

After crossing the Firth of Forth the party made rapid progress, and in due course were safely and comfortably housed in the old monastery of the Dominicans of Perth. The gaieties of Court and Carnival soon obliterated, for a time at least, the memory of the discomforts of the journey ; and the warning of the old witch, if remembered at all, was thought of with pity, or dismissed with mirth. The festivities, which were maintained with vigour and brilliance for a considerable time, surrounded the king with both friends and foes. Sir Robert Stuart, who had been promised the kingdom by Sir Richard Graeme, was actually acting as chamberlain to the king he was plotting to dethrone ; and the Earl of Athole and other conspirators were among the guests who, with loyal protestations, pledged the king's health and prosperity. Towards the close of the Carnival, when the month of February, 1437, had almost waned to a close, while the rain beat upon the windows and the wind whistled wildly around the roof of the old monastery, in grim contrast with the scene of merriment that graced the halls within, the guests were startled by a loud knocking at the outer door. The king, gayest among the gay, was singing "The King's Quhair," a ballad of his own writing, when the usher interrupted him to announce the old witch of the Firth of Forth. "She says she must have speech with you," said the usher, "and that her words admit of no delay." But James was annoyed by the interruption, and, as it was midnight, ordered her to be sent away, promising