

6 The Tudors 1485-1603

The Tudor family rose to prominence through advantageous marriages. Owen Tudor, no more than a handsome Welsh knight, captured the heart of Henry V's widow Katherine, the mother of Henry VI and herself the daughter of Charles VI of France. Their son Jasper Tudor, created Earl of Richmond, married Lady Margaret Beaufort, a direct descendant of Edward III, in 1455, but died before the birth of his son Henry Tudor in 1456. After his victory at Bosworth Henry was acclaimed as **Henry VII** and his first important move was to marry Elizabeth of York, the daughter of Edward IV, so that the houses of Lancaster and York might be reconciled. Elizabeth symbolically carried red and white roses at her wedding. The next tasks which he set himself, and upon which he toiled methodically and with outstanding success for the rest of his reign, were to establish the Tudor dynasty securely, to restore the authority of the crown and to reduce the power of the great nobles. He achieved this by a close collaboration with parliament, by avoiding foreign wars and by building up a large royal fortune.

It is important to remember that Henry VII was the ruler of a relatively small kingdom populated by about 2.5 million people and 8 million sheep. Since the 'Black Death' the human population had remained static and the biggest economic change was that instead of exporting wool directly to the Netherlands, English weavers began to make their own cloth both for internal consumption and for export. Though London was a large town by international standards in 1485, with about 75,000 citizens, England's other major towns - such as Bristol, York, Norwich, Coventry and Exeter - were hardly more than overgrown villages. Vast tracts of the countryside were still covered in forest, and timber provided the materials for houses, transport and heating. In most respects England stood well outside the main stream of European development, having little to offer either economically or culturally to compare with the artistic achievements of Renaissance Italy or the financial powerhouses of the money markets in the Low Countries. Nor could English kings rival the international prestige of the Holy Roman Emperor or the Pope.

All this was even more true of **Scotland** which since the Treaty of Northampton in 1328 had maintained its status as an independent kingdom but not made impressive progress. As we have seen Robert Bruce died in 1329 leaving the throne to his son David II, aged 5, who married Joan, a daughter of Edward II. In 1332 Edward Balliol (son of John) took advantage of David's minority by rebelling in southern Scotland and, in a re-run of the events of Edward I's reign, he received help from Edward III. David's supporters were defeated by Edward, fighting his first battle at Halidon Hill in 1337, after which Berwick was captured and the regents of Scotland were forced to send their young king and queen for safety to France, where they set up court in Chateau Gaillard, in Normandy, from 1334 to 1341. Edward III ravaged Scotland as far as Morayshire in 1336, but in 1338 he transferred his interest to the conquest of France and took his army across the Channel.

David returned to Scotland in 1341, more inclined to devote his time to entertainments in the French manner rather than give his kingdom the good order and careful administration it badly needed. In response to an appeal from Philip VI of France David invaded England in 1346 while Edward was besieging Calais but he was defeated by English forces at Neville's Cross and taken prisoner. From 1346 to 1357 he was held captive by Edward while various conditions were considered for his release. When the Scots attacked Berwick in 1355 Edward

replied the next year with another expedition to Scotland, establishing control over much of the country. However, Edward decided to abandon his attempts to subdue Scotland, possibly because his first priority was the conquest of France, and he accordingly liberated David in 1357 for a ransom of 100,000 marks. By this time the country was in a sad state, decimated by the Black Death, torn by internal feuds, ravaged by successive English invaders, and now required to find a huge ransom for their king. David's solution was not to pay the ransom but to offer the succession to the crown of Scotland to Edward III, but this was rejected in Scotland and about two-thirds of the ransom was paid before David's inglorious reign came to an end with his death in 1371.

Because David II left no heirs the Scottish crown passed to Robert II, the first king of the house of **Stewart** (later spelt Stuart) because his mother Marjorie, the daughter of Robert Bruce, married Walter Stewart, sixth High Steward of Scotland. He was 55 when he succeeded and he had thirteen legitimate children as well as others. He was considered an upstart by many nobles, as was his son Robert III (1390-1406) and the authority of the crown was strongly challenged by the nobility during this period. When Robert III died his son James I, aged eleven, had recently been captured by the English on a sea-crossing to France and he was not released until 1424 during which time Scotland was badly governed on his behalf by two regents.

When restored to his throne James proved to be able and energetic and he introduced reforms intended to reduce the feudal power of the nobles. Inevitably, he made enemies and he was murdered in 1437. This left his six-year old son James II to be further exploited by the nobles during his minority but he struck back in 1452, stabbing to death the overmighty Earl of Douglas and attainting his successor for treason in 1455. In 1460 James was killed by an exploding cannon at the siege of Roxburgh Castle so that the throne passed to his son James III, a boy of eight. Yet another unstable minority followed and when James did come of age he preferred the company of artists to that of warriors or nobles. This led to aristocratic revolts against the king's upstart favourites and James himself was murdered in 1488 while fleeing from battle.

It was fortunate for Scotland that during much of this period the English kings were also weak and preoccupied with the Wars of the Roses, so that they made little attempt to interfere in Scottish affairs. The 'Auld Alliance' between Scotland and France was constantly renewed and relations between both countries remained very cordial with French styles affecting Scottish architecture, for instance. The Scottish parliament remained much more of a feudal court than its counterpart in England though increasingly it included representatives from the richer towns. Although James II created the class of 'peer' in 1445 a separate House of Lords never developed in Scotland and all members of parliament sat in one chamber.

The death of James III brought to the throne his son James IV, a ruler of real ability and colourful character who was successful in imposing a greater degree of law and order in Scotland as well as encouraging cultural developments in tune with the European revival of interest in learning and the arts. The likelihood of a clash with Tudor England grew when it became clear that Henry VII's foreign policy continued in the anti-French tradition. In 1489 Henry made a formal alliance with Spain and in 1490 he sent troops to Brittany to defend it against the warlike Charles VIII of France. Henry's international position was weakened, however, by the appearance of the two young impostors Lambert Simnel and Perkin Warbeck

who claimed to be, respectively, the Yorkist Earl of Warwick (who was in fact alive and in captivity) and Richard Duke of York (who had been murdered in 1483).

Simnel's supporters were defeated in 1487 but Warbeck, who looked every inch a Plantagenet prince, was recognized as King of England by all Henry's foreign enemies, including the King of France and James IV of Scotland. When Henry made peace with France in 1492 Warbeck moved to Flanders, from which he launched an unsuccessful invasion of Kent. He then moved to Scotland where James IV made him welcome and in 1496 James invaded England, hoping to raise support for 'King Richard IV', but without success. Warbeck invaded again from Cornwall but he was captured and executed in 1499. In the same year Henry made a truce with James IV followed by a formal peace treaty in 1502 which was sealed by a marriage the next year between James and Henry VII's elder daughter Margaret. Though it could not have been foreseen at the time it was this marriage which led to the eventual union of the crowns of England and Scotland exactly one hundred years later.

Having successfully defeated rebellions at home and safeguarded his position abroad by alliances with Spain, France and Scotland, Henry VII was free to concentrate on his domestic policy of reducing the power of the nobility and of enriching the crown, using his minister Cardinal Morton and the royal court of 'Star Chamber' to enforce justice and levy fines. He also attempted to bring the more distant parts of his kingdom under firmer control through the Council of the North and the Council of Wales. He also attempted to strengthen his hold on **Ireland** where, since the departure of Richard II in 1399, royal control had become weak. The impoverished Lancastrian kings had not been able to afford the large sums necessary to maintain troops there and the English governors had to contend with powerful landowners, especially the earls of Desmond, Ormonde and Kildare. The English were in firm control of little more than 'the Pale', consisting of Dublin and the land immediately surrounding it. In 1447 Richard, Duke of York, was appointed governor and achieved considerable success in attracting the personal loyalty of many Irish lords so that he was able to use Ireland as a safe haven from which to launch his attack on Henry VI in 1460, though the Butler Earl of Ormonde supported Lancaster while his rivals the Fitzgeralds of Desmond and Kildare were for York.

In 1462 Ormonde led a Lancastrian rebellion against Edward IV's authority in Ireland and was defeated by Desmond who acted as governor until replaced in 1466 by John Tiptoft, Earl of Worcester, who shocked Ireland in February 1468 by executing Desmond on a dubious charge of treason. This alienated Desmond's heir from support of the crown which then had to turn for support to Kildare who was appointed Deputy in 1471 with his son the eighth earl succeeding him in 1478. Though this Kildare did not oppose the authority of Henry VII immediately his Yorkist sympathies led him to support the cause of Lambert Simnel who was crowned 'Edward IV' in Dublin in 1487 in preparation for an invasion of England. After Simnel's defeat Kildare was pardoned by the king but when Perkin Warbeck emerged as another pretender with Irish support Kildare was dismissed in 1492 to be replaced in 1494 by Sir Edward Poyning. In December Poyning summoned an Irish parliament which passed '**Poyning's Laws**' which declared that henceforth no Irish parliament could be summoned except by the king's prior consent, that no bill could be introduced that had not been approved the king and his Council in England, and that all acts of the English parliament applied also to Ireland. These measures substantially reduced the independence and authority of the Irish parliament down to the 18th century. Poyning and his soldiers and administrators

proved to be too expensive for the thrifty Henry VII, however, and in 1496 he restored Kildare as Deputy and left him to govern much as before.

Although Henry VII was outstandingly successful in bringing stability to England and in re-establishing the authority of the crown his methods of government were for the most part very traditional, differing little from his Plantagenet predecessors. Yet during his reign developments were taking place throughout Europe which, historians have generally decided, brought the 'Middle Ages' to a close and ushered in the 'Modern' era. A renewal of interest in all aspects of learning and the arts (The 'Renaissance') led to the questioning of existing institutions, including the Roman Catholic church, a process that was greatly helped by the rapid development of printing technology. The emergence of the unified states of France and Spain led to the decline of the authority of the mediaeval 'Holy Roman Emperor' who had dominated Europe for seven centuries. In 1486 Bartholomew Diaz sailed round the Cape of Good Hope and this, together with the discovery of the Americas by Columbus in 1492, using an improved mariner's compass, transformed the popular concept of the world and its boundaries. Meanwhile the development of the use of gunpowder and cannon rendered the mediaeval castle far more vulnerable to attack and encouraged the great lords to build themselves more peaceful and comfortable country houses instead.

Henry VII died in 1509 in the middle of these great changes, leaving his throne and an overflowing treasury to his eighteen-year old son **Henry VIII**. Without delay Henry decided to marry **Katherine of Aragon**, the Spanish princess who had married Henry's elder brother Arthur in 1501 but who was left a widow when Arthur died shortly afterwards. There were diplomatic advantages in the marriage but the Pope's special permission was needed for Henry to marry his brother's widow, a union forbidden by some scriptural texts. Katherine gave birth to a daughter, Mary, in 1516 but she never provided Henry with the male heir he desperately wanted. However, the early years of the reign were a golden age : Henry was young and handsome, well-educated, musical and good at sports - a true 'Renaissance' prince. Cheerful and jovial, he was also shrewd, selfish and ruthless, very much the master of his own court. In a bid to play an important part in European politics he went to war against France in 1511, in alliance with Spain, and personally won the 'battle of the Spurs' in 1513 capturing the towns of Therouanne and Tournai. While he was away James IV of Scotland, under pressure from the Pope as well as his obligations under the 'Auld Alliance' with France, crossed the border with an army which was cut to pieces by the Earl of Surrey's forces at Flodden in September 1513. James died on the battlefield, along with many Scottish nobles. Yet again Scotland was condemned to another long minority under his infant son James V, whose guardian was his mother Margaret, the sister of Henry VIII.

By 1515 Henry's chief advisor was **Thomas Wolsey**, an Ipswich cattle-dealer's son who had risen to prominence through the church by making good use of his outstanding administrative talents. He enjoyed the king's confidence for 15 years and during this period he was the effective ruler of England. As Cardinal, Chancellor and Archbishop of York he lived in princely style in return for relieving the king of the heaviest burdens of government and he built palaces for himself in London and at Hampton Court as well as founding a magnificent college at Oxford University. His weaknesses were that he was a poor financier and that he did little to reform serious abuses in the English church, but through the law courts he increased respect for law and order and he continued the Tudor policy of reducing the power of the nobility. In foreign affairs he sought to raise England's international prestige as well as his own, in the hope of being elected Pope one day. In 1518 he successfully concluded the

Treaty of London by which England, France, Spain, the Holy Roman Empire and the Pope all pledged themselves to preserve peace and defend Europe from the Turks. It was Wolsey's most spectacular achievement, but it did not last.

The main reason for its failure was the imbalance of power in Europe caused when through family inheritance Charles, Duke of Burgundy, became, at the age of 19, ruler of not only the Netherlands, but also Spain and the Spanish Empire in the New World as well as Austria, Hungary, Bohemia and many other lands belonging to the Habsburg family. When elected Holy Roman Emperor as **Charles V** in 1519 he also became the official secular head of Christendom and titular lord of most of Germany and much of Italy. Francis I, the young King of France, sought an alliance with England against Charles V and he met Henry VIII in 1520 at 'The Field of Cloth of Gold', near Calais, an elaborate courtly entertainment staged by both kings at colossal expense to pledge their mutual friendship. Despite this England made a treaty with Charles V in 1521 but when Charles crushed Francis at Pavia in 1525, making him master of Italy, Wolsey decided to change sides. Whether this decision was prompted by notions of a balance of power or of keeping the favour of the Pope, it proved to be Wolsey's downfall. France was still thought of as the national enemy in England, and Charles controlled the Flanders cloth trade which was vital to England's economy. Worse still, in 1527 Charles' army marched on Rome and took Pope Clement VII prisoner just at the moment when Henry began to seek a divorce from Katherine of Aragon, who was Charles' aunt.

Katherine had failed to provide Henry with a son and she was now past child-bearing age. Moreover, by 1527 Henry had fallen in love with **Anne Boleyn**, a lady of his court. He therefore sought from the Pope an annulment of his marriage and expected Wolsey to arrange it. But the Pope could not afford to offend Charles V, who naturally opposed his aunt's divorce. Clement employed delaying tactics until 1529 when the case was called to Rome. Also in that year Charles V and Francis I made peace at Cambrai without reference to England. Wolsey's foreign policy was seen to have achieved nothing and the king had not obtained his divorce. In October 1529 Wolsey was dismissed by the king and even summoned for trial in 1530, though he died before proceedings began.

Henry VIII's determination to secure a divorce was so great that he was prepared to consider renouncing the authority of the Pope over the English church, a step that would have been unthinkable in the 'mediaeval' world of his predecessors. But during the fifteenth century the prestige and authority of the popes declined because they behaved too much like Italian princes with political and territorial ambitions. In England, criticism of abuses among the clergy and jealousy of the vast wealth of the church had been steadily increasing despite the suppression of Wycliffe and the Lollard movement in the 15th century. About a third of the land in England was owned by the church, most of it by the 800 or so monasteries, and the payment of tithes by the population was bitterly resented. Moreover, though the monasteries were rich, they were inhabited by a declining number of monks who were widely believed to be corrupt and licentious. Similar criticisms of the church were widespread throughout Europe and in 1517 they came to a head when **Martin Luther**, a German monk, began to publish radical attacks on the central institutions and beliefs of the church. In 1520 he denied the right of the Pope to supremacy over the church and went on to question the basic doctrine (called transubstantiation) that during the mass the bread and wine are miraculously transformed into the body and blood of Christ.

When the Emperor Charles V had heard Luther's opinions at an assembly of German princes at Worms in 1521 Luther was declared an outlaw and subsequently excommunicated by the Pope. But several German princes, led by the ruler of Saxony, were convinced by Luther's arguments and also attracted by the prospect of taking over church land for themselves. Through this mixture of genuine disillusionment with the church and an awareness of the political and financial gains to be made in renouncing the authority of the Pope, many German princes embarked on a Lutheran '**Reformation**' in their lands to the dismay of both the Pope and the Emperor.

After Wolsey's fall Henry VIII's policy was to blackmail the Pope by threatening that England would also undertake a similar 'Reformation' if the Pope did not quickly grant a divorce. Parliament met in November 1529 and began to make reforms with the king's support. Henry accused the entire English clergy of breaking the Statute of Praemunire, a law made in the reign of Richard II which protected the king's rights against church courts, and he threatened punishment if the clergy did not recognize him (rather than the Pope) as Supreme Head of the English Church. In this anticlerical campaign Henry was aided by **Thomas Cromwell**, the son of a Putney blacksmith who rose to be an MP and Henry's chief advisor from 1530 to 1540. In 1532 Henry was able to appoint **Thomas Cranmer**, a church reformer, to the post of Archbishop of Canterbury and when by 1533 the Pope had still refused to grant a divorce Cranmer secretly married Henry and Anne Boleyn in January and openly declared Henry's marriage to Katherine of Aragon null and void in May.

Anne Boleyn was then crowned Queen and she gave birth, to Henry's disappointment, to a daughter, Elizabeth, in September. Meanwhile the Pope excommunicated Henry who then moved on to a final break with Rome when parliament passed the Act of Supremacy in 1534 which declared that Henry 'justly and rightfully is Supreme Head of the Church of England'. In order to marry the woman he loved Henry had in this way swept aside more than a thousand years of English religious tradition. The Act of Succession of 1534 recognized the legality of Henry's marriage to Anne, restricted the succession to any children they might have and required all citizens to take an oath signifying their assent to this arrangement. A Treason Act laid down dire penalties for anyone who opposed the new order of things. A few prominent men refused to take the necessary oath and were duly executed, most notably Henry's former minister **Sir Thomas More** and Bishop Fisher of Rochester. Faced with such ruthlessness opponents of Henry's policies kept silent for the time being.

In 1535 Thomas Cromwell authorized an inspection of about 800 religious houses which uncovered alleged corruption, scandal and abuse and the next year parliament abolished about 240 smaller establishments as a first step. This sparked off one of the biggest rebellions in English history, **The Pilgrimage of Grace**. Led by a Yorkshire landowner, Robert Aske, its main demands were the preservation of the monasteries and the removal of Thomas Cromwell. About 30,000 northerners supported Aske and presented the king with a serious threat which he overcame by a mixture of bluff and treachery, offering pardon to the rebels as well as consideration of their demands, then executing Aske and hundreds of others once the rebels had dispersed. Cromwell then turned his attention to the larger monasteries which, by a mixture of threats and bribes, were persuaded to surrender their lands and property to the crown. Four abbots resisted and were hanged outside the gates of their abbeys. Once the process of surrender was complete an act of parliament in 1539 confirmed the transfer of monastic property to the crown and as this involved about a third of all the land in England it constituted the largest and fastest redistribution of land since the Norman Conquest.

About 10,000 people were displaced by the **dissolution of the monasteries** but most of them were provided with suitable pensions or other employment. Henry made the serious mistake of selling off nearly all the monastic lands, often to lesser gentry and merchants. Although this did have the advantage of giving these people a stake in the new order, which they would not wish to see overturned, the sale meant that the crown lost heavily because most of the monastic money had been spent on futile wars before Henry died. It also created a powerful class of rich gentry who would challenge the authority of the crown in years to come.

The Pilgrimage of Grace had underlined the fact that royal authority was weak in the north of England, partly because of the special administrative powers granted in previous centuries to the Bishops of Durham, and partly because of the local loyalty commanded by the Percy and Neville families. To counteract this the County Palatine of Durham was abolished in 1536 and a Council of the North, based in York, was set up the following year, consisting of professional administrators who reported directly to the Privy Council in London. In 1536 the king and Cromwell turned their attention to Wales which since the suppression of the Glendower rebellion in 1410 had been peaceful and relatively unaffected by the turbulent events in England during the 15th century. Edward I's Statute of Rhuddlan (1284) had annexed Wales to the English crown and created three counties (Anglesey, Caernarvon, and Merioneth) but Henry VIII's statute of 1536 went further and declared a formal **Union of England and Wales**. It set up seven more counties (Pembroke, Glamorgan, Denbigh, Montgomery, Radnor, Brecon and Monmouth) and provided Wales with 27 MPs at Westminster. Welsh people were to enjoy the same status as English people and the common law of England was to be used in the Welsh courts.

Henry VIII's reign also saw major changes in Ireland. The eighth Earl of Kildare died in 1513, to be succeeded as Deputy by his son the ninth earl. Several attempts were made by the king to govern Ireland through more dependable officials but Kildare managed to make himself indispensable until 1533 when the breach with Rome and Charles V raised the possibility that he might negotiate with the Pope or the Emperor for an independent Ireland. He was summoned to England in 1534 and forbidden to return to Ireland, whereupon his son Thomas rebelled against Henry, denouncing him as a heretic. Kildare, still in London, was seized and placed in the Tower where he soon died of natural causes. Thomas' rebellion was crushed in 1535 by a force sent from England, and after a spell in prison he and five of his uncles were executed at Tyburn in 1537. In 1536 the Irish parliament obediently renounced papal authority and recognized Henry as Head of the Irish Church, and in 1541 it enacted that he should be styled 'King of Ireland', rather than 'Lord', the title bestowed on Henry II by Pope Adrian IV. This did not imply union between England and Ireland but it meant that the Tudors had gained for themselves and their successors a second independent crown.

Meanwhile Henry's love for Anne Boleyn had dwindled, partly because her first child was a girl and her second was stillborn. In 1536 Henry ruthlessly arranged for her trial and execution on dubious grounds of adultery and quickly married Jane Seymour, another lady of the court. She produced a male heir, Edward, in 1537 but tragically died in the process. Henry was genuinely distraught by her loss and it was not until 1540 that Thomas Cromwell persuaded him to contract a diplomatic marriage by proxy with Anne, the daughter of the Lutheran Duke of Cleves. The idea behind this was that England should have an ally among the European Lutheran princes in case of a joint invasion from France and Spain. No invasion took place, however, and when Henry actually met Anne he did not like what he saw and

determined to be rid of her. This involved renouncing not only the whole marriage agreement, but also Cromwell, its architect.

All Cromwell's immense labours over the past ten years counted for nothing : he had become a liability to the king and he was executed in 1540, to the delight of his many enemies. One of these was the Duke of Norfolk who now placed his 18 year-old niece Katherine Howard before Henry's view. In August 1540 she was required to marry the king, who was by now very corpulent and suffering from syphilis, gout and other ailments. After marriage she may have continued an affair with her former lover and when this was brought to Henry's notice in 1542 she too went to the block along with seven others. Henry's sixth and last marriage, to a young widow, Katherine Parr, was less sensational: she survived him, ministering to his ill health and dealing patiently with his whims and rages.

With Cromwell dead, his momentous administrative changes for the most part complete and the royal treasury overflowing with monastic booty, Henry turned his attention to foreign affairs, particularly the continuing threat from Scotland and France. When James V came of age in the early 1530s he proved himself to be full of energy and character and promised to be a strong and effective ruler. In 1537 he was married in Paris to Madeleine, the daughter of Francis I but she died only a few months later and the following year James married another French grandee, Mary of Guise. In this way he kept Scotland to the path of the 'Auld Alliance' and loyalty to the Pope. Anxious to come to terms with his nephew, Henry arranged to meet him in York in 1541, travelling to that city for the first time. James, possibly fearing a kidnap attempt, decided not to turn up, prompting a furious Henry to send troops across the border in 1542.

This invasion achieved little and James replied with a counter-attack which, as he was himself ill, was entrusted to his favourite Oliver Sinclair whose force was shattered at Solway Moss. James, who was only thirty-one, died shortly afterwards. Two of his sons had perished in infancy but a week before he died Mary of Guise gave birth to a baby girl, also named Mary, who was proclaimed Queen of Scots. In 1543 a pro-English party in Scotland signed the Treaty of Greenwich with England and this was sealed by the betrothal of the baby Mary to Henry's six-year old heir Edward. However, the following year the pro-French Cardinal Beaton persuaded the Scottish parliament to renounce this treaty, which goaded Henry into sending punitive forces into southern Scotland in 1544 and 1545, though nothing had been resolved before he died in 1547. Henry pursued a similarly inconclusive but far more expensive war against France in 1543 which lasted three years, achieved nothing and cost more than two million pounds - which was most of the money he had received from the dissolution of the monasteries.

Henry died in 1547, aged only fifty-five. He had been personally responsible for changes in England that made a clear break with the mediaeval past and set the nation on a new course. By the force of his own personality he raised the prestige of the crown to unprecedented heights though paradoxically he caused problems for his successors by giving a new power and authority to parliament. The 'Tudor Revolution in Government' had been accomplished by Henry and Cromwell not by royal decree but by parliamentary statute. If parliament could declare that Henry and not the Pope was Head of the English Church, and dissolve the monasteries and set aside the legitimate royal succession, what could it not do?

Henry left the throne to his only son **Edward VI**, a delicate child of nine who showed every sign of intellectual promise. Though Henry himself had never become a Protestant in his religious beliefs he allowed Edward to be taught by Protestant tutors and arranged in his will for the Privy Council to be led by the young king's Protestant uncle, Edward Seymour, Duke of Somerset, who assumed the title 'Protector'. Under him, and with the young king's approval, the Protestant movement made great progress. Parliament repealed Henry VIII's Treason Act and Heresy Laws, together with his 'Six Acts' which had made traditional Catholicism compulsory. In 1549 Archbishop Cranmer produced a prayer-book written in English rather than in Latin and incorporating moderate Protestant changes which were made compulsory by an Act of Uniformity. This led to a rebellion in Devon and Cornwall which was soon crushed.

In 1547 Parliament abolished chantries, which were small communities of monks which had been left money to say prayers for the dead. Much of the money simply went into the Treasury to be spent on wars though several 'King Edward VI' Grammar Schools were founded throughout the land with the proceeds. Somerset himself profited nicely and built Somerset House for himself in London. He was, however, sympathetic with the hardship endured by ordinary people when the common land which they had used for centuries began to be fenced off by landowners keen to profit from the flourishing wool trade and the increasing price rise.

When these and other grievances led to another rebellion, this time led by Robert Ket in Norfolk, Somerset was slow to take action and the rebels were defeated by his rival in the Council, the Earl of Warwick. Warwick was then able to force Somerset to resign as Protector in 1549 and take over power himself. He did not use the title Protector but was created Duke of Northumberland and under him the Protestant movement was influenced by more radical, Calvinist reformers. Archbishop Cranmer produced a second prayer-book in 1552 which was unquestionably Protestant, rejecting transubstantiation and 'popish' rituals. Many images of the Virgin Mary and other saints were destroyed, altars were dismantled and replaced by communion tables, and churches were whitewashed. Edward VI was keenly interested in theological details and these changes received his complete support. Had he lived, England might soon have become a Calvinist state but he sickened and died aged sixteen in July 1553, an unexpected event that caused turmoil.

By Henry VIII's will and by primogeniture the next heir was Mary, the Catholic daughter of Henry and Katherine of Aragon. By Edward VI's will, however, his sisters were disinherited and the throne was left to the next heir, the Protestant **Lady Jane Grey**, who was married to Northumberland's son. The Duke and his supporters immediately proclaimed Jane Queen but this was seen to be a plot to perpetuate his own hold on power and Mary won widespread support from the nobles and gentry. After a 'reign' of nine days Jane, her husband, Northumberland and others were arrested and in due course executed, while **Mary I** was proclaimed Queen. Had she been content merely to overturn the reforms of Edward VI's reign and return to the position at the end of her father's reign she would probably have carried public opinion with her but she was determined to go the whole way and restore the authority of the Pope, a policy which threatened the prosperity of the many people who had benefited from the sale of church lands and property. Mary also made a serious misjudgement by becoming engaged to Philip, the son of the Emperor Charles V and heir to the Spanish throne, because it was feared that England would become subordinate to Spanish interests.

Mary's projected marriage provoked a rebellion led by Sir Thomas Wyatt who marched from Kent to London where Mary was saved by the loyalty of the citizens. The revolt collapsed and it was used as an excuse to behead Lady Jane Grey while even Mary's sister Elizabeth was put in the Tower on suspicion of treachery. Mary and Philip were married in the summer of 1554 and parliament in that year repealed all the anti-papal legislation passed since 1529 except for the dissolution of the monasteries. Cranmer having been imprisoned at the start of the reign, a papal nominee, Cardinal Reginald Pole, was appointed Archbishop of Canterbury and he formally received England back into the Catholic church. Those who did not accept the new order were persecuted, notably Cranmer himself and Bishops Hooper, Ridley and Latimer, all of whom were burnt at the stake as heretics. Ordinary people perished too but their numbers may have been exaggerated.

In 1556 Philip became King of Spain and England became embroiled in European quarrels, as many had feared. Philip found himself confronted by an alliance of France and the Pope, by whom he was excommunicated, to Mary's dismay. In 1557 Philip persuaded her to declare war on France, much against the advice of her Council, and English troops won the battle of St Quentin. Unfortunately in January 1558 Calais, which had been an English stronghold for centuries, was captured by the French to the consternation of Mary. The pregnancy which she had longed for meanwhile turned out to be a malignant growth in her stomach and she died in November, aged forty-two.

Elizabeth I now ascended a throne beset with problems. The kingdom was divided by religious controversy, the treasury was empty and burdened with debt, and the war with France had gone badly. During a long reign Elizabeth proved herself to be shrewd, wise and a skilful political operator: she was also fortunate to be served loyally for forty years by William Cecil, **Lord Burghley**, a minister in whom she was able to place complete trust and confidence. Her first priority was to resolve the religious issue. She supported her father's break with Rome but in other respects she was inclined to be conservative in matters of religious belief. Moreover for reasons of national security she was anxious not to alienate her brother-in-law Philip of Spain who was at first a much-needed ally against France. However, public opinion at home favoured a Protestant settlement, partly as a reaction to the extreme Catholicism of Mary's reign. Acts of Parliament in 1559 appointed Elizabeth Head of the English Church with the title 'Supreme Governor' and adopted a prayer book similar to that of 1552. Unfortunately this settlement pleased neither devout Catholics nor radical Protestants.

One of the main threats Elizabeth had to face was that the Catholic church regarded her as an illegitimate daughter of Henry VIII whose claim to the English throne was therefore weaker than that of her first cousin **Mary, Queen of Scots**. Henry VIII had died at war with Scotland and Protector Somerset had acted boldly by crossing the border in 1547 and defeating the Scots at Pinkie, though he foolishly followed this up by devastating the countryside. The Scots therefore refused to consider a proposed marriage between Mary and Edward VI and instead sent their young Queen to France where she married Francis, the heir to the French throne, in 1558. When he became King of France the following year a union between the crowns of France and Scotland became a possibility. This offended many in Scotland, partly on nationalist grounds but also because Protestantism had taken root strongly there, thanks to the inspired preaching of **John Knox**, George Wishart and others. In 1559 Knox led a radical attack on the Catholic church in Scotland which forced the Regent, Mary of Guise, to call in French troops. The Scottish Protestants appealed to Elizabeth who

successfully sent a force to their aid. By the Treaty of Edinburgh (1560) French soldiers were banished from Scotland and the country was to be governed by a Scottish council of twelve on behalf of the absent Queen. In the same year the Scottish parliament cast off Catholicism with an act that abolished the authority of the Pope and adopted a prayer-book similar to that of the English 1552 model.

The threat to Elizabeth from France receded in 1560 when Francis II, Mary's husband, died after only one year as king and France entered a period of upheaval and civil war. Mary returned to Scotland but with her French and Catholic background she was not in harmony with a nation that had turned itself into a Calvinist community under the influence of John Knox. In 1564 she married her cousin Lord Darnley but he became jealous of his wife's Italian secretary David Riccio and in March 1566 he burst into the pregnant Queen's rooms with some of Mary's political opponents, dragged Riccio out and stabbed him to death. Mary used her famous charm to win back Darnley's support and soon afterwards gave birth to a son, James. However, in February 1567 there was an explosion at the house where Darnley was staying and he was later found strangled in the garden. Public opinion blamed Mary's new lover the Earl of Bothwell whom she married later that year and she was forced to abdicate in favour of her baby son, **James VI**. Imprisoned for a time in Loch Leven castle she escaped in 1568 and raised support but was defeated by the Protestant lords at Langside, after which she fled across the border to England and sought help from Elizabeth.

In 1568 Elizabeth set up a judicial hearing at which Mary was accused by the Scottish lords of rebellion and of plotting the death of Darnley, and the judges were shown the 'Casket Letters' from Mary to Bothwell, implicating her in the murder. Faced with this evidence Elizabeth decided not to attempt to restore Mary to her throne and to keep her under arrest in England while the Protestant lords acted as regents for James VI. This was a dangerous strategy because Elizabeth never married and Mary remained heir to the throne, the centre of numerous Catholic plots to unseat her. Elizabeth's advisers and her parliaments constantly implored her to marry and produce a Protestant heir but for reasons best known to herself she remained the 'Virgin Queen', playing off one foreign suitor against another and holding back from marriage to her closest English favourite, Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester.

From 1560 relations between Philip of Spain and Elizabeth steadily deteriorated as it became clear that England was holding to a Protestant policy. There was also a growing economic rivalry between the two countries because Spain claimed sovereignty over the New World where new commercial opportunities were opening up to replace the declining English cloth trade. In 1562 **John Hawkins** bought slaves in West Africa and transported them to the Caribbean for sale to Spanish plantation owners, while the Queen herself invested in a second slaving voyage in 1564. In 1567 a third fleet was attacked by the Spanish at San Juan d'Uloa in Mexico and only the ships of Hawkins and **Francis Drake** managed to escape. The next year Elizabeth retaliated by giving moral support to Protestant rebels against Philip in the Spanish Netherlands and in 1569 the Spanish ambassador supported an unsuccessful rebellion in the north of England led by the Earls of Northumberland and Westmorland, who intended to release Mary and restore Catholicism.

In 1570 Philip encouraged the Pope to declare Elizabeth excommunicated and deposed and another Spanish-backed plot was hatched to replace Elizabeth with Mary who would marry the Catholic Duke of Norfolk. The conspirators were detected by government spies and Norfolk went to the block. After 1575 Catholic missionaries and later Jesuit priests secretly

infiltrated the countryside to strengthen the old religion : they were regarded by the government as a serious danger and often put to death when caught. Meanwhile Elizabeth continued to give assistance to the rebels in the Spanish Netherlands and sponsored further expeditions to the New World. In 1579 she knighted Francis Drake aboard his ship *The Golden Hind* on his return from a successful raid on Spanish ships in the Pacific.

As relations with Spain deteriorated practical politics dictated that Elizabeth should conclude an alliance with Spain's enemy, France, and this was achieved by the Treaty of Blois in 1572 despite the notorious 'St Bartholomew's Eve' massacre of Protestants which took place in Paris that year. Between 1579 and 1584 Elizabeth appeared seriously to consider marrying the heir to the French throne, the Duke of Anjou (and Alencon), who spent much time at her court and with her support served as protector of the Dutch rebels in the Spanish Netherlands from 1580 to 1584. His death in that year altered everything. The next heir to the French throne was a Protestant, Henry, King of Navarre, and the Catholic French political factions closed ranks to prevent him succeeding and sought an alliance with Spain. An assassin in the pay of Spain murdered the Dutch rebel leader, William of Orange, in 1584 and Spanish troops under the Duke of Parma began to reconquer the Netherlands. Elizabeth had to prevent this and in 1585 she made a formal treaty of alliance with the Dutch. The 'cold' war that had been waged with Spain for 25 years now turned into an open contest in which Elizabeth and her Dutch allies took on the richest and most powerful European state. Although it was partly a war fought to win trading rights in the New World it was also a clash of religious ideologies in which England played the role of champion of Protestantism and from which she emerged as a leading European power.

In the summer of 1585 Philip II seized all English ships lying in Spanish ports and Elizabeth countered by authorizing Drake's attacks on the Cape Verde Islands, Santa Domingo and Cartagena. She also sent an army to the Netherlands under the command of her favourite Leicester, charged with supporting the Dutch rebels against Philip's army under the Duke of Parma. Leicester had minor successes at Axel and Zutphen but quarrelled with the Dutch and proved to be an ineffective commander. In 1586 spies in the pay of Elizabeth's counsellor Sir Francis Walsingham discovered that Mary Queen of Scots had given her support to a plot led by Anthony Babington, a Catholic, to assassinate Elizabeth. Babington and his accomplices confessed under torture and a special court found Mary guilty and condemned her to death. Realising the consequences of such a drastic course Elizabeth sought to avoid responsibility for Mary's death but eventually a death-warrant signed by her reached Fotheringhay Castle where Mary was beheaded on February 7th 1587.

Philip of Spain's response was to plan nothing less than a full-scale invasion of England. In 1580 he had become King of Portugal, thereby acquiring that country's extensive naval resources, and he intended to send a combined Spanish and Portuguese fleet to the Netherlands to ferry Parma's army to England where Elizabeth would be deposed and Philip declared King. The scheme suffered a major setback when Drake raided Cadiz in the summer of 1587, destroying more than 30 ships, but in May 1588 a '**Spanish Armada**' of about 130 ships with 8,000 sailors and 14,000 soldiers aboard set sail from Lisbon under the command of the Duke of Medina Sidonia. As it made its way slowly through the Channel in crescent formation it successfully fended off English attacks and reached Calais safely on 27th July. The next day the English sent fire-ships into the heart of the armada which broke formation in panic and scattered, pursued by the English. Most Spanish ships were forced to sail round

the treacherous north coast of Scotland where many foundered in bad weather so that only about half the armada reached home safely.

Far from blunting Philip's determination to invade England the armada's failure actually stimulated a naval revival in Spain, with many new ships commissioned and tighter defence measures imposed in the Spanish colonies. An English counter-offensive against Lisbon in 1589 led by Drake and John Norris was unsuccessful, as was Drake and Hawkins' attack on Spanish ports in the Caribbean in 1595, though Elizabeth's new young favourite the Earl of Essex established his reputation by destroying Cadiz in 1596. Nevertheless, more Spanish 'armadas' set out for Ireland in 1596 and 1597 only to be scattered by gales, so that Philip died in 1598 having failed in his attempt to conquer England. Nor did he succeed in defeating the rebels in the Netherlands who after Parma's death in 1592 made steady advances, aided by English troops under Lord Willoughby. Elizabeth's success in repelling Spanish invasion attempts, giving help to the rebels in the Netherlands and generally promoting the Protestant interest despite very limited financial resources, was a great achievement.

Elizabeth also devoted much money, time and effort to **Ireland**. Mary I had begun a policy of confiscating the land of Irish rebels and granting or selling it to English settlers and Elizabeth continued to do this despite the fact that the Irish clan laws regarded land as the property of the clan and not of individuals. The Protestant church established in England in 1559 was also extended to Ireland but little attempt was made to encourage enthusiasm for the Protestant religion through evangelists, education or the production of a suitable Bible or prayer-book. By contrast Jesuit missionaries were successful in preserving loyalty to the Catholic faith. Hence by the end of Elizabeth's reign a disastrous situation had arisen whereby the Irish had seen much of their land confiscated and given to English settlers while the Protestant-Catholic divide had been firmly established.

In the early years of her reign Elizabeth's Deputy in **Ireland** was Sir Henry Sidney who was successful in quelling revolts by Shane O'Neill in Ulster (1562-66) and the Fitzgerald family in Munster (1569-72). After Sidney's death the Counter-Reformation threat was made clear when the Pope sent expeditions to Ireland in 1578 and 1579. The first was diverted to Morocco but the second landed and supported a Fitzgerald revolt which was not put down until 1583. After this most of the Fitzgerald land in Munster was granted to English settlers and Ireland remained quiet until the rebellion of Hugh O'Neill, Earl of Tyrone, in 1595. He built up a strong and effective army which decisively defeated English troops in 1598, encouraging a widespread revolt which had both nationalistic and religious overtones. Both Philip II and his son Philip III promised to send Spanish troops in support so Elizabeth sent a large and expensive army to Ireland in 1599, entrusting its command to her favourite, Essex, who outraged her by making a truce with Tyrone instead of fighting him. Essex was replaced by Lord Mountjoy who was eventually successful in defeating Tyrone as well as his Spanish allies. When Elizabeth died in 1603 Ireland was, for the first time, firmly under royal control, though at the cost of bitterness between the Protestant English settlers and the Catholic Irish.

Though Elizabeth won the greatest respect from her people and became revered as 'Gloriana', an icon-figure, her last years were troublesome at home. Burghley, her adviser for forty years, died in 1598 and the Queen transferred her trust to his son Robert Cecil. This infuriated Essex, already in disgrace for his conduct in Ireland and he was foolish enough to plot a futile revolt against the Queen for which he was found guilty of treason and executed. In 1601 Parliament made such a determined attack on the Queen's use of the royal

prerogative of selling trading monopolies that she was forced to cancel many of them, illustrating that the crown's great popularity and prestige was not itself enough to overawe the increasingly powerful House of Commons. In 1603 Elizabeth died, aged 69, the longest-lived so far of England's monarchs and the last of the house of Tudor because it was generally accepted that her legitimate successor was her closest relative, James VI of Scotland. Henry VIII had made several attempts to bring about a union of the two crowns : Elizabeth achieved it by retaining her status as 'the Virgin Queen'.