vengeance fell with a proportionably heavier force upon Murdoch, his son and successor ; nor is it possible to deny that James’s retribution was cruel and excessive. Murdoch, the duke of Albany, his two sons, the earl of Athole, and Alexander Stewart, with his father-in-law, the earl of Lennox, a venerable nobleman, eighty years of age, were tried, condemned, and executed. James, the duke’s young­est son, having escaped, collected a band of freebooters, and after sacking and plundering Dunbarton, took refuge in Ireland ; but five of his men fell into the king’s hands, and were torn in pieces by wild horses. So horrid a punish­ment, and the exterminating severity exhibited to all con­nected with the house of Albany, can admit of no justifica­tion ; and there is every reason to believe, that the early and miserable death of the monarch, is to be traced to the deep feelings of revenge with which some of his nobles from that moment regarded him. Neither is it possible to believe that the king in this instance carried along with him the feelings of the people. Yet looking at the state of things in Scotland, it is easy to understand his object. It was his intention to exhibit to a nobility, long accus­tomed to regard the laws with contempt, and the royal au­thority as a name of empty menace, a memorable example of stern and inflexible justice, to convince them that a great change had already taken place in the executive part of the government ; to furnish also a warning to the people, of the punishment which awaited those who imagined that fidelity to the commands of their feudal lord was paramount to the ties which bound them to obey the laws of their country.

Having given this severe and sanguinary lesson, the next efforts of the monarch were addressed to the internal ad­ministration of his kingdom. From without he had nothing to dread ; he was at peace with England, and his marriage with Jane Beaufort, the niece of Cardinal Beaufort, had, from her near relationship to the English monarch, strength­ened the ties between the two countries. France was the ancient ally of Scotland ; and the Netherlands profited too much from the Scottish trade not to be anxious to preserve the most friendly relations. The king could therefore direct his undivided attention to his affairs at home. His great principle, and it was one worthy of so wise a prince, seems to have been a determination to govern the country through the medium of his parliament. Of these convoca­tions of the national legislature, which had been rarely held under the regencies of the two Albanys, no less than thir­teen occurred during his brief reign, which, dating from his return in 1424, lasted only thirteen years. It is to him that Scotland owes the first clear recognition of the princi­ple of representation by the election of the commissaries for shires ; it was by him that one of the greatest improve­ments was introduced into the administration of justice, by the institution of a court of law known by the name of the Session. Nor was this all. Previously to his time, the laws and the acts of parliament had been published in Latin, and the great majority of the inferior judges to whom their execution was entrusted, were unable to understand them. To remedy this grievance, the king commanded the acts of parliament to be drawn up in the spoken language of the land ; an improvement so important, that it forms an era in our legislation. Other points of almost equal interest oc­cupied his attention. By his personal presence in the High­lands, and by the military force which he brought along with him, when he visited those remote districts of his do­minions, he introduced laws and order where there had formerly been little else than feudal licence and contempt for all authority. Although he cultivated the arts of peace, he did not forget that its surest preservative was an atten­tion to the military strength of his country. *Weapon-shaioings,* or military musters, were held periodically ; and hav­ing witnessed, when resident in England, and in the war of

Henry the Fifth with France, the great superiority of the English over the Scottish archers, he made it his earnest care that his subjects should cultivate this warlike accom­plishment. In many of the acts of the various parliaments of this monarch, we can also trace an attention to the en­couragement of agriculture, to the interests of foreign trade and domestic manufactures, to the state of his shipping and navy, to the prices of labour, and the melioration of the condition of the labourers of the soil., which clearly demonstrates the high and important objects that occu­pied the king’s mind, although the means he employed were not exactly those which should have suggested themselves to the experience of a more advanced age. Amid these severer duties, James gave an example to his rude barons of the cultivation of intellectual accomplishments. He was himself a poet ; and the king’s book, or King'sQuair, composed during his captivity in England, is still read by many with delight and enthusiasm. He was a reformer of the language of his country ; he composed pieces of music, and sang and accompanied himself on various instruments. It is probable, however, that these employments were rather the solace of his tedious confinement in England, than ob­jects of serious pursuit after his return.

Having so zealously devoted himself to the best interests of his kingdom, James had the satisfaction to see his mea­sures attended with success, and all seemed secure and prosperous, when he suddenly became the victim of a dark conspiracy. Under circumstances of extreme ferocity he was assassinated in the monastery of the Blackfriars at Perth, by Sir Robert Graham, the earl of Athole, and some accomplices who had been dependants of the house of Albany, The court was then at Perth, and James had taken up his residence in the Dominican monastery beside the town. The king was betrayed by his chamberlain, who facilitated the entrance of the conspirators, by removing or damaging the locks of the royal apartments. When the alarm was given, it is said that a lady who waited on the queen, named Catherine Douglas, thrust her arm into the staple of the door, and thus, before it was broken, heroically afforded a brief interval in which the king contrived to conceal him­self in a small vaulted chamber, where for some time he evaded discovery. The conspirators, under the idea that he had escaped, had dispersed themselves through the palace, and the unfortunate monarch might have been safe, if he had not prematurely attempted to leave his concealment. The noise which he made recalled one of the ruffians, who shout­ed to his companions ; and springing down into the vault, they threw themselves upon their defenceless victim and murdered him, after a desperate resistance. Although consi­derable obscurity hangs over the ramifications of the plot which ended thus fatally to the king, there exists no doubt that it owed its origin to indignation at the fate of Albany, and those deep feelings of feudal revenge which had been long cherished by the friends of that unhappy house; afford­ing a terrible lesson to princes of the reaction which may take place, when justice forgets her calmer mood, and pushes her punishments beyond example into revenge.

The death of James the First was a severe calamity to the country, exposing it for the third time since the death of Bruce to all the evils of a long minority. His eldest son, who succeeded to the throne bythe title of James the Second, was a boy only six years old ; and although the character of the queen-mother was marked by considerable talent and vigour, these qualities were feeble substitutes for the masculine wisdom, the determined courage, and the unwearied care of the husband whom she had lost. Her first duty was the arrest and punishment of his murderers ; and this she executed with speedy and immitigable severity. But the death of the king once more gave a licence, and of­fered to the feudal nobles an opportunity of recovering their power of which they were not slow to avail themselves.