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THE
HISTORY OF SCOTLAND.

By
SIR WALTER SCOTT, BART

In Two Volumes

VOL. II.



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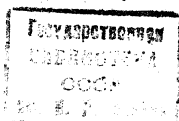
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THE HISTORY OF SCOTLAND.

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THE alarm which followed upon the melancholy event of the field of Flodden through the whole kingdom of

Scotland was universal and appalling ; but fortunately those who had to direct the energies of the state under circumstances so adverse, were composed of a metal competent to the task. The commissioners who exercised the power of the magistracy of Edinburgh, for the lord provost and magistrates in person had accompanied the king to the fatal field, set a distinguished example of resolution. A proclamation is extant, in which, speaking of the misfortune of the king and his host as a rumour of which there was yet no certainty, they appointed the females of respectability to pass to church, those of the lower rank to forbear clamouring and shrieking in the streets, and all men capable of bearing arms to take their weapons, and be ready, on the first tolling of the great bell of the city, to attend upon the magistrates, and contribute to the defence of the town. It is the language of Rome when Hannibal was at the gates.

The victorious English were, therefore, expected to appear shortly before the walls of the metropolis ; but Surrey's army had been summoned together for defending their own frontier, not for the invasion of Scotland. The crown vassals did not remain in the field after their term of service had been rendered : and though the victory was gained, yet a loss of at least four thousand men had thinned the ranks of the conquerors. The absence of Henry VIII. prevented any vindictive measures, which he was likely enough to have taken, on finding the kingdom of his late brother by the recent defeat exposed to receive its doom at the hand of a conqueror.

A general council of the Scottish nobles was convoked at Perth (October, 1513) to concert what national measures ought to be adopted for the government of the kingdom at this exigency. The number of the nobles who gave attendance was few, and the empty seats and shortened roll gave melancholy evidence of the extent of the late loss. The queen was readily admitted to the regency, a compliment which might be intended to conciliate her brother Henry. It had not, however, that effect. Letters arrived from France, by which the

king of England strictly commanded and fiercely urged that the success at Flodden should be followed up by repeated inroads upon the Scottish frontiers, where a desolating though indecisive war was maintained accordingly.

Driven to despair by the severity of Henry, the Scottish council began to look towards France, and to turn their eyes to a prince of the blood-royal, now resident there, and next heir to the crown of Scotland, had James IV. died childless. This was John duke of Albany, son of that Alexander duke of Albany, who was brother to James III., and who, having been declared a traitor for attaching himself to England, had ended his days in France. To this duke John a strong party in Scotland proposed to assign the regency, which they wished no longer to intrust with a female and an Englishwoman, sister to a monarch who used his success so unsparingly. Whatever efforts might have been made to support Margaret in the office to which the king's will had admitted her, they became unavailing by her marrying the earl of Angus as soon as she had recovered from her confinement, in which she bore a posthumous child to James IV. A marriage so soon after the death of her royal husband was prejudicial to her reputation, and, as it placed her personally under the control of a subject, rendered her incapable of holding and exercising the sovereign power of regent.

In some respects, indeed, her choice could not be amended. Earl Archibald of Angus was grandson and successor to him whom we have so often distinguished by the name of Bell-the-Cat. His father and uncle had fallen at Flodden ; his aged grandfather had carried his sorrows for Scotland, and for his own loss of two gallant sons, into the shade of religious retirement. This young man, therefore, was at the head of the second branch of the house of Douglas, which had risen to a degree of power destined once more to make their sovereign tremble. Angus was also all that could win a lady's eye ; he was splendid in attire, retinue, and house-

keeping ; handsome, brave, and active. But he had the faults of his family, being ambitious and desirous of power ; and he had those of his youth, being headlong and impetuous in his passions, wild and unrestrained in his conduct. He did not pay the queen, who was some years older than himself, that deference which Margaret might have expected from decorum if not from affection, and at best was a negligent and faithless husband. His ambition aspired to maintain his wife's claims to the regency, although forfeited, as already said, by her second marriage.

But the preferable claim of Albany was maintained by the Scottish nobility, who asserted the right of the next in succession to rule the kingdom during the minority of the monarch. Albany had, indeed, an elder brother ; but as a divorce after his birth had passed between his parents, for being related within the forbidden degrees, he was regarded as illegitimate. The right of this prince to the chief government was in an especial manner supported by the earl of Arran, head of the house of Hamilton, and connected with the royal family by his mother, Mary Stuart, the eldest daughter of king James II., who, when widow of the fallen favourite, Thomas Boyd earl of Arran, had married the first lord Hamilton. The title of her first husband was conferred upon her son by the second, who thus became the first earl of Arran of the name of Hamilton. This powerful nobleman, waving some pretensions which he himself might have made to the regency, added great weight to that party which pleaded the rights of Albany.

1515. The duke of Albany came over to Scotland accordingly, and was installed as regent. In the same year the lingering war with England was put an end to by the inclusion of Scotland in the peace which had been agreed upon betwixt France and that country.

The regent Albany, bred in the court of Francis I., and a personal favourite of that monarch, was more of a courtier than of a soldier or a statesman ; and the winning qualities of vivacity and grace of manners which had

gained him favour and applause while in France, were lost on the rude nobility of Scotland. He possessed the pride of high birth, and the command of considerable wealth, for his wife had been heiress of the county of Auvergne; but his talents were of a mean order, and he was alike insolent and pusillanimous.

Albany was not long in showing that he was about to direct the power of regent, now that he had obtained the office, against Angus and his wife, by whom his ascent to the dignity had been opposed. He obtained an order from the parliament that the royal children should be delivered up to him. Margaret, after a vain resistance, was compelled to place the infant king and his short-lived brother Alexander under the suspicious care of an aspiring kinsman; and her husband Angus hastened to the border, to consult with lord Home upon some means of withstanding the oppressive severity of the regent's government. Albany, however, was powerful enough to disconcert all their measures, even though Arran, deserting the regent's party, was so mutable as to make common cause with Home. The queen-mother, far advanced in her pregnancy, was driven into England, where she was delivered of a female infant, in the miserable turret of a Northumbrian baron, from which she afterwards took refuge in her brother's court. The circumstance, however, of having been born in England was of considerable advantage to the lady Margaret Douglas in calculating her proximity to the English crown.

Meantime the regent became unpopular. The younger of the two Scottish princes died in his custody, not without foul suspicion of neglect or poison. The nation sympathised with the distresses and danger of the royal family; the dissatisfaction at Albany's government became universal; and the king's person was taken from his custody, and placed in the hands of certain select peers, to whose loyalty he might be safely intrusted. The regent found his power restricted and his situation unpleasant, and entertained thoughts of