suffered his favourite to be beheaded and quartered at Edinburgh on the 16th of August 1540, and his estates were confiscated to the Crown and bestowed on numerous courtiers; but in 1543 his son obtained a recall of the forfeiture. The downfall of the *Bastard of Arran* occasioned much surprise at the time, and Pit-scottie quaintly observes, that "the countrie marvelled meikle that sic ane man, of so great credence, was so suddenly put down by (beyond) ony man's expectations." Another old writer observes that "his death, because of his former wicked life, was lamented by verie few, except of his awin friends and the priests, who had fixed the hope of the suretie of their haif estate in him."

"After this time," continues the same authority, "the King began to suspect the nobilitie. Solicitude pinches his troubled mind, quhilk unsettled, was troubled in the night by visious, whereof ane is reported, verie notabill. He thocht he saw Sir James Hamilton of Fynnairt come upon him with a naked sword, and first cut his right arm and next his left arm, and threatening, after a short space, to take his life, he evanished. As he awaked in ane feir, and revolved upon the event of the dream, soon afterwards he was advertized that baith his sons were deceased, the ane at Sanct Androis, the other at Streveling, on ane day, and almost in ane hour."