hands, had not completed his seventeenth year ; but he had been nursed in the school of difficulty, and his character had acquired a consistency and vigour far superior to his age. This was the more to his credit, because the Douglases had neglected his education; and while they gave him no op­portunities of cultivating the qualities which might have made him a blessing to his people, permitted him to indulge in that love of pleasure and tendency to dissipation which was incident to his temperament and time of life. Happily his character, although it did not escape the pollution of such a base system, survived it; and, with some great faults, the king possessed at the same time not a few of the highest qualities which became a wise and good prince. Strict and scrupulously just, unwearied in his application to business, earnest in his endeavours to remove the complicated bur­dens which, under the tyranny of the late oligarchy, had oppressed the people ; generous, though somewhat warm in his temper, easy of access, a stranger to pride, and fond, al­most to a fault, of mingling familiarly with all classes of his subjects; he soon rendered himself, young as he was, an object of respect to his nobles, and of affection to his people.

The principles which regulated his future government sprung naturally from the circumstances of his early life. The sternest resentment against Angus and the house of Douglas, was combined with a determination to assert and regain the rights of the crown, and to abridge the power of an aristocracy, which had grown intolerable during a long minority. Towards his uncle, Henry the Eighth, it was impossible that his feelings could be any other than those of resentment and suspicion. It was by this prince that there had been introduced into Scotland an organised sys­tem of corruption, of which his able and unscrupulous mi­nister, lord Dacre, had been the author. Many Scottish nobles had become the pensioned agents of the English go­vernment ; paid informers swarmed in the court and through the country. All idea of conquering Scotland by force of arras had been long since abandoned ; but a more insidious expedient was adopted, by which the English king, main­taining the Douglases in their usurped dominion, received in return their homage and fidelity, and administered the go­vernment at his pleasure.

James’s great objects, which we can trace through the whole remaining period of his reign, were to put an end to this system of foreign dictation ; to restore its ancient and constitutional prerogatives to the crown ; to bridle the ex­orbitant power of the great nobles, raising up as a check upon them the large and influential body of his clergy; to encourage the mercantile and commercial classes of his people ; and to facilitate the administration of the laws, and insure equal justice to the lowest orders of the community.

For the accomplishment of such ends, it was first neces­sary to exhibit a wholesome example of retributive justice upon those who had been the greatest delinquents. It was declared treason for any person to hold intercourse with Angus, and every Douglas was commanded to leave the ca­pital on pain of death. Angus himself was commanded to re­main beyond the waters of the Spey, and required to deliver his brother Sir George Douglas, and his uncle Archibald, as hostages, for his answering to his summons of treason. Having haughtily disobeyed these orders, a parliament as­sembled. He was proclaimed a traitor, and his lands no­minally divided among those nobles to whom James owed his late success. It was easier, however, to promulgate than to execute such decrees against so powerful a baron ; nor was it till after repeated attacks upon Tantallon, some of them led by the king in person, that the arch-offender was reduced, and compelled to seek an asylum in England.

James next directed his attention to the state of the bor­ders ; and in an expedition which was long remembered for the vigour, dispatch, and severity of the royal vengeance,

inflicted punishment upon the greatest offenders, among whom was the noted freebooter, Johnnie Armstrong, and reduced the district into a state of tranquillity. Scarcely was this accomplished, when the Orkneys were threatened to be torn from the crown by the rebellion of the earl of Caith­ness ; and the Isles became the scene of a fierce struggle between the earl of Argyll and Alexander of Isla, one of the most powerful chiefs of that remote region. The judg­ment and energy of the monarch were shewn in the speedy re-establishment of peace in both quarters ; and the peo­ple, aware that the sceptre was once more in a firm hand, readily and gratefully co-operated with their sovereign in all his labours.

England and France were now at peace, and Henry the Eighth and Francis the First united in a. strict alliance, which had for its object to bridle the increasing power of the emperor Charles the Fifth. Under these circumstan­ces, Henry proposed a matrimonial alliance with Scotland, and the design was encouraged by France ; while the em­peror, jealous of the power which so near a connexion with James might give to his enemies, offered in marriage to the young prince his sister, the queen of Hungary, or his niece, the daughter of Christiern, king of Denmark, with Norway as her dowry.

For the present, however, all these offers were declined, and the monarch appeared wholly engrossed with the pro­secution of his various plans for the melioration of his king­dom. Finding himself thwarted by the nobles, he was com­pelled to adopt decided measures, and to promote the clergy to those offices which had been filled by temporal barons. Argyll was thrown into prison, the earl of Crawford stripped of a large part of his estates ; the determination that no Douglas should ever bear sway in Scotland became a more stern and obstinate principle than before ; and while the archbishop of Glasgow, the abbot of Holyrood, and the bishop of Dunkeld, were principally consulted in affairs of state, many of the nobles who had hitherto enjoyed the royal confidence saw themselves treated with coldness and distrust.

It was at this time, that the king carried into effect two important measures, the one affecting the commer­cial interests of his kingdom, the other of still higher mo­ment, as an endeavour to secure to all classes of his subjects an equal and speedy administration of justice. A commer­cial treaty between Scotland and the Netherlands had been concluded by James the First, for the period of one hundred years. It was now approaching its termination, and an em­bassy was dispatched to Brussels, which renewed the league for another century. His second measure was the institution of the College of Justice, a court consisting of fourteen judges, one half selected from the spiritual, the other from the temporal estate, of which the idea is commonly believ­ed to have been suggested by the parliament of Paris. The principal design of this new judicature was to put an end to the delay and partiality arising out of the barons’ courts ; in other words, to remove the means of oppression out of the hands of the aristocracy ; but as it was provided, that the king might at his pleasure send three or four members of his council to give their votes, it was evident that the subject was freed from one grievance, only to be exposed to the hazard of another, whenever his rights might happen to come in collision with the crown.

During these transactions, the Douglases and their ad­herents were driven upon violent and discreditable courses, in proportion as their prospect of reconciliation to the king became more hopeless and remote. The earl of Bothwell, also a powerful border baron, whose excesses James had severely punished, entered into a traitorous alliance with Henry the Eighth, in which he engaged, if properly sup­ported, to dethrone his sovereign, and to “ crown the Eng­lish king in the town of Edinburgh within a brief time