hostile preparations, made it apparent that war could not be long averted. France now offered her assistance to her an­cient ally. The earl of Arran, ever wavering and irresolute, once more threw his whole influence into Beaton’s hands; and this minister, availing himself of an accession of strength, proceeded with a vigorous hand to suppress heresy, and to inculcate determined resistance to England.

Henry, who was thoroughly unprincipled, and cared not@@1 what means he used to rid himself of his opponents, attempted to remove the cardinal, by hiring Brunston, Grange, Rothes, and some of the opposite faction, to seize or assassinate him ; but he once more failed in this nefarious project, and, foiled and irritated, let loose his vengeance in the shape of a naval invasion. An English fleet of a hundred sail., under lord Lisle, high admiral, appeared suddenly in the Forth, and disembarked a force which plundered Leith, sacked Edinburgh, which had been deserted by its inhabitants, ra­vaged the adjoining country with merciless cruelty, and left upon land a considerable force, which, in its retreat, was as remorseless in its devastations as the fleet had been in its attack. Such was Henry’s mode of wooing, of which it was well observed by lord Herbert, that he did too much for a suitor, and too little for a conqueror.

It might have been expected that the rival leaders and factions in the state, all of whom had suffered by this in­vasion, would have had their eyes opened to the necessity of saving the country, by uniting their strength ; but in vain the cardinal strained every effort to effect so desir­able a result. Mutual jealousies, feudal quarrels, renewed intrigues with England, private bonds or covenants among themselves, all co-operated to destroy any cordial union ; and the earls of Lennox and Glencairn, two of the most powerful of the Scottish barons, seized this opportunity to sell themselves to Henry, and to conduct a hostile expedi­tion into the heart of Scotland.

It was at this moment, when all was gloom and despond­ency, that the earl of Angus, who, with his brother, had been lately restored to his estates, and absolved in Par­liament from the sentence of treason, encountered and to­tally defeated Sir Ralph Evre and Sir Brian Layton at Ancram Muir. These English leaders had procured from Henry a grant of all they could conquer in Teviotdale and the Merse, where Angus’s estates chiefly lay; and penetrat­ing at the head of five thousand men to Melrose, they not only ravaged that district, but plundered the abbey, and wantonly defaced the tombs of the house of Douglas; an insult which Angus revenged in the most signal manner, by attacking the English in their retreat, dispersing their force, with the slaughter of eight hundred men, leaving Evre and Layton dead on the field, and making a capture of one thousand prisoners.

This victory, although resulting not from patriotic prin­ciple, but personal revenge, had a good effect in restor­ing confidence to the people; and it was followed up by the resolution of Francis the First to equip a fleet for the in­vasion of England, and to assist Scotland by an auxiliary force. Beaton, encouraged by this expected aid, having concentrated his party, prevailed upon the majority of the nobles, in a convention held in the capital, to refuse every advance of the English monarch, and to declare the treaty of peace and marriage at an end ; while Henry, enraged to the utmost pitch by this success, eagerly en­couraged a second plot of the earls of Cassillis, Angus, and Glencairn, for the murder of tne cardinal. The king, however, enjoined Sir Ralph Sadler to propose the assassination, as coming from himself, and the conspirators

at this moment would not act without Henry’s direct ap­proval.1

In the midst of these dark plots, a French fleet arrived in Scotland with three thousand men. This led to decisive measures. A Scottish army was assembled ; but torn as usual by internal dissensions, and betrayed by the Douglases, who held a principal command, its operations were insigni­ficant, and its retreat almost immediate. This was follow­ed by a cruel invasion of the English, in which the earl of Hertford, at the head of an army, whose numbers rendered opposition fruitless, invaded Scotland, and after a desolating progress, sent word to his master, that for three hundred years there had not been such ravages committed. Seven monasteries and religious houses, sixteen castles and towns, five market towns, two hundred and forty-three villages, thirteen mills and three hospitals, were burned down during this atrocious expedition ; and there still exists a character­istic letter, in which Henry, on receiving some French de­serters into his service, enjoins them to show their attach­ment by some notable exploit, such as the “ trapping or slaying the cardinal.” He, at the same time, engaged the earl of Lennox, and Donald, lord of the Isles, to attack Scot­land on the west coasts ; and having heard that Beaton, his able and indefatigable enemy, meditated a visit to France for the purpose of subsidising a large auxiliary force for the continuance of the war, he determined to make a last effort to cut him off, and with this view, resumed with the laird of Brunston the plot for his assassination.

Into the details of this remarkable conspiracy, and the various parties whom Henry contrived to bring together for the execution of his sanguinary purpose, we cannot here enter.@@2 Fanaticism of the sternest kind, which had been worked up into action by the cardinal’s cruel execution of George Wishart, commonly called the martyr, united itself to more mercenary motives with some of the conspirators, and with others, to the desire of private revenge; and on the morning of the 28th of May, a band of desperate men, who are now known to have been in the pay of England, and some of whom had been on former occasions urged by the English king to the commission of the murder, broke into the cardinal’s apartments in the castle of St. Andrews, beat down the barricades with which the miserable man had at­tempted to defend the door, and putting him instantly to death, hung out his naked and mangled body over the win­dow of his bed-chamber, in savage and brutal triumph. They then seized the castle, dismissed unharmed the household servants of the cardinal, sent off a messenger to the English court to inform Henry of their success ; and being soon after­wards joined by John Knox, and a considerable band of his friends, who considered the death of Beaton as favourable to the reformation, they determined to defend the castle for Henry against any force which might be brought against them.

These confident anticipations were, for a time, overthrown by the death of Henry the Eighth, an event soon followed by that of his rival Francis the First ; but the accession of Edward the Sixth in England, and that of Henry the Second in France, did not materially alter the policy of either king­dom towards Scotland. In England, the protector Somer­set, who was placed at the head of the government during the minority of his royal nephew, considered himself bound to enforce the observation of the marriage treaty between Edward and the young queen of Scots ; while in France, Henry the Second, devoted to the cause of the Catholic church, and directed in his affairs by the Guises, foresaw at once the necessity of an intimate union with Mary of

@@@’ Tytler’s History of Scotland, vol. v. pp. 388, 889.

@@@, The whole of the plot, as it is to be traced in authentic letters in the State Paper-Office, will be found detailed in Tytler's History of Scotland, vol. V. p. 387—391, and in an Appendix **to that** volume, untitled, ” Historical Remarks on the Assassination of Cardinal Beaton.”