ed into factions among themselves occasioned by the va­cant benefices. The archbishop of St. Andrews, the pre­lates of Caithness and the Isles, and other ecclesiastical dignitaries, had fallen in the field of Floddon ; and the intri­gues of the various claimants for these high prizes distracted the church and the council. There were evils also to be dread­ed from the character and youth of the queen-mother. Mar­garet had been married at fourteen, and was now only twenty- four. Her talents were excellent, as we know from the testi­mony of such able judges as Surrey, Dacre, and Wolsey; but in some points she too nearly resembled her brother Henry the Eighth. She was hasty in her resentment, headstrong, and often ready to sacrifice her calmer judgment to her passion or her pleasure ; and in her thirst for power or per­sonal gratification she sometimes cared as little for the puri­ty of the means by which these objects were accomplished. Soon after the death of the late king this princess gave birth to a son, who was named Alexander, and created duke of Ross ; and in a parliament, which met after her recovery, she was confirmed in the office of regent, and entrusted with the custody of the young king and his brother.

At this moment the most powerful nobles in Scotland were the earls of Angus, Home, Huntly, and Crawford. Angus wielded the whole strength of the house of Douglas; Home was chamberlain, and commanded the eastern bor­ders ; while Huntly and Crawford ruled the northern dis­tricts. The earl of Arran, in the mean time, arrived from France along with the Sieur de la Bastie, who had been a favourite of the late king, and brought a message from the duke of Albany. Arran was nearly related to the royal family, and entitled, by his high birth, and the office of Lord High Admiral which he held, to act a leading part in the government ; but his talents were of an inferior order, and unable to compete with the trying circumstances in which the country was placed.

Scarcely had the queen recovered from her confinement when she married the earl of Angus, a nobleman of great accomplishments and personal attractions, but, in the words of lord Dacre, “ childish, young, and attended by no wise councillors.” Had the princess entered into a second mar­riage after due consultation had been held with the coun­cil assigned to her by parliament, and after a decent inter­val, no one could have blamed her. She was yet in the bloom of her best years, and from her youth, as well as her high rank and the important duties entrusted to her, she required the protection of a husband ; but the precipitation with which she hurried into the match with Angus was scarcely decorous, and certainly unwise, nor was it long be­fore she bitterly repented her choice.

The first effects of this unfortunate step was to increase the bitterness of the pre-existing feuds amongst the nobles. Home and Angus marshalled themselves and their vassals against each other ; Arran, assisted by Lennox and Glen­cairn, aspired to the regency ; Beaton, archbishop of Glas­gow, an intriguing prelate, supported the interests of Albany and the French faction ; while Huntly, lord Drummond, and the earl Marischal gave their influence to Angus and the queen, who courted Henry the Eighth, and took the name of the English party. At this unfortunate crisis the country received a new blow in the death of Elphinstone, who had been nominated archbishop of St. Andrews. For the vacant primacy there were three competitors ; Gawin Douglas, uncle to the earl of Angus, Hepburn, prior of St. Andrews, and Forman, bishop of Moray, respectively no­minated by the queen, the chapter, and the pope. These ambitious ecclesiastics scrupled not to muster their armed vassals, and to vindicate their claims by an appeal to the sword, an indecent spectacle, which could not fail to lower the church in the eyes of the people.

It was under this deplorable state of things that Henry the Eighth carried to perfection a base system already be­

gun by his father, that of keeping in pay a number of spies and pensioned supporters. He bribed the Scottish nobles, entertained a constant correspondence with the queen his sister, and even went so far as to propose her flight with the young king and his brother to the English court. It may give us some idea of the loose principles of some of the leading men, that Angus and his uncle, Gawin Dou­glas, who ranks higher as a poet than a politician, did not he­sitate to give their countenance to a plan which amounted to nothing short of treason.

In the midst of these scenes the duke of Albany arrived from France, and assumed the regency ; but unfortunately his determined predilection for the French interests was as unacceptable to many of the wisest and best men in the country, as the queen and Angus’s devotion to England. At this moment Scotland required an upright and vigor­ous governor, animated by a sincere love of his country, and who could hold the balance with judgment between contending parties. But Albany was ignorant of the con­stitution, of the language, and of the manners of the coun­try. His family also made him an object of suspicion, his fa­ther having traitorously attempted to seize the crown. He was the son of a French mother, had married a French wo­man, and having his chief estates in France, constantly styled the French king his master ; nor does it appear that either his talents or his temper were calculated to counter­balance such disadvantages.

On his assumption of the government the effects of all this were soon perceived. The queen refused to give up the custody of the infant monarch ; Home, the chamberlain, threw himself into the arms of England ; Angus, guided solely by selfishness and the ambition of becoming chief ruler, deserted his wife, the queen. France, instead of as­sisting her ancient ally to defeat the intrigues of Henry the Eighth, which were carried on by his able minister lord Dacre, first betrayed strong symptoms of a change of policy, and at length refused to renew the alliance with Scotland ; and although Albany, amid these difficulties, acted with con­siderable spirit and ability, it was impossible for him to com­pose the jarring elements, or restore tranquillity and order to the country.

Dissatisfied and dispirited, he retired for a few years to France, and returned to Scotland only to find the dangers which threatened the kingdom more imminent, and the task of encountering them more difficult. In his absence De la Bastie, the person who enjoyed his chief confidence, and to whom he had entrusted the offices of warden of the marches and deputy governor, was murdered by the Homes in the most savage manner. The Highlands and Isles, long deprived of regular government, were torn by various fac­tions, and exhibited scenes of the wildest excesses. And Angus, whose feudal power was far too great for a subject, had acted in open defiance of the laws, and domineered in the most tyrannical manner over all who dared to oppose his commands. The arrival of Albany compelled this chief to fly from the capital, and the regent exerted himself with the utmost vigour to put down the despotism of the Dou­glases. He was forthwith reconciled to the queen, received from her the keys of the castle of Edinburgh, and with them the custody of the young king ; he assembled a par­liament, summoned the Douglases to answer a charge of treason, and, although thwarted in his administration by the intrigues of lord Dacre and the treachery and venality of the Scottish nobles, he compelled Angus, his principal ene­my, to leave the kingdom.

It would be difficult, and if easy, uninstructive, to enter into the history of this period, when the country was torn by contending factions, and exposed to all the miseries inci­dent to a feudal minority. Albany’s worst enemies were lord Dacre and the Anglo-Scotican party which he kept in his pay. It was his policy to throw distrust and suspicion up­