who had so lately sworn allegiance, were again in arms, and in more formidable numbers than before. In this emergen­cy, indeed, the king acted with courage and promptitude ; but having disbanded the strongest division of his army, which consisted of his northern barons and their vassals, the force which he mustered was much inferior to that of his opponents. It was therefore determined to await in the capital the arrival of the northern barons ; but unfortun­ately this resolution was abandoned, and the monarch with inferior numbers, attacked the insurgents, who were com­manded by the prince his son, at Sauchy Burn, within a mile of Bannockburn. The consequences proved most ca­lamitous. The royal forces, after an obstinate struggle, gave way to their opponents ; and James, flying from the field, was murdered by an unknown hand, at a little hamlet call­ed Miltown, a few miles distant from the field of battle. He perished in the prime of life, and it is said his youthful successor was seized with overwhelming remorse on being informed of the miserable fate of his father. However this may be, he was immediately proclaimed king, and the ho­mage of his barons, the early possession of a sceptre, and the lustre of a court, soon stifled his repentant feelings.

The character of James the Third has been represented by Boyce, Buchanan, and those writers who have been contented to follow their authority, as a compound of weak­ness, wilfulness, and crime ; a character contradicted by the history of his reign. It must indeed be admitted, that James’s indulgent treatment of his rebellious subjects, and of the prince his son, partook of weakness, although there are few father’s hearts in which he will not find an advocate ; but in other respects the best refutation of the ideal pic­tures of Buchanan is to be found in the real history of the reign. James’s misfortunes are, in truth, to be attributed more to the extraordinary circumstances of the times in which he lived, than to any flagrant vices or defects in the monarch himself. At this period, in almost every king­dom in Europe with which Scotland was connected, the power of the great feudal nobles, and that of the sover­eign, had been arrayed in jealous hostility against each other. The time appeared to have arrived when both parties seemed convinced that they were on the con­fines of a great change ; that the power of the throne must either sink under the superior strength of the greater nobles, or the independence and tyranny of these feudal tyrants receive a blow from which it would not be easy for them to recover. In the different countries of Europe indeed, the result was not uniform, but in all the same elements of faction were seen arrayed against each other. Thus, in France, the struggle under Louis the Eleventh had terminated in favour of the crown ; yet the les­son to be derived from it was not lost upon the Scottish nobility, who were in constant communication with this country. In Flanders and the states of Holland, they had before them the spectacle of an independent prince deposed and imprisoned by his son ; and in Germany the reign of Frederic the Third, who was contemporary with James the Third of Scotland, presented one constant scene of struggle between the emperor and his nobility, in which this capricious potentate was uniformly defeated.

There is yet one other observation to be made upon this remarkable revolution, by which, for the first time in Scot­tish history, a king was solemnly deposed by a faction of his own subjects. Although the barons who led the success­ful faction represented themselves as the friends of liber­ty, driven to a resistance of royal oppression, the middle classes and the body of the people took no share in the struggle. Many individuals belonging to these classes, who were feudal vassals of the great lords, must no doubt have been compelled to serve under them ; but as far as they were represented by the commissaries of burghs who sat in Parliament, they appear in this struggle to have joined the

party of the sovereign and the clergy, by whom, during this reign, frequent efforts were made to introduce a more effec­tual administration of justice, and a greater respect for pro­perty and the rights of individuals.

Laws, mingled with alternate threats and exhortations, are to be found upon these subjects in the records of each successive Parliament of this reign ; but the offenders continued refractory, and these offenders were the very men, whose offices, if conscientiously administered, ought to have secured the rights of the great body of the people. It was the nobles who were the justiciars, chancellors, cham­berlains, sheriffs; and these, it was well known, were often the worst oppressors, partial and venal in their administra­tion of justice, severe in exacting obedience, and opposed to every right which interfered with their own power. Their privileges as feudal nobles came repeatedly into direct collision with their duties as servants of the go­vernment, and they made no scruple to sacrifice the last to the preservation of the first ; duty to privilege and self-interest. It is from this cause that we discern an honourable distinction between the clergy and the feudal nobles, **in** the struggle between the crown and the faction by which it was attacked. In this contest, wherever the greater offices in the government were in the hands of the clergy, it will be found that they generally supported the sovereign ; when they were entrusted to the nobility they almost uniformly combined against him.

When James the Fourth succeeded to the throne left vacant by the murder of his father, he was in his seventeenth year ; but his character at that early age had vigorously de­veloped itself, and although it has sometimes been asserted, there is no reason to believe that the prince had been an unwilling assistant, or a passive tool in the hands of the conspirators. Their first care was to hold at Scone the ceremony of the coronation ; their next to conclude a three years’ truce with England, then under the government of Henry the Seventh ; their third, to assemble a Parliament and provide for their own safety, by the forfeiture of their enemies and the rewards distributed to their friends.

And here it is not unimportant to mark the course which they artfully pursued. If any party in the state were at this time liable to a charge of treason, it was evidently the friends of the young king, and not the barons who had continued faithful to his father ; but the difference consisted in this, that the treason of the prince’s party had been accompanied with success, whereas the resistance of the friends of his father had been overwhelmed, and himself dethroned and murdered. They who now were in possession of the supreme power, therefore boldly turned the tables, summoned their opponents on a charge of treason, and as the facts were notorious, pro­nounced sentence against them. They next voted their own acquittal in strong and significant terms ; and consider­ing under whose dictation the act was drawn up, it is diffi­cult to read, without a smile, the compliments pronounced upon their treason, when they declare that their sovereign lord, and his *true* barons, who served with him in the field, were innocent of the late battle and pursuit, and had no blame in exciting the disturbances which had terminated so fatally.

The innocence of these barons was however far from being generally admitted; and the Parliament had scarcely risen, when Lennox, Huntly, Marischal, and other power­ful chiefs, rose in arms to avenge the death of their king. Lord Forbes, who had joined them, marched through the country, bearing the bloody shirt of the unfortunate prince suspended from a spear; and had it not been for the promptitude with which their opponents met the enterprise, the movements of Lennox, who advanced upon Stirling, might have delivered the country from their domination. But this chief, betrayed by some of his followers, was sur­prised and completely routed by Lord Drummond at Fal-