

H E N R Y V I I I

Henry VIII , Tudor king of England (1509-1547), and founder of the Church of England . The son of Henry VII , he profoundly influenced the character of the English monarchy . Henry was born in London on June 28 , 1491 , and on the death of his father in 1509 succeeded to the throne (his elder brother Arthur having died in 1502) . He then married his brother's widow , Catherine of Aragon , having been betrother to her through a papal dispensation secured in 1503 . This was the first of Henry's six marriages , all of which were affected by the political and religious conditions of the time and by the monarch's increasingly despotic behaviour . At the beginning of his reign Henry's good looks and hearty personality his fondness for sport and the hunt , and his military prowess endeared him to his subjects . A monarch of the Renaissance , he entertained numerous scholars and artists , including the German painter Hans Holbein the Younger who painted several portraits of the king and members of his court .

A Question of Divorce

In 1511 Henry joined in the Holy League against France and in 1513 he led the English forces through a victorious campaign in northern France . Meanwhile France's ally James IV of Scotland , Henry's brother-in-law , led an invasion of northern England that was crushed in September 1513 at Flodden Field by Henry's commander Thomas Howard , 2nd Duke of Norfolk with the death of the king and many Scottish nobles . Deserted by his allies , Henry arranged a marriage in 1514 between his sister Mary and Louis XII of France , with whom he formed an alliance . Louis's successor , Francis I , met Henry at a magnificently

stages meeting on the Field of Cloth of Gold in 1520 but no significant political decisions resulted . In 1521 Henry arranged the death of his counsellor Edward Stafford , 3th Duke of Buckingham , one of the few nobles with a potential claim to the throne . In 1525 riots broke out in England in protest against an attempt by Henry to levy taxes for military purposes and he withdrew from major military activity in Europe .

In 1527 Henry announced his desire to divorce his wife , on the grounds that the papal dispensation making the marriage possible was invalid . The chief reason for the divorce was that Catherine had failed to produce a male heir . Her only surviving child was Mary later Mary I of England . In addition , Henry was in love Anne Boleyn , a young and beautiful lady-in-waiting of the queen . Several obstacles however stood in the way of the divorce . Holy Roman Emperor Charles V , Catherine's nephew , strongly opposed the divorce , and Pope Clement VII , whom Charles had made a prisoner could not invalidate the marriage without displeasing his captor . In 1528 the pope was persuaded to appoint Henry's chief minister , the English cardinal and statesman Thomas Wolsey , and Lorenzo Camppegio , a papal legate , to try the case in an English legatine court . In 1529 the pope summoned the case to Rome . When the prospect of securing a papal annulment seemed hopeless , Henry dismissed Wolsey , who died soon after in disgrace , and appointed the humanist scholar and statesman Sir Thomas More as Lord Chancellor . The latter , however , was reluctant to support the divorce .

The Break with the Papacy

Henry now proceeded to dissolve one by one the ties to the papacy . With the aid of parliamentary legislation , he first secured control of the clergy , compelling that group in 1532 to acknowledge him as head of the English Church . In the following year Henry secretly married Anne Boleyn , who was crowned Queen after Henry's obedient Archbishop of Canterbury , Thomas Cranmer , declared the marriage with Catherine void and that with Anne valid . An act of succession affirmed

the declaration of the archbishop and established Anne's progeny as heirs to the throne. Henry's new chief minister Thomas Cromwell, a former follower of Wolsey, began a reform of the English Church but also of governmental machinery: introducing important centralizing and organizational changes dubbed by some "the Tudor revolution in government". Although Henry was immediately excommunicated, he repudiated papal jurisdiction in 1534 and made himself the supreme ecclesiastical authority in England with the aid of compliant bishops such as Stephen Gardiner. The English people were required to affirm under oath Henry's supremacy and the act of succession. However, early hopes by Protestant radicals such as William Tyndale to introduce the Reformation into England were broadly thwarted: apart from the issue of papal supremacy Henry remained conservative in matters of doctrine. Nonetheless, an English translation of the Bible by Miles Coverdale was officially published in 1535. Sir Thomas More and the English cardinal John Fisher were executed for refusing to accept the religious supremacy of the English monarch. Henry ordered the dissolution of the monasteries and gave much of their property to the nobles in exchange for their support. A short-lived rebellion in northern England against this policy, the Pilgrimage of Grace was soon suppressed by Thomas Howard, 3rd Duke of Norfolk. Henry soon tired of Anne Boleyn, and in 1536 after charging her with incest and adultery he had her executed. A few days after Anne's death he married Jane Seymour, Thomas Howard's niece, who died in 1537 after bearing Henry's only legitimate son, Edward, later Edward VI. A marriage was arranged in 1540 with Anne of Cleves in order to form a tie between England and the Protestant princes of Germany. Because he thought Anne unattractive and because Henry found the political alliance no longer to his advantage, he divorced her after several months and married Catherine Howard another niece of Thomas Howard in the same year. Cromwell who had arranged the marriage with Anne, fell from favour and was executed in 1540. Catherine was

executed summarily in 1542 for having been unchaste prior to marriage and having committed adultery . In the following year Henry married his sixth wife , Catherine Parr , who survived him .

Between 1542 and 1546 Henry was involved in war with Scotland and France . His troops defeated the Scots at Solway Moss in 1542 . they captured Boulogne from the French in 1544 , and when peace was made in 1546 Henry received an indemnity from France . Meanwhile , his growing paranoia led to disgrace for the Howards : the poet Henry Howard , Earl of Surrey was arrested and executed in 1547 , and Thomas Howard was only saved by the king's death . Henry died in London on January 28 , 1547.

And so , this is the end .