

permitted James to languish in captivity had he not fallen in love with Lady Joanna Beaufort,* the daughter of the Duchess of Clarence, by her first husband the Duke of Somerset, and the descendant of Edward III. by both her parents. A negotiation was then commenced, which terminated in an agreement by which it was stipulated that £40,000 should be paid to England within six years, by half-yearly payments, under the name of compensation for the expenses of the maintenance of James during his eighteen years' captivity. Espousing the lady on February 24, 1423, he obtained his liberty, and amid the enthusiasm of his subjects, James returned with his young bride to Scotland. He had no sooner assumed the reins of government when he began to remedy the abuses which, owing to the misrule of the Duke of Albany, prevailed in the kingdom. He found the laws set at naught, trade and industry gone, and the people oppressed. "Let God but grant me life," he indignantly exclaimed, "and by his help I shall make the key keep the castle, and the furze-bush the cow, throughout my dominions, though I should lead the life of a dog to complete it!" He therefore commenced his work of internal reform, and several noblemen, after a trial over which James himself presided, were executed in front of Stirling castle.

Barely thirteen years had elapsed since his accession to the throne, when a few turbulent nobles, who saw in his enlightened rule a cause for resentment and hate, entered into a conspiracy to take his life. At the head of this nefarious design was his second uncle, the Earl of Athol—his confederates being Sir Robert Graham, and Sir Robert Stuart, who was said to be an illegitimate son of James's father. Unfortunately the king had disbanded his army, without even retaining a body-guard, and he was one night sitting at supper in a monastery near Perth, when Graham, knowing the defenceless state of his master, brought the band of conspirators, whom he had gathered together, and privately posted them in the passages of the building. There they remained unnoticed until Walter Stratton, the king's cup-bearer, discovered them as he left the apartment to procure some wine. Stratton, upon being perceived, was ruthlessly cut down, but his cry of terror and the

of the planks of the floor; and in this way, after replacing the board, dropped into a dark vault below. The heroic woman held the door till the hound of her arm was broken in two, when the ruffians, sword in hand, rushed into the apartment. A brave but ineffectual resistance was made by those who were with James at the time he escaped. Patrick Dunbar, brother to the Earl of March, was killed; and the Queen was also wounded in the affray. Search was now made for the king, and hearing a noise which was occasioned by his attempting to get out of the vault, the assassins discovered where he was concealed. Defenceless as he was when they sprang down upon him, he made a desperate resistance, but Sir Robert Graham at last succeeded in giving him his death-stroke—and the story of James' life was thus finished by an end as tragic as history can record. It was afterwards discovered that in the affray he had received no less than twenty-eight wounds. He was forty-four years of age at the time of his assassination. Universal grief overpowered the nation on the death of the king becoming known; and with just vengeance his inhuman assassins were traced, dragged from their retreats, and executed by the most lingering tortures that human ingenuity could suggest.

James I. besides being a most accomplished scholar and a poet of great merit, was also a very skilful performer on the harp, and by some historians has been termed the "Father of Scottish Music." Three of his literary productions have been preserved—the "King's Quhair," "Pebbles at the Play," and, "Christ's Kirk on the Green," in all of which are exhibited a great degree of intellectual skill and beauty.

Additional Notes to February.

LORD ELDON'S FIRST FEE.

(12.)—LORD CAMPBELL, in his *Lives of the Lord Chancellors*, gives the following account of the manner in which Lord Eldon was cheated out of his maiden fee, and which was thus told by his lordship himself:—

"I had been called to the Bar but a day or two, when, on coming out of court one morning, I was accosted by a dapper-looking attorney's clerk, who handed me a motion paper, in some matter of course, which merely required to be authenticated by counsel's signature. I signed the paper, and the attorney's clerk, taking it back from me, said, 'A fine hand yours, Mr. Scott—an exceedingly fine hand! It would be well if gentlemen at the Bar would always take a little of your pains to insure legibility. A beautiful hand, Sir!' While he spoke thus, the eloquent clerk was fumbling first in one pocket, then in the other, till, with a hurried air, he said, 'A—a—a—I really beg your pardon, Sir, but I have unfortunately left my purse on the table in the coffee-room opposite; pray do me the favour to remain here, and I will be back in one moment.' So speaking, the clerk vanished with the rapidity of lightning, and I never set eyes on him again."

In after life Lord Eldon would frequently speak of the difficulties he had to encounter through his poverty, when, in the outset of his career, he went on the northern circuit; and in reference to his obscurity at this period of his life, the Rev. Sydney Smith, in an assize sermon delivered in York Cathedral in the year 1824, preached from the text, for the encouragement of desponding barristers—"And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tempted him," and said, "Fifty years ago, the person at the head of his profession, the greatest lawyer now in England, perhaps in the world, stood in this church on such an occasion as the present, as obscure, as unknown, and as much doubting of his future prospects, as the humblest individual of the profession here present."

Lord Eldon's fortune was made by his being retained in the cause of *Akroyd v. Smithson*, in which the Master of the Rolls decided against him. The cause, however, having been carried by appeal to a higher court, a guinea brief was given (in desperation) to Eldon to argue the case when it came on for hearing. Most ably he did so, and at the close of his speech Lord Thurlow took three days to consider the points raised, and delivered his judgment in accordance with the young counsel's speech; "and," says Eldon, in speaking of it, "that speech is in print, and has decided all similar questions ever since."



noise alarming one of the maids of honour, Catherine Douglas, she ran to the door and endeavoured to fasten it. The traitor Stuart, however, had contrived to remove the bolt beforehand, and the brave woman perceiving this, thrust her arm into the staple—calling upon the king to fly whilst she had the strength to hold out. In the extremity of his despair James tore up one

* Tradition says that James fell in love with this lady on seeing her from his prison in the Round Tower of Windsor Castle, an incident which is believed to have suggested his plaintive and elegant poem entitled "The King's Quhair."