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James Gairdner

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BOOK V
JUVENILE SUPREMACY

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CHAPTER I

BEGINNING OF THE PROTECTORATE

THAT the death of Henry VIII. would produce results more than ordinarily momentous must have been obvious to every man. The merest tyro in politics knew well enough what an extraordinary change he had made, first in the relations of Church and State within his own kingdom, and secondly in the relations of the kingdom itself to all Christian nations besides. And the real politician knew, or should have known, that it was an abnormal condition of things which had only been maintained so far by the most astute vigilance on the part of a great ruler, balancing himself between opposing factions even within his own realm, and adjusting himself continually to the different phases of the conflict between powerful rivals outside. The King himself, apart from declining physical health, was probably worn out before he died by the constant strain put upon him by circumstances which were largely of his own creation. He was Head of the Church, and must settle judicially in the last instance all religious questions which arose within the kingdom. He must keep out the jurisdiction of "the Bishop of Rome," and even the use of the name by which other Christians called him. Yet he must have friends on the Continent among great princes who still acknowledged papal authority; or, if there was the least

Momentous
issues on
the death
of Henry
VIII.

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James Gairdner

Excerpt

[More information](#)4 LOLLARDY AND THE REFORMATION BK. V

danger of a coalition against him, he must make common cause with the Protestants of Germany to weaken one or both of the principal allies. He had lost the respect of all foreign princes, but he had made them feel to the last that they could not do without him. He had lost the respect of the Protestants, though they had been driven to think once more that he might be useful to them as a political ally. But he had not lost the respect of his own subjects, who felt, in addition to the ties of natural allegiance, that they were under one who understood thoroughly how to rule, and of whom they must stand in awe.

Did the disappearance of such a power as this imperil the great revolution which that power had effected? Would royal supremacy now hide its diminished head, and the Church of England come once more under the old papal sovereignty? Some, no doubt, must have thought so. Nothing kept out the Pope's jurisdiction even now but royal supremacy; and the transfer of the Headship of the Church from a man of powerful intellect, versed in theology as well as politics, to a boy little more than nine years of age—notwithstanding that his education had been really forced and overdone—was a tremendous fall. Of course, the Headship of the Church would have to be exercised by advice, just like the Headship of the Realm. But in both cases there must be a certain divinity in the King himself to give effect to his authority; for deputed authority could not command respect if the ultimate source of it was weak.

State of parties.

And that was the real weakness, even in politics. The question was not what the boy King would do, but what power would get about the boy King. The death of Henry VIII. had been anticipated for some time, and the different parties at Court had been very naturally thinking each what was to become of itself

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Excerpt

[More information](#)

CH. I BEGINNING OF THE PROTECTORATE 5

under an altered state of matters. Of the powerful nobility the Seymours, of course, were the nearest in blood to the heir-apparent. The only other great families, apart from the royal line of Scotland, which could claim affinity to Henry VIII., were the Howards and the Parrs; and neither of these was related in blood to his son. The Howards were older and higher in nobility, but their relations to the King had been unfortunate. Both those Queens of Henry VIII. whom he had caused to be beheaded were nieces of the Duke of Norfolk; and, notwithstanding the glory he and his father had gained early in the reign at Flodden, and the fact that his daughter had been married to the King's bastard son, the Earl of Richmond, he was only able to maintain his influence with Henry by a servility unbecoming his rank and station. Great as his experience was in war and practical matters, his master leant more to the counsels of other advisers, and both the Seymours and the Parrs had eclipsed him in the royal favour. Then his son, the Earl of Surrey, as if to complete the ruin of the family, had given symptoms of a dangerous ambition which he paid for by the loss of his head; and he himself would have undergone a similar fate if the Act of Attainder passed against him had been carried into effect. But the King's own death saved him, and he only remained a prisoner in the Tower during the whole of Edward's reign.

So political power fell naturally to the Seymours, and chiefly to Edward, Earl of Hertford, the elder of two brothers, the new King's uncles. For several months, indeed, before the old King's death political observers had noted that he and Sir John Dudley (Lord Lisle, the Lord Admiral) had been very much at Court, and that the Council often met at Hertford's house. So the old ambassador Chapuys, then living in retirement at Louvain, gave it as his opinion

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James Gairdner

Excerpt

[More information](#)6 LOLLARDY AND THE REFORMATION BK. V

that if the King were to die, the Earl of Hertford and Lord Lisle would probably have the principal management of affairs. That was not a pleasing prospect to men in the Emperor's service; for it was manifest that these two noblemen sympathised with the German Protestants against the Emperor. Moreover, about the time they came to Court the persecution of heretics in England had ceased, and their wives, along with the Dowager-Duchess of Suffolk, were allies of Queen Katharine Parr in promoting heresy whenever it was safe. The two lords themselves hated bishops, whose power they wished entirely to destroy, and they used abusive language towards leading Catholics like Bishop Gardiner and the Lord Chancellor Wriothesley.¹

Hertford as
Protector.

Thus there was no great prospect of impartial government during the minority. Even pacific government was not assured, and for that reason it was determined before the young King came to London that he should take up his residence in the Tower.² It was natural, however, that Hertford's claims should be generally recognised to fill the office of Protector; and he had the advantage of possessing a very useful tool in the late King's secretary, Paget, who well knew how to manage things. They arranged between them to keep the old King's death secret a day or two, while the Earl repaired to young Edward at Hertford and brought him up to London. The Earl had received from the late King himself the keeping of his will and sent Paget the key of it, agreeing to a suggestion made by him that it "should be opened till a further consultation," with a view to considering "how much thereof were necessary to be published," which "for divers respects" he thought not convenient.³

¹ *Spanish Calendar*, vol. viii. pp. 464, 533-4, 555-7.

² *Correspondance politique d'Odé de Selve*, p. 96.

³ Tytler's *England under Edward VI. and Mary*, i. 15.

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Excerpt

[More information](#)

CH. I BEGINNING OF THE PROTECTORATE 7

Meanwhile all was kept quiet till the morning of Monday, 31st January, the third day after Henry's death, when the Lord Chancellor Wriothesley, scarcely refraining from tears, announced the event to Parliament.¹ The Lord Mayor and Aldermen were sent for; the accession of Edward VI. was proclaimed in the city that forenoon, and in the afternoon Edward himself arrived and took up his quarters, as arranged, in the Tower.² There next day the executors assembled, heard the will read, and took oath to the faithful observance of its provisions.³ What were those provisions?

The will of Henry VIII. was dated on the 30th December 1546, just four weeks before his death.⁴ It contains a long preamble, from which, if from any source, we may judge of the religious feelings and purposes which animated him at the close of a most extraordinary life. Let the following extracts stand as examples:—

Will of
Henry
VIII.

And considering further also with ourselves that we be, as all mankind is, mortal and born in sin, believing nevertheless and hoping that every Christian creature living here in this transitory and wretched world under God, dying in steadfast and perfect faith, endeavouring and exercising himself to execute in his life time, if he have leisure, such good deeds and charitable works as Scripture demandeth, and as may be to the honor and pleasure of God, is ordained by Christ's Passion to be saved and to attain eternal life; of which number we verily trust by His grace to be one, . . .

We also, calling to our remembrance the dignity, estate, honor, rule and governance that Almighty God hath called us unto in this world, and that neither we nor other creature mortal, knoweth the time, place, when ne where, it shall please Almighty God to call him out of this transitory and miserable world; willing, therefore and minding with God's grace before our passage out of the same to dispose and order our latter mind, will and testament in that sort as we trust

¹ *Lords' Journals*.

² *Wriothesley's Chronicle*, i. 178-9.

³ *Dasent's Acts of the Privy Council*, ii. 7.

⁴ The entire text of it is printed in *Rymer*, xv. 110-17.

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Excerpt

[More information](#)8 LOLLARDY AND THE REFORMATION BK. V

it shall be acceptable to Almighty God, our only Saviour Jesus Christ, and all the whole Company of Heaven, and the due satisfaction of all godly brethren in earth, have therefore, now being of whole and perfect mind, adhering wholly to the right faith of Christ and His doctrine, repenting also of our old and detestable life, and being in perfect will and mind by His grace never to return to the same nor such like, and minding by God's grace never to vary therefro as long as any remembrance, breath, or inward knowledge doth or may remain within this mortal body, most humbly and heartily do commend and bequeath our soul to Almighty God, who in person of the Son redeemed the same with His most precious Blood in time of His Passion, and, for our better remembrance thereof, hath left here with us in His Church Militant the consecration and administration of His precious Body and Blood to our no little consolation and comfort, if we as thankfully accept the same as He, lovingly and undeserved of Man's behalf, hath ordained it for our only benefit and not His.

Also we do instantly require and desire the Blessed Virgin Mary his Mother, with all the Holy Company of Heaven, continually to pray for us and with us while we live in this world and in the time of passing out of the same, that we may the sooner attain everlasting life, etc.

Such sentiments were not quite in accordance with the spirit of the times that were at hand.

The will then goes on to make provision for the King's burial at Windsor, and for making "more princely" the tombs of Henry VI. and Edward IV. As soon as convenient after his death, "all divine service accustomed for dead folk to be celebrate for us." His body was to be brought to Windsor next day, *Placebo* and *Dirige*, with a sermon and Mass devoutly to be done, and then to be interred. Then comes a bequest of alms to poor people of 1000 marks. The Dean and Canons of Windsor were to have lands and spiritual promotions to the yearly value of £600 over all charges made sure to them, they being bound to find two priests to say Masses "at the altar to be made where we have before appointed our tomb to be made," and to keep four solemn obits, giving

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Excerpt

[More information](#)

CH. I BEGINNING OF THE PROTECTORATE 9

£10 in alms to poor people; also to give twelve pence a day to thirteen poor men to be called "Poor Knights," and once a year a long gown of white cloth, with the Garter upon the breast, embroidered with a shield and cross of St. George within the Garter, and £3:6:8 a year to one of them who shall be appointed their head and governor; also to have a sermon preached at Windsor every Sunday in the year. Thus Henry VIII., we see, believed to the end of his days that Masses for his soul would be beneficial to him.

Then came provisions for the succession to the throne in accordance with two Acts of Parliament which allowed him the extraordinary power to devise it by will. The King certainly took advantage of the powers conferred on him to tie up the succession to quite an extraordinary degree. The Imperial Crown and realm, with his title to France, and so forth, were first to go to his son Edward and the heirs of his body. In default of such issue they were to remain to the heirs of his own body by his present Queen, Katharine. For lack of such issue again they were to go to his daughter Mary, on condition that she did not marry without the consent of the Privy Councillors appointed by himself and his son Edward, or the most of them then alive. If she, as well as Edward, died without lawful issue, they were to go to his daughter Elizabeth and the heirs of her body, she likewise being bound not to marry without the consent of the majority of the same Privy Councillors. If she, too, died without lawful issue the great estate was to remain to the heirs of the body of Lady Frances, Henry's niece, daughter of his sister, the French Queen; with remainder, in like case, to the heirs of the body of Lady Eleanor, second daughter of the French Queen, and on failure of lawful issue from her, to the next rightful heirs. If either Mary or Elizabeth were to marry without the consent of

Provisions
for the
succession.

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James Gairdner

Excerpt

[More information](#)

10 LOLLARDY AND THE REFORMATION BK. V

the majority of her father's and her brother's surviving Councillors, she was to forfeit her place in the succession.

The
executors.

The will next appointed as executors sixteen persons, namely, Archbishop Cranmer; the Lord Chancellor Wriothesley; Lord St. John, Great Master of the Household; the Earl of Hertford, Great Chamberlain of England; Lord Russell, Lord Privy Seal; Viscount Lisle, High Admiral of England; Bishop Tunstall of Durham; Sir Anthony Browne, Master of the Horse; Sir Edward Montague, Chief Justice of the Common Pleas; Justice Bromley; Sir Edward North, Chancellor of the Augmentations; Sir William Paget, the King's Chief Secretary; Sir Anthony Denny and Sir William Harbard, Chief Gentlemen of the Privy Chamber; Sir Edward Wotton, and Dr. Wotton his brother. These executors were to manage both the private affairs of the King and the public affairs of the realm during young Edward's minority (which was to be till he should complete his eighteenth year), nothing being done by one of them without the consent of the greater number of his co-executors.

As regards the future of religion and government, it does not appear that the dying King, however penitent for his past evil ways, had any thought of giving up royal supremacy for his son, or of anything that looked like going backwards. The will, it is true, is silent upon this subject, but silence could only mean continuance of an existing rule. All the executors were already committed to the repudiation of papal supremacy, and the only man who would have brought it back was purposely left out of the King's will. It is not likely, indeed, that even Bishop Gardiner would have dared to suggest a movement in that direction in the face of statutes which made it treason; but he had once, as we have already seen, been used as an instrument for such

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James Gairdner

Excerpt

[More information](#)

CH. I BEGINNING OF THE PROTECTORATE 11

proposals, and though he stood high, even to the last, in the opinion of his master as a wise and politic counsellor, it is evident that Henry did not think him a fit man to take part with colleagues who did not share his views in responsibility for affairs in the coming reign. It is said, indeed, and seems not unlikely to be true, that Henry himself, when questioned about the omission of the Bishop of Winchester's name in the will, replied that he could control him but no one else could.¹ For in point of fact, as we have seen already, it was the influence of Gardiner at foreign courts, that of Charles V. especially, that had warded off dangers from abroad, against which no other diplomatist could have obtained effectual security for such a king as Henry. But his value in this way arose from the very fact that his heart was entirely Catholic, and that he could hold sympathetic conferences with sovereigns and statesmen who were endeavouring to preserve the traditions of Catholicism from dangerous enemies in Europe, as he himself would have done in England.

Omission of
Gardiner's
name.

The day after the date of Henry's will an Englishman at Strassburg, having heard of the arrest of the Duke of Norfolk and his son, which he was informed was owing to "a secret attempt to restore the dominion of the Pope and the monks," wrote to Bullinger of the event as a great deliverance. "Nor is any one wanting," he added, "but Winchester alone, and

¹ Foxe says that the King on going over to Boulogne made a new will, in which he left the Bishop of Winchester out among the list of his executors; and that Sir Anthony Browne, thinking it was an accident of the clerk, called the King's attention to the omission, saying that his services would surely be most important to his co-executors. "'Hold your peace,' quoth the King, 'I remembered him well enough, and of good purpose have left him out; for surely if he were in my testament and one of you, he would cumber you all, and you should never rule him, he is of so troublesome a nature. Marry,' quoth the King, 'I myself could use him and rule him to all manner of purposes as seemed good unto me; but so shall you never do; and therefore, talk no more of him to me in this behalf.'" It is added that Sir Anthony "perceiving the King somewhat stiff herein," forbore to press the matter then, but met with a further rebuff when he spoke of it another time. Foxe, v. 691-2.