land; and at length, in a fruitless effort to regain his lost power by invading the Merse along with the earl of North­umberland, he was totally routed by the earl of Angus, and driven a landless fugitive into England.

The remainder of this reign was employed by the king in an endeavour to complete the work which he had begun ; by strengthening the power of the crown, and giving security to the persons and property of his subjects ; by attaching to his party the great and influential body of the clergy, carry­ing into effect various parliamentary enactments for the de­fence of the borders against the attacks of England, and cultivating the warlike character of his people. Amid these kingly cares, he unwisely suffered himself to be entangled by the contests between the Yorkists and Lancastrians; and having espoused the party of Henry the Sixth, levied an army, and met his death by the bursting of one of his own guns at the siege of Roxburgh. He was succeeded by his son James the Third, a boy in his eighth year.

The death of a sovereign thus cut off in the prime of his manhood and usefulness, leaving an infant successor, would have been a deep calamity at all times, but it was especial­ly so at this moment. James the Second had with uncom­mon vigour and judgment reduced the overgrown power of his nobles; but he died before his plans were matured, leaving the nation at war with England, the seeds of civil disunion lurking in his kingdom and ready to spring up, and the more northern parts of the realm held by fierce chiefs, who were disposed, on the slightest provocation, to throw off their al­legiance. With these island lords, Edward the Fourth en­tered into a strict alliance ; and the banished Douglases, now become English subjects, agreed to assist him in a con­federacy, the object of which was nothing less than the conquest and partition of Scotland. It was to be expected that the favour shewn by that country to the expatriated monarch Henry the Sixth, should have deeply incensed his rival ; but the facility with which he purchased his instru­ments, and found them in the ranks of the Scottish nobles, who became the vassals of England, is a mortifying fact.

From these general remarks it is easy to anticipate the history of this reign, and the scenes which it presented. In­to their minuter details it is impossible to enter. For a while the energy of the queen-mother supported the go­vernment. On the news of the death of her husband, in­stead of giving herself up to unavailing grief, she repaired with all speed to the camp before Roxburgh, carrying with her her infant son, now king ; him she presented to the nobles, and urged them for him and his father’s sake to press forward the siege. She was obeyed, and Rox­burgh was taken; but fatal disputes soon succeeded to this success, and it required all the vigour of the queen, with her chief minister, Bishop Kennedy, a man of high character and talent, to struggle against the difficulties which' surrounded them. In the northern parts of the kingdom all was unsettled ; and the earl of Ross espousing the cause of Edward the Fourth, proclaimed himself king of the He­brides, while the earl of Angus, on whom, after the fall of the house of Douglas, a large share of their power had de­volved, undertook to support the party of Henry the Sixth, contrary to the wishes of the queen and Bishop Kennedy. At this crisis, the young sovereign lost his mother Mary of Gueldres ; and, after a few years, Bishop Kennedy followed her to the grave; events which deprived the government of its best, or rather of its only support. Yet amid all these com­plicated dangers, it is remarkable, that for fifteen years, the interval occupied by the minority of this prince, the affairs of the country were prosperous.

On the death of Bishop Kennedy, the chief power in the government had fallen into the hands of William Lord Boyd, the high Justiciar, a baron hitherto little known, but whose power rose, in a few years, to a height which almost rivalled that of the once formidable Douglases. He became

governor of the king’s person ; filled every office with his dependants ; married his eldest son, who was created earl of Arran, to the king’s sister ; and acquired so much influence over the young king, rather, it would seem, by terror than by love, that he appeared completely subservient to his wishes. The decay of this family was as sudden as its rise. A marriage had been negociated between the king and Mar­garet princess of Denmark, and scarcely was it conclud­ed, when a faction of the nobles, at the head of whom was the monarch himself, suddenly attacked the Boyds, ar­raigned them of high treason, seized and confiscated their large estates, and brought to the scaffold their principal leader. A divorce was instituted against the earl of Arran and his wife, the princess Mary, sister to the king ; and she was compelled to give her hand to Lord Hamilton, a fa­vourite of the young monarch. It was through this mar­riage that the family of Hamilton, which now rose into great power upon the ruin of the Boyds, became, in the subse­quent reign of Mary, the nearest heirs to the crown.

James had now attained majority, and in assuming the full administration of the government, he found his king­dom more opulent, more secure, and more powerful, than could have been anticipated from the struggles of his minority. The important isles of Orkney and Zetland had been acquired with the daughter of Denmark ; the rich town of Berwick, and the border fortress of Roxburgh, had been occupied by the Scots ; the earldom of Ross had been annexed to the crown ; the independence and liberty of the Scottish Church established by the erection of St. Andrews into an archbishopric ; and, lastly, a marriage treaty with England, by which the youngest daughter of Edward the Fourth was betrothed to the king’s eldest son, seemed to pro­mise security and peace in this formidable quarter. If such had already been the success of this reign, it seemed not unreasonable to look forward to still greater prosperity in after years ; and yet the history of the country, from the moment when the monarch attained his majority, presents a melancholy contrast to this beginning. This reverse we are inclined to ascribe partly to the personal qualities of the king, partly to some changes in the power and dis­positions of the great body of the feudal nohles, which are discernible at this period, not in Scotland only, but in all the feudal kingdoms of Europe.

Some of our historians have represented James the Third as a compound of indolence, caprice, and imbecility ; but their opinion seems rash and unfounded. His character was different from that of the age in which he lived, and in some respects it was far beyond it. The times were rude, warlike, and unintellectual. The king was fond of repose, and addicted to a seclusion in which he might de­vote himself to pursuits which bespoke a refined and cul­tivated mind: a passion for mathematics, and the study of judicial astrology, a taste for architecture, a love for the science and practice of music, and a generous disposition to patronize the professors of literature and philosophy, ra­ther than to surround himself with a crowd of fierce retainers, were the prominent features in the mind of this unfor­tunate prince ; tastes which have been reprobated by contemporary historians, but which, if duly regulated, were rather praiseworthy than the contrary. Unfortunately, however, this due regulation was wanting. James had the weakness, not only to patronize, but to confer feudal rank, and distinctions, hitherto appropriated to the nobles, upon the professors of his favourite studies. Architects, musi­cians, painters, and astrologers, were admitted to the fami­liar converse of the sovereign, while the highest nobles found a cold reception or a positive denial of access. Is it any subject of surprise, that a fierce nobility should have been disgusted with such conduct, and that the king’s war­like brothers, the earls of Albany and Mar, should have been regarded as the chief support of the state ?