But in studying the history of this reign, we shall detect other causes of the sanguinary scenes in which it concluded. Not only were the feudal nobility of Scotland induced by the neglect and favouritism of the king to long for a change, but it is worthy of remark, that for some time previous to this period, the feudal nobility of Europe had been in a state of extraordinary commotion and tumult ; and events had occurred which diminished in the eyes of the aristocracy and of the people the respect entertained for the throne. The revolution in, England under Henry the Fourth, the sub­sequent history of that kingdom during the contest between the houses of York and Lancaster, the political struggles in France under Louis the Eleventh, the relative condition of the greater nobles in Germany and of the rights of the im­perial crown under the emperor Sigismund, the dissensions which divided the Netherlands, and the civil factions which agitated the government in Spain, all combined to render resistance so common, and so lucrative in the eyes of the feudal nobility in Europe, that its frequency can be a sub­ject of little wonder ; and if, when we take into account the frequent communication between Scotland and the conti­nent during the period of these commotions, we may easi­ly imagine their effect upon the still ruder and more inde­pendent nobility of that country. We have been tempted to throw out these general observations, because the reign of James the Third is in one respect most remarkable. It is the era from which we may date the rise of a republican spirit, and the first propagation of those popular princi­ples, of which the operation can be traced, in a greater or less degree, through the whole course of its subsequent history.

To return from such remarks to the events of this reign, we find the king engaged in a contest with his two power­ful brothers, Albany and Mar. To the first had been en­trusted the wardenship of the east marches, the government of Berwick, and the castle of Dunbar, the principal key of the kingdom ; and there seems no doubt that he had abused his **high** powers to an extent which bordered upon treason. Against Mar was brought a still more atrocious charge. He had plotted, it was said, to cause the king’s death by magi­cal arts ; and being convicted by the evidence of his wizard accomplices, was imprisoned, and, according to one account, secretly executed. Another story ascribes his death to the consequences of a fever, for which having a vein opened, he in an excess of phrensy tore off his bandages and bled to death. Against Albany the king proceeded with unusual vigour. He attacked him in Dunbar, made himself master of the fortress, and would have seized his person, but the rebellious prince availed himself of the situation of the castle, which was open to the sea, and fled first to England, and afterwards to France.

At this moment, Louis the Eleventh was at war with Edward the Fourth, and he unfortunately possessed such influence over the Scottish king, that he brought about a rupture between James and Edward. It was a step signally impolitic. Al­bany, the king’s brother, returning from France, threw him­self into the arms of England ; the nobility were full of com­plaints against the government; the Lord of the Isles em­braced the interests of Edward ; and after a long interval of peace had softened the national animosity between the kingdoms, it was a miserable sight once more to witncss the renewal of hostilities.

This contest led to some extraordinary scenes. Albany having openly avowed his purpose to dethrone his brother, as­sumed the title of Alexander king of Scotland, and entered into a treaty with Edward, by which he basely consented to sacrifice the independence and dismember some of the finest portions of the kingdom. To effect his designs, he had the address not only to secure the co-operation of the banished earl of Douglas, with the Lord of the Isles and his north­ern vassals, but he detached from James’s service Angus,

Gray, Huntly, Lennox, and many others of the leading nobility in Scotland. A conspiracy was formed against the monarch and his favourites; the conjuncture of his assem­bling his army, preparatory to his invasion of England, was deemed the most favourable moment for the execution of their purpose ; and in the camp at Lauder its success was equally sudden and terrible. The nobles, led by Angus, seized Cochrane, James’s favourite, who, from a mean sta­tion, had been promoted to high rank and enriched with the earldom of Mar; they then broke into the king’s tent, made him prisoner, arrested the band of ignoble associates who shared his confidence, and proceeded to inflict summary vengeance on them all. Cochrane was hanged over the bridge of Lauder; Rogers, a musician, Hommel, Leonard, Preston and others, shared his fate ; and the unfortunate monarch, having been conveyed to the capital, was shut up in the castle of Edinburgh. The result of this success was what might have been expected. Albany, who all along had acted from motives of personal ambition, having once possessed himself of the king’s person, ruled the government at his will.

But usurpation of the supreme power was not the full extent of his treachery. He attached Edward the Fourth to his service by the sacrifice of the national independence. In a secret treaty, the English prince engaged to assist Al­bany, who hitherto had only assumed the title of lieutenant- general of the kingdom, in placing the crown on his own head ; and as the base price of this assistance, the new king and his nobles agreed to withdraw their oaths from king James, and to live under the sole allegiance of the king of England. It may give us some idea of the low estate to which the nobles of Scotland had fallen, when we men- ation, that not only the earl of Douglas, now banished and living in England, but the earls of Angus, Buchan, Athole, and many others, were willing parties to this wan­ton sacrifice of their country.

The plot, however, was defeated, and happily a party yet remained among the nobles, who, though their vengeance had been directed against the king’s favourites, were friends to the crown and to the country. They had joined Albany with the object of sacrificing Cochrane and his associates, but had been kept in ignorance of his ultimate intentions ; and the moment these became apparent, they united with the king and overwhelmed the opposite faction. And here, in the manner in which Albany was treated, is to be found the cause of all the subsequent misfortunes of the king. His brother deserved punishment, and ought to have met with no pity. He had been guilty of open and repeated treasons, had levied war against his prince ; and imprisoned his royal person, leagued himself with his enemies, sold the indepen­dence of his country, and assumed the title of king. His guilt and ambition had seduced from their allegiance a large party of the nobles ; and if ever there was a time in which a great example was to be made, that time was now come. Yet, instead of this wholesome severity, the duke of Albany was treated with a lenity for which it is impossible to ac­count. On acknowledging his manifold treasons, and lay­ing down his office of lieutenant-general, he not only re­ceived a full pardon, but was permitted to retain not only his vast estates, but his wardenship of the marches, and was simply interdicted from coming within six miles of the court, or continuing his illegal combination with Angus, Athole, and Buchan.

Whether we are to ascribe this misplaced mercy to the king’s attachment to his brother, or to a suspicion that he was not strong enough to inflict a more exemplary punish­ment, it is difficult to decide ; but the result demonstrated what has been so often taught, the folly of a misplaced lenity. In a few weeks Albany was again in rebellion. At his invita­tion, an English army invaded Scotland ; Dunbar, the most important castle in the kingdom, as the key of the eastern