CHAPTER V.

EDWARD VI. AND MARY.

HENRY VIII. was succeeded by his son, Edward VI., a boy of nine years of age, learned, pious, and precocious. Still he was a boy; and, as such, was a king but in name. The history of his reign is the history of the acts of his ministers.

The late king left a will, appointing sixteen persons, mostly members of his council, to be guardians of his son, and rulers of the nation during his minority. The Earl of Hertford, being uncle of the king, was unanimously named protector.

The first thing the council did was to look after themselves, that is, to give themselves titles and revenues. Hertford became Duke of Somerset; Essex, Marquis of Northampton; Lisle, Earl of Warwick; the Chancellor Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton. At the head of these nobles was Somerset. He was a Protestant, and therefore prosecuted those reforms which Cranmer had before projected. Cranmer, as member of the council, archbishop of Canterbury, and friend of Somerset, had ample scope to prosecute his measures.

The history of this reign is not important in a political point of view, and relates chiefly to the completion of the reformation, and to the squabbles and jealousies of the great lords who formed the council of regency.

The most important event, of a political character, was a war with Scotland, growing out of the attempts of the late king to unite both nations under one government. In consequence, Scotland was invaded by the Duke of Somerset, at the head of eighteen thousand men. A great battle was fought, in which ten thousand of the Scots were slain. But the protector was compelled to return to England, without following up the fruits of victory, in consequence of cabals at court. His brother, Lord Seymour, a man of reckless ambition, had married the queen dowager, and openly aspired to the government of the kingdom. He endeav

ored to seduce the youthful king, and he had provided arms for ten thousand men.

The protector sought to win his brother from his treasonable designs by kindness and favors; but, all his measures proving ineffectual, he was arrested, tried, and executed, for high treason.

But Somerset had a more dangerous enemy than his brother, and this was the Earl of Warwick, who obtained great popularity by his suppression of a dangerous insurrection, the greatest the country had witnessed since Jack Cade's rebellion, one hundred years before. The discontent of the people appears to have arisen from their actual suffering. Coin had depreciated, without a corresponding rise of wages, and labor was cheap, because tillage lands were converted to pasturage. The popular discontent was aggravated by the changes which the reformers introduced, and which the peasantry were the last to appreciate. The priests and ejected monks increased the discontent, until it broke out into a flame.

The protector made himself unpopular with the council by a law which he caused to be passed against enclosures; and, as he lost influence, his great rival, Warwick, gained power. Somerset, at last, was obliged to resign his protectorship; and Warwick, who had suppressed the rebellion, formed the chief of a new council of regency. He was a man of greater talents than Somerset, and equal ambition, and more fitted for stormy times.

As soon as his power was established, and the country was at peace, and he had gained friends, he began to execute those projects of ambition which he had long formed. The earldom of Northumberland having reverted to the crown, Warwick aspired to the extinct title and the estates, and procured for himself a grant of the same, with the title of duke. But there still remained a bar to his elevation; and this was the opposition of the Duke of Somerset, who, though disgraced and unpopular, was still powerful. It is unfortunate to be in the way of a great man's career, and Somerset paid the penalty of his opposition — the common fate of unsuccessful rivals in unsettled times. He was accused of treason, condemned, and executed, (1552.)

Northumberland, as the new dictator, seemed to have attained

the highest elevation to which a subject could aspire. In rank, power, and property, he was second only to the royal family, but his ambition knew no bounds, and he began his intrigues to induce the young king, whose health was rapidly failing, and who was zealously attached to Protestantism, to set aside the succession of his sister Mary to the throne, really in view of the danger to which the reformers would be subjected, but under pretence of her declared illegitimacy, which would also set aside the claims of the Princess Elizabeth. Mary, Queen of Scots, was to be set aside on the ground of the will of the late king, and the succession would therefore devolve on the Lady Jane Grey, granddaughter of the Duke of Suffolk and of the French queen, whom he hoped to unite in marriage with his son. This was a deeply-laid scheme, and came near being successful, since Edward listened to it with pleasure. Northumberland then sought to gain over the judges and other persons of distinction, and succeeded by bribery and intimidation. At this juncture, the young king died, possessed of all the accomplishments which could grace a youth of sixteen, but still a tool in the hands of his ministers.

Such were the political movements of this reign — memorable for the rivalries of the great nobles. But it is chiefly distinguished for the changes which were made in the church establishment, and the introduction of the principles of the continental reformers. No changes of importance were ever made beyond what Cranmer and his associates effected. Indeed, all that an absolute monarch could do, was done, and done with prudence, sagacity, and moderation. The people quietly — except in some rural districts — acquiesced in the change. Most of the clergy took the new oath of allegiance to Edward VI., as supreme head of the church; and very few suffered from religious persecution. There is no period in English history when such important changes were made, with so little bloodshed. Cranmer always watched the temper of the nation, and did nothing without great caution. Still a great change was effected — no less than a complete change from Romanism to Protestantism. But it was not so radical a reform as the Puritans subsequently desired, since the hierarchy and a liturgy, and clerical badges and dresses, were retained. It was the fortune of Cranmer, during the six years of Edward's reign,

to effect the two great objects of which the English church has ever since been proud — the removal of Roman abuses, and the establishment of the creed of Luther and Calvin; and this without sweeping away the union of church and state, which, indeed, was more intimate than before the reformation. The papal power was completely subverted. Nothing more remained to be done by Cranmer. He had compiled the Book of Common Prayer, abolished the old Latin service, the worship of images, the ceremony of the mass, and auricular confessions. He turned the altars into communion tables, set up the singing of psalms in the service, caused the communion to be administered in both kinds to the laity, added the litany to the ritual, prepared a book of homilies for the clergy, invited learned men to settle in England, and magnificently endowed schools and universities.

The Reformation is divested of much interest, since it was the work of *authority*, rather than the result of *popular convictions*. But Cranmer won immortal honor for his skilful management, and for making no more changes than he could sustain. A large part of the English nation still regard his works as perfect, and are sincerely and enthusiastically attached to the form which he gave to his church.

The hopes of his party were suddenly dispelled by the death of the amiable prince whom he controlled, 6th of July, 1553. The succession to the throne fell to the Princess Mary, or, as princesses were then called, the *Lady* Mary; nor could all the arts of Northumberland exclude her from the enjoyment of her rights. This ambitious nobleman contrived to keep the death of Edward VI. a secret two days, and secure from the Mayor and Alderman of London a promise to respect the will of the late king. In consequence, the Lady Jane Grey was proclaimed Queen of England. "So far was she from any desire of this advancement, that she began to act her part of royalty with many tears, thus plainly showing to those who had access to her, that she was forced by her relations and friends to this high, but dangerous post." She was accomplished, beautiful, and amiable, devoted to her young husband, and very fond of Plato, whom she read in the original.

But Mary's friends exerted themselves, and her cause — the

cause of legitimacy, rather than that of Catholicism — gained ground. Northumberland was unequal to this crisis, and he was very feebly sustained. His forces were suppressed, his schemes failed, and his hopes fled. From rebellion, to the scaffold, there is but a step; and this great nobleman suffered the fate of Somerset, his former rival. His execution confirms one of the most striking facts in the history of absolute monarchies, when the idea of legitimacy is firmly impressed on the national mind; and that is, that no subject, or confederacy of subjects, however powerful, stand much chance in resisting the claims or the will of a legitimate prince. A nod or a word, from such a king, can consign the greatest noble to hopeless impotence. And he can do this from the mighty and mysterious force of ideas alone. Neither king nor parliament can ever resist the omnipotence of popular ideas. When ideas establish despots on their thrones, they are safe. When ideas demand their dethronement, no forces can long sustain them. The age of Queen Mary was the period of the most unchecked absolutism in England. Mary was apparently a powerless woman when Lady Jane Grey was proclaimed queen by the party of Northumberland, and still she had but to signify her intentions to claim her rights, and the nation was prostrate at her feet. The Protestant party dreaded her accession; but loyalty was a stronger principle than even Protestantism, and she was soon firmly established in the absolute throne of Henry VIII.

Then almost immediately followed a total change in the administration, which affected both the political and religious state of the country. Those who had languished in confinement, on account of their religion, obtained their liberty, and were elevated to power. Gardiner, Bonner, and other Catholic bishops, were restored to their sees, while Cranmer, Ridley, Latimer, Hooper Coverdale, and other eminent Protestants, were imprisoned. All the statutes of Edward VI. pertaining to religion were repealed, and the queen sent assurances to the pope of her allegiance to his see. Cardinal Pole, descended from the royal family of England, and a man of great probity, moderation, and worth, was sent as legate of the pope. Gardiner, Bishop of Winchester, was made lord chancellor, and became the prime minister. He and

his associates recommended violent councils; and a reign, unparalleled in England for religious persecution, commenced.

Soon after the queen's accession, she married Philip, son of the Emperor Charles, and heir of the Spanish monarchy. This marriage, brought about by the intrigues of the emperor, and favored by the Catholic party, was quite acceptable to Mary, whose issue would inherit the thrones of Spain and England. But ambitious matches are seldom happy, especially when the wife is much older than the husband, as was the fact in this instance. Mary, however, was attached to Philip, although he treated her with great indifference.

This Spanish match, the most brilliant of that age, failed, however, to satisfy the English, who had no notion of becoming the subjects of the King of Spain. In consequence of this disaffection, a rebellion broke out, in which Sir Thomas Wyatt was the most conspicuous, and in which the Duke of Suffolk, and even the Lady Jane and her husband, were implicated, though unjustly. The rebellion was easily suppressed, and the leaders sent to the Tower. Then followed one of the most melancholy executions of this reign — that of the Lady Jane Grey, who had been reprieved three months before. The queen urged the plea of self-defence, and the safety of the realm — the same that Queen Elizabeth, in after times, made in reference to the Queen of the Scots. Her unfortunate fate excited great popular compassion, and she suffered with a martyr's constancy, and also her husband — two illustrious victims, sacrificed in consequence of the ambition of their relatives, and the jealousy of the queen. The Duke of Suffolk, the father of Lady Jane, was also executed, and deserved his fate, according to the ideas of his age. The Princess Elizabeth expected also to be sacrificed, both because she was a Protestant and the next heiress to the throne. But she carefully avoided giving any offence, and managed with such consummate prudence, that she was preserved for the future glory and welfare of the realm.

The year 1555 opened gloomily for the Protestants. The prisons were all crowded with the victims of religious persecution, and bigoted inquisitors had only to prepare their fagots and stakes. Over a thousand ministers were ejected from their

Religious Persecution.

ivings, and such as escaped further persecution fled to the con inent. No fewer than two hundred and eighty-eight persons, among whom were five bishops, twenty-one clergymen, fifty-five women, and four children, were burned for religious opinions, besides many thousands who suffered various other forms of persecution. The constancy of Ridley, Latimer, and Hooper has immortalized their names on the list of illustrious martyrs; but the greatest of all the victims was Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury. The most artful and insinuating promises were held out to him, to induce him to retract. Life and dignities were promised him, if he would consent to betray his cause. In an evil hour, he yielded to the temptation, and consented to sell his soul. Timid, heart-broken, and old, the love of life and the fear of death were stronger than the voice of conscience and his duty to his God. But, when he found he was mocked, he came to himself, and suffered patiently and heroically. His death was glorious, as his life was useful; and the sincerity of his repentance redeemed his memory from shame. Cranmer may be considered as the great author of the English Reformation, and one of the most worthy and enlightened men of his age; but he was timid, politic, and time-serving. The Reformation produced no perfect characters in any country. Some great defect blemished the lives of all the illustrious men who have justly earned imperishable glory. But the character of such men as Cranmer, and Ridley, and Latimer, present an interesting contrast to those of Gardiner and Bonner. The former did show, however, some lenity in the latter years of this reign of Mary; but the latter, the Bishop of London, gloated to the last in the blood which he caused to be shed. He even whipped the Protestant prisoners with his own hands, and once pulled out the beard of an heretical weaver, and held his finger in the flame of a candle, till the veins shrunk and burnt, that he might realize what the pain of burning was. So blind and cruel is religious intolerance.

But Providence ordered that the religious persecution, which is attributed to Mary, but which, in strict justice, should be ascribed to her counsellors and ministers, should prepare the way for a popular and a spiritual movement in the subsequent reign. The fires of Smithfield, and the cruelties of the pillory and the prison,

Decrease of Protestants.

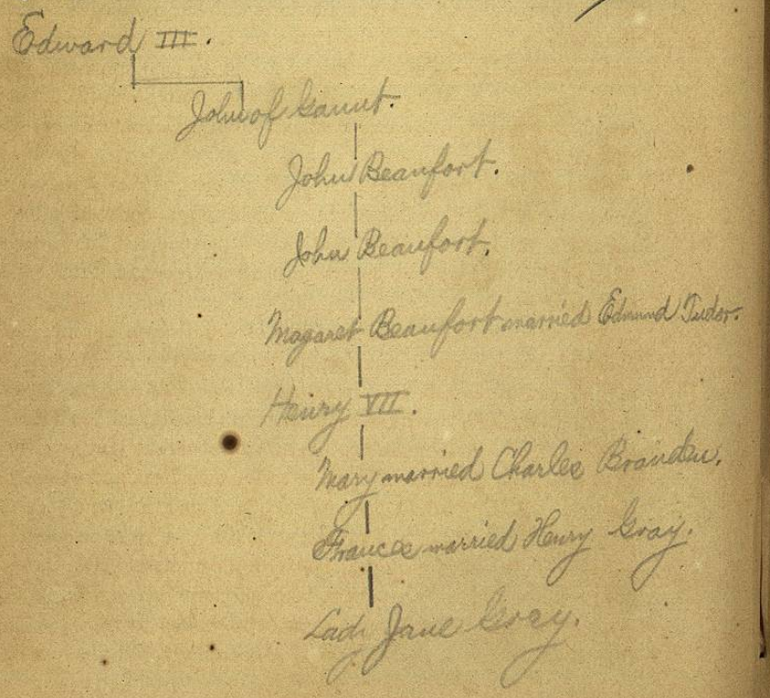
opened the eyes of the nation to the spirit of the old religion, and also caused the flight of many distinguished men to Frankfort and Geneva, where they learned the principles of both religious and civil liberty. "The blood of martyrs proved the seed of the church" — a sublime truth, revealed to Cranmer and Ridley amid the fires which consumed their venerable bodies; and not to them merely, but to all who witnessed their serenity, and heard their shouts of triumph when this mortal passed to immortality. Heretics increased with the progress of persecution, and firm conviction took the place of a blind confession of dogmas. "It was not," says Milman, "until Christ was lain in his rock-hewn sepulchre, that the history of Christianity commenced." We might add, it was not until the fires of Smithfield were lighted, that great spiritual ideas took hold of the popular mind, and the intense religious earnestness appeared which has so often characterized the English nation. The progress which man makes is generally seen through disaster, suffering, and sorrow. This is one of the fundamental truths which history teaches.

Character of Mary.

The last years of the reign of Mary were miserable to herself, and disastrous to the nation. Her royal husband did not return her warm affections, and left England forever. She embarked in a ruinous war with France, and gained nothing but disgrace Her health failed, and her disposition became gloomy. She continued, to the last, most intolerant in her religious opinions, and thought more of restoring Romanism, than of promoting the interests of her kingdom. Her heart was bruised and broken, and her life was a succession of sorrows. It is fashionable to call this unfortunate queen the "bloody Mary," and not allow her a single virtue; but she was affectionate, sincere, high-minded, and shrunk from the dissimulation and intrigue which characterized "the virgin queen" — the name given to her masculine but energetic successor. Mary was capable of the warmest friendship; was attentive and considerate to her servants, charitable to the poor, and sympathetic with the unfortunate, when not blinded by her religious prejudices. She had many accomplishments, and a very severe taste, and was not addicted to oaths, as was Queen Elizabeth and her royal father. She was, however, a bigoted Catholic; and how could partisan historians see or acknowledge her merits?

But her reign was disastrous, and the nation hailed with enthusiasm the accession of Elizabeth, on the 17th of November, 1558. With her reign commences a new epoch, even in the history of Europe. Who does not talk of the Elizabethan era, when Protestantism was established in England, when illustrious poets and philosophers adorned the literature of the country, when commerce and arts received a great impulse, when the colonies in North America were settled, and when a constellation of great statesmen raised England to a pitch of glory not before attained?

REFERENCES. — See Hume's, and Lingard's, and other standard Histories of England; Miss Strickland's Lives of the Queens of England; Burnet's History of the Reformation; Life of Cranmer; Fox's Book of Martyrs. These works contain all the easily-accessible information respecting the reigns of Edward and Mary, which is important.



CHAPTER VI.

ELIZABETH

ELIZABETH, daughter of Henry VIII., by Anne Boleyn, was in her twenty-sixth year when she ascended the throne. She was crowned the 15th of June, 1559, and soon assembled her parliament and selected her ministers. After establishing her own legitimacy, she set about settling the affairs of the church, but only restored the Protestant religion as Cranmer had left it. Indeed, she ever retained a fondness for ceremonial, and abhorred a reform spirit among the people. She insisted on her supremacy, as head of the church, and on conformity with her royal conscience. But she was not severe on the Catholics, and even the gluttonous and vindictive Bonner was permitted to end his days in peace.

As soon as the Protestant religion was established, the queen turned her attention towards Scotland, from which much trouble was expected.

Scotland was then governed by Mary, daughter of James V., and had succeeded her father while a mere infant, eight days after her birth, (1542.) In 1558, she married the dauphin, afterwards King of France, by which marriage she was Queen of France as well as of Scotland.

According to every canonical law of the Roman church, the claim of Mary Stuart to the English throne was preferable to that of her cousin Elizabeth. Her uncles, the Guises, represented that Anne Boleyn's marriage had never been lawful, and that Elizabeth was therefore illegitimate. In an evil hour, she and her husband quartered the arms of England with their own, and assumed the titles of King and Queen of Scotland and England. And Elizabeth's indignation was further excited by the insult which the pope had inflicted, in declaring her birth illegitimate. She, therefore, resolved to gratify, at once, both her ambition and her vengeance, encouraged by her ministers, who wished to advance the Protestant interest in the kingdom. Accordingly, Elizabeth, with