

I.

ON THE REGNAL YEARS OF DAVID II. BY THE MOST HON. THE MARQUESS OF BUTE, K.T., LL.D., F.S.A. SCOT.

It is well known that in the latter part of the reign of David II., his regnal years are dated incorrectly, being one year less than they ought to be. That this is done by omitting exactly one year, appears from the consistency of the charters with one another, and also from certain particular documents, *e.g.*, David's letter in London, dated June 4, 1370, and fortieth of his reign, whereas his real forty-second and nominal forty-first begins only three days later, on June 7. (The letter is in *Rymer's Fœdera*, vi. 655.)

In the *Acts of Parliaments of Scotland*, i., 514, Nov. 12, 1347, is said to be in the nineteenth year. This is correct.

In the *Chartulary of Kelso* (Bannatyne Club), ii., 385, April 1, 1354, is said to be in the twenty-fourth year. This is a year too few, as the real twenty-fifth year began on June 7, 1353.

It is evident, therefore, that the year which was counted as having twenty-four months must have begun on June 7, either in 1347, 1348, 1349, 1350, 1351, or 1352.

In the second volume (*Pars Altera*) of the *Chartulary of Arbroath* (Bannatyne Club), pp. 23 and 25, are two documents both dated in the twenty-third year. The first is Nov. 14, at Newcastle-upon-Tyne, ordering the Chancellor to make out a charter, the words of which are given at length; the second is March 13, in Edinburgh, on the same subject, but in different words.

David's real twenty-third year began June 7, 1351.

In the June of 1350 he was still in the Tower of London, as the *Rotuli Scotia*, 734, contain a passport for one of the Queen's servants to come to him there, and he was probably still there in August, for on p. 736 there is another passport for one of his own servants to come there.

A meeting on Scottish affairs was arranged for April 24, 1351, at Hexham, concerning which there are many documents (*Rotuli Scotiæ*, 740, 741, and elsewhere), but it seems not to have come to much, for a fresh meeting was arranged for Newcastle, for which the Scottish Commissioners had a passport on June 28 till August 15; but on July 11 the English Commissioners were empowered to extend the time (*Rotuli*, 741, 742).

On September 4 three of these same English Commissioners were empowered to receive David's bodily oath, from which it would appear probable that he had then been sent northwards (*Rymer*, v. 722), and on November 3 the same is repeated, at which date also the term of his leave of absence in Scotland is prolonged from February 16 to May 1 (1352), (*Rymer*, v. 725), and there is moreover a letter (*Rotuli*, 745) to the Sheriff of Northumberland, charging him, in case the negotiations fell through, to keep David safely at Newcastle.

His temporary enlargement must, however, have been effected soon after. On February 1, 1352, Edward III. speaks of him as then in Scotland, and gives permission that on his return he might be accompanied as far as Newcastle by 200 horsemen, whose passport is made good till May 17 (*Rotuli*, 748).

A variety of documents seem to show that the arrangements were carried out as intended, and on June 22 a passport for his servant Hector Leche (*Rotuli*, 751) mentions him as again in the Tower of London. He was there still on December 6 (*Rymer*, v. 746), and it is not till July 7, 1353 (*Rymer*, v. 756), that we find an order to take him again from London to Newcastle.

From the above it appears eminently probable that David was at Newcastle on November 14, 1351, and in Edinburgh on March 13, 1352, both of which are in his real twenty-third year, and that he was not in those places in November 1352 and March 1353.

Consequently, it appears by the Arbroath documents that the years are reckoned rightly up to the twenty-third, included, and that the year passed over in the reckoning is that from June 7, 1352, to June 7, 1353, the real twenty-fourth year.

But I have not yet met with anything to show whether these twelve months were reckoned as added to the twenty-third year, or whether it is the twenty-fourth year, which is counted from its true beginning on June 7, 1352, and then continued over what was really the twenty-fifth.

Nor have I seen anything to account for so extraordinary a change having been made in the enumeration.

If any one differs from my conclusion, I should be sincerely obliged to them for pointing out to me my error, and also to any one who could point out to me anything throwing light upon the question to which year (the twenty-third or the twenty-fourth) the twelve months from June 7, 1352, to June 7, 1353, are reckoned to belong, or upon the reasons which caused the change to be made.

It is perhaps worth noting that the Kelso Charter of April 1, 1354, which is the earliest I have found in which the change appears, is granted in the absence of the King (who was still in prison at Newcastle, as appears from *Rotuli*, 765, 766, and elsewhere), by the Council held at Inverkeithen by Robert the High Steward, then Guardian of Scotland.