

UNIT III

THE TUDOR AGE (1485 — 1603)

THE NEW DYNASTY. THE ENGLISH REFORMATION, HENRY VIII AND HIS HEIRS. THE GOLDEN AGE OF ELIZABETH. MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS.

Key words, terms and concepts:

1. *The Court of Star chamber*
2. *Thomas More*
3. *Cardinal Wolsey, Thomas Cromwel*
4. *Catherine of Aragon*
5. *Anne Boleyn*
6. *Jane Seymour*
7. *Anne of Cleves*
8. *Catherine Howard*
9. *Catherine Parr*
10. *Mary Queen of Scots*
11. *The Act of Supremacy (1534)*
12. *The Act of Union with Wales (1536)*



The end of the Wars of the Roses, the victory of Henry Tudor at Bosworth field and his marriage with Princess Elizabeth, heiress of the House of York (1485) were the events that symbolized the end of the Middle Ages in Britain. The year of 1485 is traditionally considered the watershed and the beginning of the Tudor Age.

In historical development the rule of the Tudors (1485–1603) with their absolute power in the long run contributed to the strengthening of its role in international affairs.

The 16th century was the age of a growing absolutism of monarchy and centralisation of the state; these phenomena facilitated the development and foundation of new capitalist relations in production.

The English type of absolute monarchy was shaped by Henry VII, who was opposed to the power of old barons. He ordered that the old castles should be destroyed (pulled down) and the feudal baronial armies should be disbanded. He was very rich with the confiscated wealth of his defeated rivals. He was strong enough to prevent any revival of armed strength of any group of nobles, and he enjoyed support of merchants and small landowners who had all suffered from the civil war.

These two groups, linked by a common interest in the wool trade not yet powerful enough to claim the political power were to fight for in the 17th century. They were strong enough to be useful allies of the Tudor kings and queens. Their support enabled the Tudors to become despotic rulers, while at first playing a progressive historic role.

But their reign was abundant in various controversial arbitrary developments.



Henry VII, Tudor

The financial policy of Henry VII filled the Treasury and strengthened the throne and the church position, improved the contacts with Rome. The King skillfully steered through the complexities of European politics. His eldest son was married to the Spanish princess Catherine of Aragon, and his daughter Margaret to King James IV of Scotland.

His son **Henry VIII** (1509–1547) whose court was glamorous with royal games, balls and entertainments, development of culture, was among other things — a wasteful monarch, on his death his treasury was practically empty.

Henry VIII's despotism was fatal for the country's progressive minds and terrible for his family.

The king invited to court outstanding people — humanists of the Renaissance period: **Thomas More** — “The man for all seasons” — a play and a film with



Henry VIII, Tudor

Paul Scollfield in the title role, the greatest thinker and the founder of the Utopic Socialism (1478–1535). In 1516 he wrote a book about Utopia — the best government structure on the Island of Utopia and was invited and appointed Chancellor. But Thomas More dared to contradict the King and was beheaded. That was the destiny of many a Chancellor which made the post the most dangerous in the country.

One could compare the fate of the Chancellors only with the destiny of the King's spouses, the Queens. The plural of the noun is explained by the fact of Henry VIII's record number of wives, their fate is "humorously" described by some school teachers with the following rhyme:

divorced, beheaded, died,
divorced, beheaded, survived.

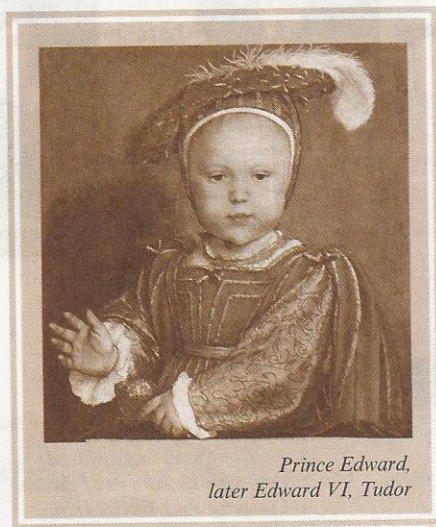


- 1. Catherine of Aragon was divorced
- 2. Anne Boleyn (mother of Elizabeth I) was beheaded
- 3. Jane Seymour (mother of Edward VI) died

- 4. Anne of Cleves was divorced
- 5. Catherine Howard was beheaded
- 6. Catherine Parr survived him

Catherine of Aragon was divorced by Henry VIII against the will of the Pope and that caused a break up with the Holy See*. The declaration of Henry VIII in 1531 that he now was Head of the Church, was an English way of Reformation, so the Reformation in England was conducted from above by the King.

His second wife was **Anne Boleyn** (1532–1536). She gave birth to a baby-girl (her daughter was Princess Elizabeth) that caused the disappointment of the King. No one could foresee the triumph of Elizabeth I. He disposed of Anne accusing her of unfaithfulness, and she was **beheaded**. But two days before she died her marriage was dissolved. Henry was a bachelor once more and Anne's decapitated body was buried without ceremony in the Tower of London. Ten days later the King was married again. His third wife was **Jane Seymour**. She **died** in 1537 soon after giving birth to a son and heir — **Prince Edward**, (to become later Edward VI) a sickly child who died of consumption in 1553 aged 15 years.



*Prince Edward,
later Edward VI, Tudor*

* The Holy See — святейший престол.

Henry VIII died in 1547 and his wife Catherine Parr **survived** him.

Henry VIII had a powerful adviser and a skilful minister Cardinal Thomas Wolsey, who was very rich and ambitious. But for all his efforts he failed to get the King a divorce from his first wife Catherine of Aragon as the Pope did not want to anger Spain and France, two Catholic powers.

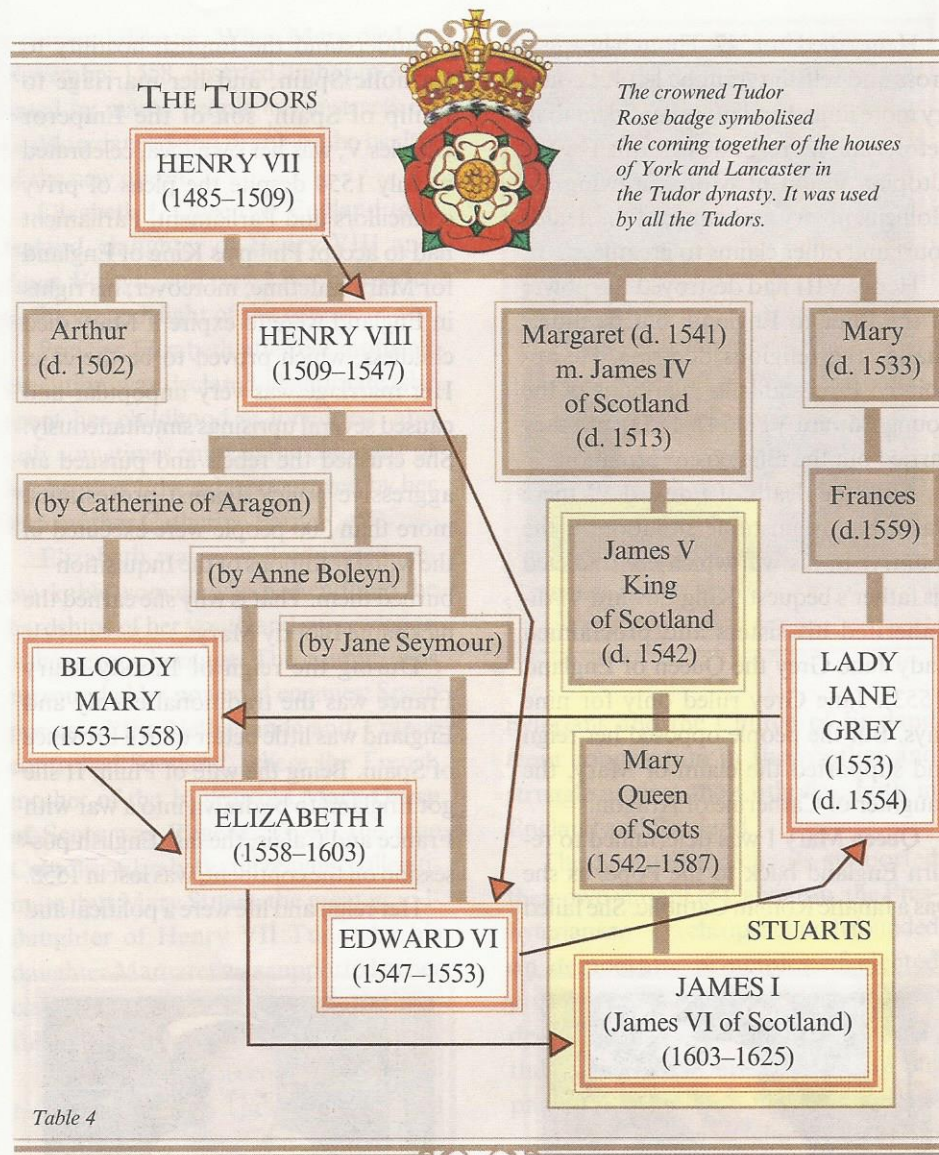
Henry was outraged with his minister and the Pope. The Power of the Catholic Church in England was out of his authority and he wanted to control it for material and personal reasons. Though at the initial stages of the Reformation in Europe Henry VIII had not approved of the ideas of Martin Luther and was awarded by the Pope with the title Fidei Defensor, — Defender of the Faith. The letters "F. D." are still to be found on every British coin.

The opposition to the Pope as a political prince but not the religious leader was growing in England and Henry VIII started his own Reformation. Thomas Cromwell was his faithful reformer.

In 1531 Henry was elected the Head of the Church of England by the English bishops and in 1534 the Parliament passed the Act of Supremacy declaring him the Supreme Head of the Church of England. His Chancellor Sir Thomas More refused to recognize the Act and that cost him his life — he was charged with high treason and executed in the Tower.

With the help of his new Chancellor Thomas Cromwell Henry VIII ordered to suppress the monasteries, he captured the wealth of the monasteries that had been dissolved and destroyed. The lands of the monasteries were either sold or given to the new supporters who turned

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 Cardinal Thomas
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out to be enthusiastic protestants all of a sudden.

Within a few years an enormous wealth went into the empty treasury of the King.

In 1536 he managed to unite Wales with England, as the Welsh nobility were showing interest in the support of their representative on the English throne. It was the first **Act of Union** in the history of Britain.

His beloved wife Jane Seymour left him the long-awaited-for heir Prince Edward. Mary and Elizabeth had been declared illegitimate. He wanted to achieve a betrothal of his son with the future Mary Queen of Scots who was born when Edward was 5 years old. The Scots refused the wooing of the English King as they could see through his far-reaching plans and sent Mary to France. On her return she became Queen of Scots (1561-1567).