was impossible ; and Murray’s friends who remained at court, and watched the increasing estrangement between the Queen and her husband, determined to turn it to their advantage.

It was the misfortune of the Scottish queen that she had few or no servants whom she could trust. Her secretary, Maitland of Lethington, had betrayed her interests to Eliza­beth, and was in disgrace, and, in the mean time, the queen had availed herself of the services of Riccio, her foreign secretary. This person had entered her service at first as a singer in her band, but afterwards, by his skill and fideli­ty, he raised himself to this confidential employment, much to the annoyance of the young king, who regarded him with peculiar aversion ; and, incredible as it may appear, Darnley having persuaded himself that he had stolen from him the affection of the young queen, resolved to assassinate him. Nor was it difficult, among a fierce and unscrupulous nobility, to find associates in his flagitious schemes. His father the earl of Lennox, Morton the lord chancellor, Lethington the ex-secretary, Murray and his friends who were in banishment, and many of the stern supporters of the reformation, who suspected Riccio of intriguing with the papal court, willingly joined in the conspiracy. The par­liament was at hand in which it was intended to pronounce sentence against the banished lords : it had been report­ed that measures were in preparation for the establishment of the Roman Catholic faith ; and it was determined to arrest both the one and the other by striking the blow against Riccio. Accordingly, when Mary, who was then six months gone with child, sat at supper in a small cabinet adjoining to her bed-room in the palace of Holyrood, the king led the conspirators up a secret stair which communicated with the apartment, while the earl of Morton and a band of armed soldiers seized the gates of the palace. The countess of Argyll, Erskine, captain of her guard, the comptroller of her household, Riccio her secretary, and one or two do­mestic servants formed the queen’s party, some sitting at table and others being in attendance. Indeed, the little closet or cabinet was so small that three or four persons could with difficulty have seated themselves. But its nar­row dimensions prevented escape and favoured the feroci­ous purposes of the conspirators. Led by the king they burst into the cabinet, overturned the table, and threw them­selves upon Riccio, who sprung for protection behind the queen. In a moment his fate was decided. One ruffian threatened Mary with his dagger, another held a pistol to her breast, a third, snatching the king’s dagger, stabbed Riccio over her shoulder ; and at last tearing him from the closet, amidst the shrieks of the women, and the shouts and execrations of the conspirators, they dispatched him, or rather cut him to pieces in an adjoining apartment, with fifty-six wounds.@@1

After this atrocious murder, which, considering the si­tuation of the queen, might have cost her and her infant their lives, the conspirators detained her as a prisoner in her palace, permitted no one but the king and their own party to hold any communication with her ; and having been joined next morning by the earl of Murray and the exiles from Carlisle, it was determined to make a complete change in the government. Darnley, weak and profligate as he was, they rewarded by placing at the head of their new sys­tem, being well aware that he would soon be their tool. The queen was to be confined in Stirling till she should con­sent to the full establishment of the reformed religion ; and the earl of Murray and his associates were to be restored to their former favour and power. In a single day all these in­tentions were overturned. Mary, left alone with her hus­band, regained her ascendancy over him ; she convinced him of the perfidy of Morton, Ruthven, and his associates,

obtained from him a confession of all the secrets of the con­spiracy, escaped with him to Dunbar, and being instantly joined by eight thousand men, advanced with such rapidity against the conspirators, that they fled ip dismay to Berwick, and solicited the protection of Elizabeth.

Darnley, in his confessions to Mary, had betrayed his brother conspirators whilst he solemnly asserted his own innocence ; but Morton and his associates produced in their own defence various bonds and letters, which were signed by the king, and fully established his guilt ; and Mary saw, to her inexpressible grief and disgust, that the cruel outrage was planned by her husband. From this moment this mi­serable prince became an object of contempt and aversion to all. His conduct had been a tissue of cowardice, cruelty, falsehood, and weakness : to treat him with confidence, or to entrust to him any share in the government was impossible; and the unhappy queen, without a stay to rest on, fell into a state of the deepest despondency. Whom indeed could she trust ? Murray and his party had but recently been rebels; Morton and his associates were stained by the blood of her confidential servant, murdered at her knees; the king was the chief conspirator, the queen of England had deceived her, the party of Knox and the Scottish church regarded her with avowed aversion ; and even the Roman Catholics were somewhat estranged by the preference which at first she had given to their opponents. Under these complicated dif­ficulties, the queen pursued the course which she deemed most likely to ensure success. She broke with none, par­doned some of the conspirators, affected to believe her hus­band, hoping even against hope, and restored Murray to some portion of the power of which he had been deprived. Such was the state of things, when, the period for her con­finement having arrived, she gave birth to a son in the castle of Edinburgh. The child was named James Charles, and on the death of Elizabeth succeeded to the English throne.

When her recovery permitted Mary to attend to the af­fairs of the country, it was apparent that unless imme­diate steps were taken to establish something like a strong government, the kingdom would fall to pieces ; and yet such was the weakness and treacherous nature of the king, that to admit him to a share in it was impossible. She next turned to her nobles. Of these the most powerful were Mur­ray, Bothwell, Huntly, Argyll, Lennox, Morton, and Le­thington; but there had long existed a feud between Mur­ray and Bothwell, while Morton, Lethington, Lennox, and their partizans were still in disgrace for the murder of Riccio. It was necessary to make an effort, and the queen succeeded in reconciling Murray to Bothwell : Huntly was made chancellor, Lethington was pardoned and restored to his office of secretary ; while Murray, Argyll his brother- in-law, and Bothwell, were entrusted with the chief man­agement of affairs.

Enraged at his exclusion from power, the king sullenly retired from court, threatened to murder the earl of Mur­ray, and at last declared he would leave the kingdom. It was in vain that his father remonstrated against his resolution ; in vain that the queen herself, leading him before her coun­cil., conjured him to detail his grievances, and if she had injured him in any respect, to accuse her without reserve. He declared she had herself given him no cause of com­plaint ; but afterwards, in a letter, he complained that he had no power in the state, that he was neglected by the no­bility, and would bear it no longer. Soon after this the unhappy princess was seized by a fever at Jedburgh, during which her life was despaired of. Her enemies ascribed it to the in­jurious effects of a rapid ride which she took from Jedburgh to visit Bothwell, who had been wounded in a skirmish with some border thieves ; it had more probably its origin in that anxiety which followed the conduct of Darnley ; but be

**@@@1 Keith's History of Scotland, p. 283,**