

Original Documents.

LETTER FROM JAMES V., KING OF SCOTLAND, ADDRESSED TO
HENRY VIII., DATED AUGUST 24, A.D. 1526.

FROM THE ORIGINAL CORRESPONDENCE PRESERVED IN THE STATE PAPER OFFICE.

By the fate of the chivalrous James IV. upon the field of Flodden, Scotland had to pass through one of the severest trials to which—next perhaps to a civil war—a kingdom can be subjected, viz., a long minority of the sovereign. Joined to the many occasions for disputes which perhaps must always exist among a high spirited and brave people, and which had prevailed from a very early period among the nobility of Scotland, the accession of the infant nephew of the wealthy and powerful sovereign of the neighbouring kingdom introduced many fresh elements of difference. The violence of the “National” and “French” parties was only moderated to be directed with greater force against the rising power of the “English” party. The Duke of Albany, opposed by the influence of Henry VIII., had great difficulty in maintaining his position as Regent. His difficulties were increased by the fact of his being the heir presumptive to the kingdom. Schemes and plots of various kinds were entered into—professedly to give the juvenile sovereign greater liberty of action—but really only to transfer the direction of that action to other hands.

After the forced retirement of Albany, James V. was in the power of that influential party of nobles, of whom Archibald Douglas Earl of Angus, the great opponent of the Regent and the husband of the queen-mother, was the chief. So matters continued for a short time. In the year 1524 the result of such a state of things appears by some correspondence given by David Scott, who tells us that Angus got the king to write publicly “That his mother and her friends need not be solicitous about him,” as he was well satisfied with the treatment he received from Angus—while in secret he wrote letters to the queen of quite an opposite purport.

An opportunity, afforded by the absence of Angus, enabled the queen to place her son upon the throne two years before the time appointed. Presuming perhaps too much upon this stroke of policy, the demands of Margaret upon her brother became immoderate, and her now divorced husband was again in secret confederacy with the English monarch. By his aid the Earl of Angus succeeded, in the year 1526, in once more overthrowing all opposition, and wielding all the power of the country to the advantage of the Douglasses and the dismay of their enemies.

To the critical period of Scotland's history, which I have thus slightly adverted to, belongs a collection of original correspondence, numbering between fifty and sixty letters, written (or signed) by the king himself, his mother Margaret, the Earl of Angus, and other nobles, to Henry VIII., Wolsey, and the Earl of Northumberland, which has been very lately transferred to the State Paper Office, from one of the branch Record

Offices, where they have long lain comparatively unknown. That these letters have been equally unused, is apparent from their having escaped the diligence of the late Mr. Tytler, who in his excellent history has turned to so good an account the contents of the State Paper Office itself. That some of those letters are full of interest to the historical student of Scotland, the following copy of one of them will show.

It has been already seen how the king had been obliged to practice the completest deception in the letters issuing from his hand. Henry VIII. doubtless always kept open means of communication with the leaders of all parties. The present letter was written to him while James V. was under such duress by the Douglasses that he was obliged to borrow his mother's signet ring to seal the letter—"because oure selis and signettis ar withalding,"—and it will be seen how the actions of the queen and the Bishop of St. Andrews are defended and excused, and that he complains loudly of the restraint he was kept under, and the deception he had been made to practice by the uncontrolled authority of the Earl of Angus.

A small fragment of the wax of the seal remains attached to this interesting letter, but no portion of the impression can be discerned. An impression from the signet of Queen Margaret has been found by Mr. Henry Laing, impressed on a paper document amongst the Philliphaugh Charters, bearing date the same year as the following letter. The seal displays, as described in Mr. Laing's useful "Catalogue of Scottish Seals," the arms of Scotland impaling England and France quarterly. Above the shield is an arched crown, and on a scroll under it—IN GOD IS MY TRAIST.¹

JOSEPH BURTT.

"Richte hie Right excelleng and Right nichtie prince, oure derrest uncle and bruther, We commend we unto zou in oure maist hartlie and tendre manere, quhilk emplesit to remembre. We wrait lettres unto zou of before making mencione hou ane maist Reverend fader, oure traist counsaloure and cristin fader, James Archiebischop of Sanctiandres, witht certane oure liegis his assisteres and part takaris, maid conspiracioun and confederacioun till oure displesoure, and contrare ye commoun wele of oure realme, quhilkis writtingis procedit no^t of oure awin mynde, hot thro^t sollistacioun of certane oure liegis, and in speciall Archibald erle of Angus, We no^t being at oure awin liberte and kinglie fredome, bot abandonnit in sure keping and nychtlie awaiting of ye said Archibald, his assisteris and part takaris, lyke as we ar zit presentlie : Declaring zou maist intrelly, oure belovit uncle and brudre, yat ye said maist Reverend fader, at ye instance of oure derrest moder zoure luffing sister, lauborit yat tyme allanerly for oure fredome and liberte, and to have ws out of parciale keping, yat We my^t resort amangis oure trew liegis universalie, to the wele of oure hale realme, as yai zit, with assistance of oure belovit counsaloure and cousing Johune erle of Levnax and utheris oure trew liegis, labouris and procuris ye samyne. Quharfore We exhort and prayis zou oure derrest uncle and bruder, yat ze fortife and manteine oure derrest moder and all utheris takand hir opinioun to ye uptenyng of oure fredome and liberte. Thankand yame specialy for yare cure and lauboris takin tharupoun, praying yamē

¹ Facsimile casts in sulphur from this, may be obtained, at moderate cost, from as also from a large series of Royal, Mr. H. Laing, 55, East Cross Causeway, Baronial, and Ecclesiastical Scottish Seals, Edinburgh.

for continuance, and promitting yamē zour fortificacioune : And yat it will plesē zou to writ to ye papis halynes certifeing of ye premisses, and in favouris of oure derrest moder and oure counsaloure Archiebischop of Sanctiandres forsaid, thare causis and materis for the graciouse expedicioune of ye samyn : nocht withstanding ony writtingis send at oure Instance in yare contrare, quhilkis procedit be Inductiounē of ye said Archibald allanerlie. Richt hie, Richt excellēg and Richt michtie prince, oure derrest uncle and bruder, almy^{tie} gode conserve zou in maist prosperous stait. Subscrivit with oure hand, and closit with the Signet of oure derrest moder, becaus oure selis and Signettis ar withholding : At Edinburgh, ye xxiiij. day of August. The zere of god I^m v^c xxvj zeris.

Zoure loving nepheu and bruther

King of Scottis

(Signed)

James R.

(Addressed) To the Richt hie Richt excellēg and
Richt michtie prince, oure derrest uncle
and bruder, The king of Ingland."