

**THE
STORY
OF
ENGLAND**

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PHAIDON

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1485 – 1603 **TUDOR ENGLAND**



Elizabeth of York, wife of Henry VII and mother of Henry VIII.

Previous page:
The Spanish Armada under attack during its passage up the Channel in 1588.

According to a tradition preserved by Shakespeare, when Henry Tudor was brought to London as a boy to be presented to Henry VI, the King, struck by the intelligence of his looks, declared, 'Lo, surely, this is he to whom both we and our adversaries shall hereafter give place.'

Several portraits of Henry VII, as well as the bust of him by Pietro Torrigiani, now in the Victoria and Albert Museum, do, indeed, present the impression of a remarkable man, astute and wary, calculating but not without mercy, grave yet responsive to humour. He was clearly a ruler as capable as any of restoring order to a stricken country, of bringing solvency and honour to the Crown, and of continuing the work begun by his Plantagenet and Lancastrian predecessors. He chose his servants well, esteeming capacity above high birth, ensuring that his financial and judicial agents lost no opportunity of gathering in every penny due to the King who personally supervised their accounts, straining to obtain all that could be gleaned from royal lands and the administration of royal justice, allowing the commissioners of his minister, Richard Foxe, Bishop of Winchester, and of his Lord Chancellor, John Morton, Archbishop of Canterbury, to raise money by the method which became known as Morton's Fork, a form of assessment that extracted money both from those who lived frugally, on the grounds that they must have savings, and from those who lived in grand style, on the grounds that they must be rich. Morton, Foxe and the King's other principal advisers, about half of them bishops, were members of his Privy Council, now effectively the government of the country, the Great Council being in process of development into the House of Lords.

The Lords had been much weakened and reduced by the recent wars – several noble families having been completely wiped out and not replaced by the creation of new peerages – while the Commons – comprising for the most part knights elected by their shires and burgesses from the towns – were summoned only when their assent was needed for

the passing of new laws or the raising of taxes. The Privy Council was, therefore, under the King supreme; and its powerful judicial body, the Court of Star Chamber – so known because of the decoration of the ceiling in the room where it met in Whitehall Palace – made its rulings unhampered by the Common Law which was administered by the unpaid Justices of Peace in the country at large. The Council of the North was held responsible for the administration of the northern counties – in so far as these still largely wild regions could be said to be susceptible to royal rule at all – but, in matters of concern to the nation as a whole, the Privy Council had to be consulted.

The accession of the Tudor dynasty in 1485 did not, of course, immediately put an end to strife and rebellion. The impostor, Lambert Simnel, the son of a pastrycook, claiming to be the nephew of Edward IV and crowned in Dublin as King Edward VI, mustered sufficient support for an invasion of England in 1487; but he was soon defeated, and his survival as a scullion in the royal kitchens, and later as a falconer, shows how confident of his safety the King had already become in a country weary of conflict and only too ready to accept autocracy for the sake of peace. Another impostor, Perkin Warbeck, claiming to be the younger of the two princes held in the Tower in the reign of Richard III, also invaded England; but he, too, was soon forced to submit to the King's troops.

Nor did the accession of the Tudors and the ending of the Wars of the Roses bring the Middle Ages to a convenient close. Most people in the country, living and working in their age-old ways, were unaware that any notable change had taken place. A Statute of the second year of the King's reign which referred to him as 'the Sovereign Lord of this land for the time being' might well have seemed well phrased to them, had they ever heard of it. Yet profound changes were, nevertheless, taking place. The ideas of the Renaissance, that flowering of art, literature and politics under the influence of Greek and Roman models, which had



William Caxton, the first English printer, with his trademark and initials.

begun in northern Italy in the previous century or earlier, was now spreading across Europe and inducing men and women to regard themselves and their lives in relation to the world in which they lived rather than to the superhuman world of the old-fashioned theologians and schoolmen. This was the age of John Colet, Dean of St Paul's Cathedral and founder of St Paul's School, who returned to England from Italy in 1496, and of Desiderius Erasmus who came to Oxford from Paris two years later, as well as of William Caxton whose press at Westminster was busily printing the books which were to disseminate the new ideas of their time.

Also, the world was expanding: Portuguese explorers were voyaging ever further south down the coast of Africa; and in 1497 Vasco da Gama made his momentous journey round the Cape of Good Hope to India. Five years earlier, the Genoese, Christopher Columbus, having failed to persuade the English and Portuguese Kings to invest in his enterprise, had sailed across the Atlantic and planted the Spanish flag upon the shores of the New World, claiming it for his sponsors, Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain.

For centuries England had been regarded as an offshore island of relatively small concern in the affairs of western Europe. She was now becoming a nation and a market of importance not only to the Low Countries and the states of the Baltic but also to France and Spain. She was being recognized as a country of expert seamen and experienced merchants, a country whose resources, as yet scarcely known, would one day make her powerful, a country occupying a position which might have been especially designed to enable her to take advantage of the opportunities of trade which the discoveries of the century's explorers now offered Europe. While the marriage of Henry VII's daughter, Margaret, to King James IV of Scotland might have been seen merely as a prudent means of keeping the peace by the union of dynasties – like Henry's own marriage to Elizabeth of York – the match between Henry's son, Prince Arthur,

and Catherine of Aragon, daughter of the Spanish King Ferdinand, could not but be interpreted as a sign of England's rising reputation in the eyes of the world.

When Henry VII died in 1509 at fifty-two, an age greater than that reached by any of his four immediate predecessors, he left his son and heir an immense fortune, even though he had not denied himself the pleasures of building. He had lavished immense sums of money upon Henry VII's Chapel in Westminster Abbey - a superb example of the late Perpendicular or Tudor Gothic style - had contributed towards the cost of several institutions established by his mother, Lady Margaret Beaufort, foundress of St John's College and Christ's College, Cambridge, and had spent enormous sums upon the navy whose flagship, the *Mary Rose*, which sank off Portsmouth in 1545, was recently raised and can now be seen in the naval base at Portsmouth.

The King's eldest son, Prince Arthur, fourteen years old at the time of his marriage to Catherine of Aragon, had died at Ludlow Castle soon after the wedding. He boasted coarsely that he had been 'six miles into Spain'; but his bride maintained that she was still a virgin at his death. The Pope was accordingly persuaded to grant a dispensation so that she could marry his younger brother, Henry, who had by then become King of England.

Henry VIII was an attractive young man of high intelligence, numerous accomplishments and boundless self-confidence, enjoying to the full both the sports and pastimes of the royal parks and palaces and the intellectual pleasures of a court which was graced, or soon to be graced, by Sir Thomas More, the humanist scholar and statesman and author of *Utopia*, the poets Skelton, Surrey and Wyatt, and the painter Hans Holbein whose portraits and whose followers' portraits of the magnificent King were to adorn the country houses of numerous of his awed and faithful subjects.

The King pursued his pleasures and interests with a seemingly tireless energy; but to work he brought little of the



Henry VII, the first of the Tudor monarchs.

Henry VIII, from a portrait by Hans Holbein.



Sir Thomas More, who was executed in 1535, with his father, household and descendants.



Henry VIII's chief minister, Cardinal Thomas Wolsey.



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application of his father, content to leave much of the Crown's business in the highly capable and grasping hands of Thomas Wolsey. The son of an Ipswich butcher, Wolsey was immensely rich and powerful, a Cardinal, Archbishop of York as well as Lord Chancellor. His portly figure, clad in sumptuous scarlet and mounted upon a mule – a sponge soaked in vinegar and encased in the peel of an orange held to his nose to keep off the smell of the surrounding throng – could often be seen riding from his splendid palace to Westminster Hall, attended by numerous liveried servants crying out, 'Make way for my Lord's Grace!' It was natural that the King should turn to Wolsey when, tired of Catherine of Aragon, who had given him a daughter but no living son – and obsessively worried by the biblical text: 'And if a man shall take his brother's wife, it is an unclean thing ... They shall be childless' – he set his mind upon a divorce. With this end in view, Wolsey approached the Pope; but the Pope was Clement VII who had recently been driven from Rome by Queen Catherine's uncle, the Emperor Charles V. An indecisive man, distracted by his recent misfortunes, Clement delayed giving the answer which Wolsey and the King required. Henry was by now in love with one of his Queen's ladies, the pert, excitable and

sensual Anne Boleyn, great-granddaughter of Sir Geoffrey Boleyn, hatter, mercer and Lord Mayor of London who had bought Blickling Hall in Norfolk and had created of himself a country gentleman. The longer he was obliged to wait, the more determined the King became to make Anne Boleyn his Queen and the mother of his longed-for heir. By the end of 1532, soon after Wolsey's disgrace and death, Anne was known to be bearing Henry's child; and in January the next year they were married, secretly and in haste. Soon afterwards Thomas Cranmer, a married man of reformist views, was confirmed as Archbishop of Canterbury in succession to Queen Catherine's friend, William Warham; and, in early May, an ecclesiastical court convened by Cranmer decreed that the King's marriage to Catherine of Aragon was null and void.

The Pope responded by excommunicating the King, while the King initiated the long process of legislation establishing the principle, which several of his predecessors had endeavoured to maintain, that the authority of the King of England was independent of Rome and putting a stop to the revenues that customarily flowed from England into the capacious coffers of the Curia.

To support him in his endeavours to reform the relationship between the King and the Papacy without disturbing Roman Catholic doctrine - or the right of the King to the title Defender of the Faith which had been granted to him by Leo X for a pamphlet he had written on the errors of Protestantism and which in the abbreviated Latin form of *Fid Def* or *FD* is still seen on coins of the realm - the King summoned Parliament which his father had called upon only six times in twenty-three years. Parliament obligingly passed the Act of Supremacy which declared the King to be Supreme Head of the Church of England.

The legislation of the Reformation, that religious upheaval which turned Roman Catholic England into a constitutionally Protestant country, was not unpopular with the people at large; nor was the Dissolution of the



Catherine of Aragon,
Henry VIII's first wife,
mother of Queen Mary.

Anne Boleyn, Queen
Elizabeth I's mother, who
was married to Henry VIII
in 1533.





Title page of the Great Bible of 1539.

Thomas Cromwell, Henry VIII's instrument in the separation of the English Church from Rome and the Dissolution of the Monasteries.



Monasteries which accompanied it. For years anti-clerical feeling had been growing in England and had been exemplified by the satisfaction caused by the fall of Cardinal Wolsey, that archetypal churchman, proud and pompous, who had amassed such immense riches from lay and ecclesiastical offices of profit. For years, too, there had been a growing feeling in the country that most monasteries were fulfilling few if any of the functions for which they had been founded in the Middle Ages, that some of them – in the words of the official pronouncement decreeing inspection of the smaller foundations – were nests of ‘manifest sin, vicious, carnal and abominable living’.

Objections were raised to the destruction of the monasteries in certain areas where they were still providing food and shelter for the destitute and travellers, as well as education for the sons of families in the surrounding parishes. In the troublesome north the uprisings known as the Pilgrimage of Grace caused the government disquiet for a time; but in the country generally the Dissolution caused little dismay, however disliked may have been the man employed to carry through the King's revolution, Wolsey's former secretary, Thomas Cromwell, son of a blacksmith who kept a public house at Putney, a man of extraordinary administrative ability and single-minded determination.

As the King's Vicar-General, Cromwell supervised the dismantling of the abbeys, the transfer of their properties and lands to the Crown, and their sale, through the Court of Augmentations, to the English gentry, rich speculators and, most commonly of all, to existing local landowners. Some of England's great abbeys still lie in romantic ruin, among them the Yorkshire abbeys of Kirtall, Jervaulx, Rievaulx and Fountains whose grounds have now been joined to those of Studley Royal. Many others were converted into private houses like Lacock Abbey in Wiltshire and Mottisfont in Hampshire. Several new houses were built in the grounds of dissolved monasteries, like Longleat, Sir John Thynne's mansion on the land of the priory of St



Fountains Abbey in Yorkshire, one of the numerous religious houses to be dissolved in the reign of Henry VIII.

Radegund. The money from very few was used for the endowment of charitable and educational establishments, as the reforming clergy had hoped, though Trinity College, Cambridge was founded by the King in 1546, not long after Christ Church, originally Cardinal's College, had been founded by Wolsey at Oxford following the demolition of the Augustinian St Frideswide's Priory.

By the time most of the abbeys had been transferred to their new owners in 1541, Henry VIII was fifty years old. The handsome, lithe young man had become grossly fat; his fair features had coarsened; he inspired more fear than admiration. Anne Boleyn, increasingly petulant and hysterical, had been beheaded, condemned to death on charges of adultery with several men, including her brother; the King's third wife, Jane Seymour, had died in childbirth, having given him his longed-for son, Edward; the arrival in England of his fourth wife, the excessively plain Anne of Cleves, pressed upon him by Cromwell in pursuit of a German alliance, had led to Cromwell's following to the block the more agreeable figure of Sir Thomas More, executed for refusing to deny the principle of papal supremacy. The King's fifth wife, Catherine Howard, accused of being

Jane Seymour, Henry VIII's third wife, the mother of his heir Edward VI.





Catherine Parr,
Henry VIII's sixth wife,
who survived him,
dying in 1548.

as unfaithful to him as Anne Boleyn was alleged to have been, was beheaded too. At last he found some comfort in the pain of his declining years in the company of his sixth wife, Catherine Parr, a good-natured, virtuous widow, who was kind to his children and sat with his ulcerated leg on her knee, discussing with him those recondite religious problems which had never failed to interest him.

For most of his reign, Henry VIII punished religious dissidents, whether Roman Catholic or Protestant, with impartiality. His son, Edward VI, however, the cold and 'lonely, clever boy' who succeeded him at the age of nine, was a convinced Protestant, surrounded by Protestant advisers, notably his uncle, Edward Seymour, Duke of Somerset, who had obtained for himself the 'name and title of Protector of all the Realms and Domains of the King's Majesty, and Governor of His Most Royal Person'. The King was still Defender of the Faith but that faith was now to be ever more avowedly Protestant, as defined by the 42 Articles which formed the basis of the 39 Articles, the cornerstone of the religious settlement of 1563 and still in force. Hugh Latimer, who had resigned the bishopric of Worcester in Henry's reign – after preaching forceful

A painting of 1549
depicting Edward VI
and the Pope stunned
by a Bible.



sermons urging on the Reformation which had brought him a prisoner to the Tower – returned to the pulpit to express views more advanced than ever. Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury, who had by now given up his belief in transubstantiation, issued *The Booke of the Common Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments*, the use of which the Act of Uniformity of 1549 required in churches instead of the old Latin services. There being no abbeys left to plunder, the King's advisers turned upon chantries – shrines devoted to prayers for the dead – and seized their endowments. The Duke of Somerset himself lavished a large share of his accumulated riches upon the building of his huge palace, Somerset House in the Strand. To make way for this the Church of the Nativity of Our Lady and the Innocents was demolished and, to provide the stone for it, much of the Priory Church of St John Clerkenwell was blown up, little of the building being spared, apart from the south gate, St John's Gate. Attempts were made to take stone also from St Margaret's Westminster but the parishioners here drove the Duke's men off.

Elsewhere in the country, there were protests not only against the imposition of religious changes but also against the continuing revolution in agriculture: in Devon and Cornwall people rebelled against having to use a prayer book rather than the Latin forms with which they had been so long familiar; and in East Anglia in 1547 there was a rebellion, led by Robert Kett, a well-to-do landowner, against the growing practices of enclosing land for pasture and of taking over the arable and common land on which poor country people had for long relied for their subsistence. Kett's Rebellion was soon suppressed and Kett and his brother hanged; but the hesitant way in which Somerset had dealt with the growing crisis enabled his rival, the Earl of Warwick, later Duke of Northumberland, to take over the government in the name of the King whose health was failing fast.

Well aware that his fall from power was likely to be as

sudden as Somerset's if the King were to be succeeded by his half-sister and rightful heir, Mary – the devoutly Roman Catholic daughter of Catherine of Aragon – Northumberland endeavoured to secure a Protestant succession with the ready complicity of the dying King. He hastily arranged for the marriage of his son to Lady Jane Grey, the King's cousin and a granddaughter of a younger sister of Henry VIII.

On the afternoon of 6 July 1553, King Edward died at the age of fifteen, poisoned by the medicines that his physicians had prescribed, with swollen legs and arms and darkened skin, his fingers and toes touched by gangrene, his hair and nails falling out. Although she fainted when told that he had nominated her his successor, and then tearfully declared that she had no right to the Crown since the Lady Mary was 'the rightful heir', Lady Jane Grey eventually gave way to the entreaties of her relations and to what she was persuaded to believe was the will of God.

The English people were, however, not so ready to submit. Nor was Mary. From her castle at Framlingham, she sent an order to the Council demanding the recognition of her rights; and in this she was supported even by the Protestant citizens of London, exasperated as they were by the corruption and mismanagement of the Duke of Northumberland who had pillaged the Church as ruthlessly as Somerset, lavishing fortunes upon Dudley Castle in Staffordshire and his London house in Ely Place. Mary marched into London unopposed. Northumberland was arrested and executed; and so was Lady Jane Grey after her father's implication in a rebellion against Mary led by the reckless conspirator, Sir Thomas Wyatt.

Mary was a virtuous and conscientious woman who would have been quite well suited to the quiet, orderly, innocent life of a nun. Unworldly and impressionable, she was unshakeably loyal to those few people she loved and to the religion which was the mainstay of her life. Her reign was to be remembered for the screams of the Protestants on the crackling fires of Smithfield, the deaths of Hugh

Frontispiece to the *Book of Martyrs* by John Foxe, 1563.





The burning of Thomas Cranmer at Oxford in 1556, an illustration from Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*.

Latimer, former Bishop of Worcester, and Nicholas Ridley, Bishop of London, burned alive at Oxford, of Cranmer also burned at Oxford, and of those three hundred others whose martyrdom was to be commemorated by John Foxe in a book which – with its strong implication that the English people had been chosen by God to fight against anti-Christ in the person of the Pope – was later to be considered so important a work that it was ordained that copies should be available in all cathedrals, as well as in the houses of gentry and the upper clergy, for the edification of both servants and visitors.

Yet Mary who presided over this bloodshed was not cruel by nature. Obstinate and narrow-minded, she knew her way to God and could not conceive that there might be some other way. Men and women had to suffer for their refusal to accept it, not to be punished but to be saved. In vain did her husband advise her to be less rigorous, for political rather than religious considerations.

This husband was Philip II, King of Spain, a solemn, courteous young man whom she adored, the representative of all that she held most dear, her mother's country and her mother's faith. She longed to have a child by him so as to

Queen Mary, the Roman Catholic who reigned from 1553 to 1558.





Elizabeth I as a woman of about 42 years of age.

unite their two countries in blessed trinity with Rome. But all her hopes were in vain. Pregnancy after pregnancy proved illusory; her husband, eleven years younger than herself, returned to Spain, persuaded that his wife lacked 'all sensibility of the flesh'. She died in 1558 of cancer of the ovaries, miserable and unlamented, often in great pain, so fearful of assassination that she had taken to wearing armour, dragged by Spain into a war with France which resulted in the loss of Calais, England's last toehold on the Continent.

These were miserable times for England. The country was in economic decline, already plagued by those bands of unemployed, unruly vagabonds which were to present such an intractable problem throughout the coming years. Prices were rising; wages for most workers remained low, field-workers earning about twopence a day, the price they would have been asked to pay for a single rabbit. Men such as these looked with a kind of desperate hope to their new Queen, Anne Boleyn's daughter, Elizabeth, a pale, composed, simply-dressed Protestant girl who was said to have knelt down on the grass beneath an oak tree when told of her half-sister's death and her own accession and to have quoted in Latin the words from the 118th Psalm, 'This is the Lord's doing. It is marvellous in our eyes.'

Queen Elizabeth, twenty-five years old, was already a formidable personality. In a report to his master, the Spanish Ambassador in London described her as being 'incomparably more feared' by her advisers than her sister had been. She was also 'undoubtedly a very clever young woman' but 'extremely vain'. This was certainly true. She could read Latin and Greek with equal facility; she spoke French, Spanish and Italian as well as Latin and even a little Welsh. Roger Ascham, her tutor, had never known a pupil with a quicker apprehension or a more retentive memory. She could talk intelligently on any intellectual topic, and would spend three hours a day reading history. Yet, astute

and alert as she was, she was susceptible to the most outlandish flattery. Even in old age when the smooth, reddish gold of her hair had given way to a wig and the remaining teeth in her wrinkled jaw were black and decayed, she expected the handsome men she liked to have about her court to tell her how beautiful she was, that they would die of passion for her, that they could not look upon her face for long for fear of being dazzled by its loveliness. Towards the end of her life the French Ambassador was disconcerted by her pulling open the front of her dress so that he could see her breasts and her belly 'even to the navel'.

She was exasperating as well as flirtatious, difficult and demanding, reluctant to make up her mind and constantly changing it, as eager to take all the credit for her government's successes as she was quick to shuffle the blame onto her ministers when things went wrong. Dictatorial and high-handed, selfish and ungrateful, she would irritably slap her ladies and even her ministers and councillors when they annoyed her. They all acknowledged her authority but often pursued policies in direct opposition to her wishes, keeping important documents from her sight and encouraging ambassadors to give her misleading reports. Fortunately they were for the most part themselves men of exceptional talent. Among them were Sir William Cecil, later Lord Burghley, industrious, trustworthy, a master of statecraft; Sir Francis Walsingham, the wily, brilliant organizer of a network of agents unparalleled in Europe; Sir Christopher Hatton, Lord Chancellor and skilled manipulator of the House of Commons. Her court was indeed a busy hive of genius where intellectual gifts and gallantry were valued more than high birth, where even those who were its most decorative and dashing denizens, like the handsome and adored Earl of Leicester, and Sir Walter Raleigh, soldier, navigator, poet, historian and chemist, were men of exceptional ability. Musicians, artists and men of letters were encouraged at court as well as such adventurers as Hawkins, Frobisher and Sir Francis Drake who brought

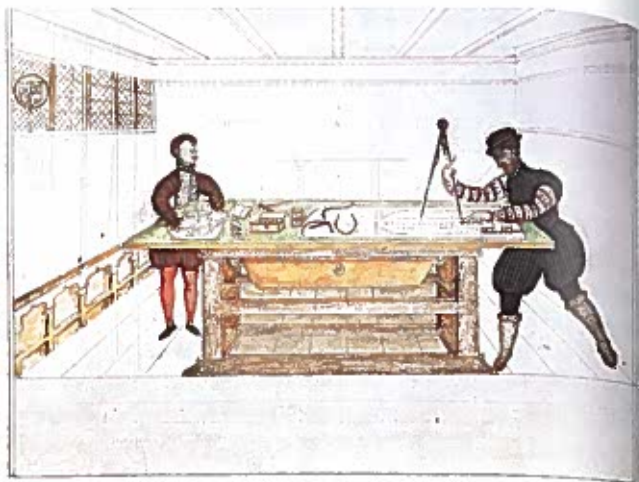


Elizabeth opening her last Parliament.

William Cecil, 1st Baron Burghley, Elizabeth I's faithful minister.



English shipwrights
working on plans in
Elizabeth's time.



home great wealth from their voyages, delighting the Queen, a most exact not to say parsimonious accountant, by the enrichment of her coffers.

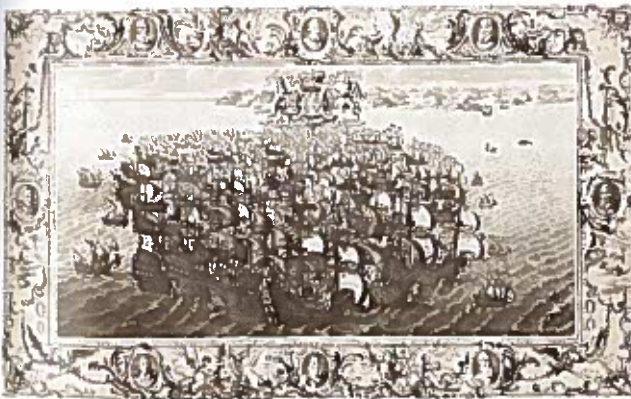
After the miseries of the previous reign it seemed, indeed, a golden age, the age of Christopher Marlowe and Shakespeare, of Philip Sidney and Edmund Spenser, of Nicholas Hilliard, Thomas Tallis, William Byrd and Orlando Gibbons, and of Hakluyt's *Voyages and Discoveries of the English Nation* which described the adventurous explorations of the country's navigators, one of whose voyages – James Lancaster's to the East Indies – led to the establishment of the East India Company and the beginnings of the empire in India. Other voyages and discoveries were eventually to result in an even larger empire across the Atlantic in America. Yet the Queen was the patron rather than the begetter of the age. Her achievements have been exaggerated; her posthumous reputation is a triumph of propaganda over reason. The religious settlement, a compromise of views – while welcome to those who shared the Queen's own impatience with petty doctrinal squabbles – was as unacceptable to the extreme Protestants known as Puritans, as it was to ardent Catholics. Several times the Queen's life

was in danger from conspirators, most notable amongst whom was the beguiling Mary Queen of Scots, daughter of James V of Scotland and, through a descent untainted by illegitimacy, great-granddaughter of Henry VII. Once the King of France's wife, Mary Stuart was as troublesome to Elizabeth when living in Scotland as she was to be after she had been driven from that country by her Protestant lords who were outraged by her marriage to the Earl of Bothwell, murderer of her second husband, Lord Darnley. Queen Elizabeth did not shrink from having other conspirators tortured and then hanged, drawn and quartered as traitors. But Mary, as a queen and her cousin, she was reluctant to bring to trial; and it was not until her proven complicity in the plot of the Catholic would-be assassin, Anthony Babington, that Elizabeth consented to sign the Queen of Scots's death warrant, afterwards characteristically blaming others for its precipitate execution at Fotheringhay Castle in 1587.

The following year the Queen's throne seemed under even greater threat from the Spanish Armada, an immense fleet of ships and tens of thousands of soldiers sent with the blessing of the Pope to overthrow the heretical Queen of England, to bring her country back into the Catholic fold and to prevent British troops interfering in the Netherlands



A miniature by Nicholas Hilliard of Mary Queen of Scots.



The Spanish Armada of 1588 as embroidered on an early 18th-century tapestry.



A gold medal struck to commemorate England's victory over the Spanish fleet.

Elizabethan London showing shipping on the Thames, St. Paul's Cathedral, and the Globe theatre and Bear Garden in the foreground.



where Protestant rebels were in revolt against their Spanish masters. But the Spanish galleys proved no match for the more manoeuvrable smaller British ships and, having suffered heavy losses, they were dispersed by storms. Driven further and further north, the survivors of the catastrophe were forced to sail round Scotland and down the coast of Ireland where many of those who clambered ashore in the hope of salvation were robbed, murdered or held to ransom.

The danger over, the Queen – who had made a speech celebrated for its stirring patriotism to the troops assembled at Tilbury – returned to her familiar cheese-paring, denying money to her crews and adequate support to her naval commanders. Yet all over the realm, immense sums were being spent on houses built by men who had been allowed to make vast fortunes through the remunerative offices, monopolies and licences granted them by the Queen or who had made fortunes by their own often shady speculations in trade and finance. William Cecil, Lord Burghley, granted the immensely profitable office of Master of the Court of Wards, owned Burghley House in Lincolnshire as well as Theobalds, a house nearer London which he was obliged to enlarge considerably 'by occasion of Her Majesty's often coming'. Christopher Hatton, the Queen's Lord Chancellor, all but ruined himself building Holdenby House in Northamptonshire which stood ready for ten years, full of servants vainly waiting for the Queen to come to stay. The Earl of Leicester, the Master of the Horse, spent as large a fortune upon Kenilworth Castle, Warwickshire. Several of those who had made fortunes in her time, either through profitable offices or by such commercial enterprise as the export of woollen cloth, turned to Robert Smythson, mason and architect, to advise them in their designs, as did Sir Francis Willoughby of Wollaton Hall, Nottingham, Sir Henry Griffith of Burton Agnes, Humberside and the Countess of Shrewsbury in that dramatic combination of the Gothic and the classical, Hardwick Hall, Derbyshire.



Little Moreton Hall, Cheshire, a characteristic half-timbered manor house of the Tudor period.

Some of these houses were enormous, like Montacute near Yeovil, others, such as Sulgrave Manor, Oxfordshire, built in 1558 and occupied by members of the Washington family, were relatively small. Most were built of brick and stone; a few, like Little Moreton Hall, that astonishing black and white creation in Cheshire to which William Moreton added the jettied gatehouse in the 1550s, were of wood; many were in the shape of an E – supposedly in flattery of Elizabeth – as was Charlecote Park where William Shakespeare is said to have been caught on a poaching expedition, tried in the great hall and flogged on order of the house's owner, Sir Thomas Lucy, subsequently to be ridiculed as Justice Shallow.

The bedroom used by Elizabeth I at Burghley House, Lincolnshire.

