this as it may, she recovered only to be the victim of more aggravated sufferings. Partial reconciliations were followed by no revival of affection or confidence ; and in the anguish of a wounded spirit, she sometimes lamented that she had not died at Jedburgh.

It was in this season of depression and despair that Murray and Maitland proposed to her a divorce from the king. They had previously confided their project to Huntly, Argyll, and Bothwell ; and at first Mary seemed inclined to follow their advice, provided the divorce could be lawfully pro­cured, and without prejudice to her child. But after weighing the whole matter her opinion changed, and when Maitland urged that means could be found to free her of Darnley without injury to her son, declaring that Murray would look on and say nothing against it, she broke off the conference. “ I will,” said she, “ that ye do nothing through which any spot may be laid to my honour or con­science; let the matter be in the state it is, abiding till God of his goodness put remedy thereto.”

Having failed in this device, a conspiracy for the murder of the king was entered into by Maitland, Bothwell, Hunt­ly, Argyll, and Sir James Balfour. It has been disputed whether Murray was, or was not, a party to this atrocious design. It is certain that he did not sign the bond, by which, according to the custom of this age, the conspirators bound themselves to each other. There is a strong pre­sumption, however, that he knew of its existence ; and the deed was communicated to Morton and his associates, who signed it, and agreed to support the conspirators in the ex­ecution of their purpose. Such was the state of matters when the baptism of the young prince took place at Stir­ling. From this ceremony the king obstinately absented himself, alleging in excuse the neglect and rigour with which he was treated. Soon after« ards he left the court and retired to Glasgow, where he was seized with the small­pox, and appeared in imminent danger. His situation ap­peared to awaken the tenderness of the queen. She sent her own physician to wait on him, and soon after visited him herself, and ministered to his wants. When his convales­cence permitted him to be removed, she returned with him to Edinburgh, and placed him, for the benefit of the air, in a house in the suburbs called the Kirk-of-Field. It was here that the conspirators determined to carry their dread­ful purpose into effect. At the solicitation of Elizabeth and the French king, Morton had been pardoned and permitted to return; and in a secret interview between him, Maitland, and Bothwell, the particulars of the murder were arranged. Bothwell undertook the chief part, and his men having ob­tained access to the cellars of the Kirk-of-Field, undermin­ed the foundation, and placed gunpowder in the cavities which they had formed. According to another account, they deposited it in the queen’s bed-chamber, which was imme­diately under that of the king. While all this had been se­cretly carrying into effect, Mary continued her attendance upon Darnley : their reconciliation appeared to be perfect, she often slept in the house, and on the evening of the 9th of February, when she took leave of him to attend a mar­riage of one of her servants, which was to be held at the palace, it was remarked that she embraced him tenderly, took a ring from her finger, and placed it on his. On that night, after she had retired to her chamber in the palace, a sudden and terrific explosion was heard, which shook the city, and it was soon discovered that the Kirk-of-Field was blown up. The dead bodies of the king and his page were found at a little distance in the garden. It is well known that this miserable catastrophe has given rise to a celebrat­ed historical controversy, in which authors of great name

and talents have taken different sides ; some insisting that the queen was cognizant of the plot for the murder of her husband, and others as positively asserting the contrary. The limits of this historical sketch render it impossible that we should enter into its details.@@1 In the preceding narra­tive we have carefully avoided the introduction of a single controverted fact ; in the sequel we shall as sedulously fol­low the same rule.

Scarcely were the citizens of the capital recovered from the horror and dismay which was incident to such a cala­mity, when bills appeared on the walls of the Tolbooth, which accused Bothwell of the murder, and added that the queen had assented to it. Soon afterwards, the earl of Lennox, the unhappy father of the late king, earnestly required the imprisonment of the persons named in the anonymous hand­bills, and Bothwell declaring his innocence, demanded an instant trial. It was granted, and Lennox received due notice of it; but on the day of trial Bothwell appeared sur­rounded by upwards of four thousand of his friends and ad­herents; and Lennox, intimidated by the array, or finding it impossible to collect sufficient proof, requested an adjourn­ment. This, however, was peremptorily refused, and the accused was acquitted by the jury, who considered it esta­blished by sufficient evidence that Bothwell could not have been at the Kirk-of-Field when the explosion took place.

Soon after this acquittal the Parliament assembled, and the majority of the nobility prevailed upon the queen to consent to an act by which all the grants of crown proper­ty which had been made during the present reign were con­firmed, and herself and her successors deprived of all power of revocation. In the same assembly of the estates, the verdict passed upon Bothwell, which many accused as informal, was declared just and legal, and soon afterwards a bond was drawn up by twenty-four of the principal peers. It affirmed in solemn terms the innocence of this profligate baron, whom the public clamour still denounced as the mur­derer of the king; recommended him as a proper husband for the queen; and bound its authors, as they should answer to God, to defend him from all danger, and to promote this unhallowed marriage to the utmost of their power and abi­lity. The tragedy now hurried on to its conclusion. Both­well, at the head of a thousand men, intercepted the queen on her way from Stirling to Edinburgh, and carried her captive, with the slender suite by whom she was accom­panied, to Dunbar castle. Among her attendants were Huntly, Maitland, and Melville, but the first two were in Bothwell's interest, and had signed the bond. The last was completely in his power, and so was the unfortunate queen. He proposed marriage, and on her refusal ex­hibited the bond signed by her nobles. She still, it is said, resisted his request, and hoped for a rescue ; but it was a vain expectation. He became more peremptory, and if we may trust the expressions of Mary, corroborated by Mel­ville and her enemies, he compelled her by fear, force, and other unlawful means, to yield to his wishes, and admit him to her bed. From Dunbar he now carried his victim to Edinburgh. A divorce was procured from his wife on the ground of adultery, and the process having been hurried through the court, and the sentence passed, Bothwell was married to the queen at Holyrood, within a month after his acquittal of the murder of her husband, (May 15, 1567.)

Events of the deepest and most tragic interest now crowded on each other. The nobles who had advised the marriage, who had acquitted Bothwell, and abetted him in his career of ambition and outrage, at once dropped the mask, assembled their forces, and declared their determination to separate the queen from the murderer of her husband. As

@@@1 The reader who wishes to make himself master of the controversy should consult for the Queen’s innocence, the work of Goodall, and that of William Tytler, with the volumes of Stuart, Whitaker, and Chahners ; against her, the Histories of Hume and Robertson, with the Dissertation by Mr. Malcolm Laing.