

# ELIZABETH I



MAKERS OF HISTORY SERIES

BY

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# CONTENTS.

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. ELIZABETH'S MOTHER . . . . .	7
II. THE CHILDHOOD OF A PRINCESS . . . . .	21
III. LADY JANE GREY . . . . .	35
IV. THE SPANISH MATCH . . . . .	51
V. ELIZABETH IN THE TOWER . . . . .	65
VI. ACCESSION TO THE THRONE . . . . .	79
VII. THE WAR IN SCOTLAND. . . . .	93
VIII. ELIZABETH'S LOVERS . . . . .	107
IX. PERSONAL CHARACTER . . . . .	123
X. THE INVINCIBLE ARMADA . . . . .	137
XI. THE EARL OF ESSEX . . . . .	153
XII. THE CONCLUSION . . . . .	173





## ELIZABETH'S MOTHER.

**T**RAVELERS, ascending the Thames by the steamboat from Rotterdam, on their return from an excursion to the Rhine, often have their attention strongly attracted by what appears to be a splendid palace on the banks of the river at Greenwich. However, the edifice is not a palace, but a hospital, or rather a retreat where the worn out, maimed, and crippled veterans of the English navy spend the remainder of their days in comfort and peace, on pensions given to them by the government in whose service they have spent their strength or lost their limbs.

The magnificent buildings of the hospital stand on level land near the river. Behind them there is a beautiful park, which extends over the undulating and rising ground in the rear. On the summit of one of the hills is the famous Greenwich Observatory, whose quadrants and micrometers guide the navigation of the world. The

most indifferent spectator is interested in the manner in which the ships which throng the river all the way from Greenwich to London "take their time" from this observatory before setting sail for distant seas.

From the top of a cupola crowning the edifice, a slender pole ascends, with a black ball on it, constructed to slide up and down for a few feet on the pole. As noon approaches, the ball slowly rises to within a few inches of the top, warning the ship-masters in the river to be ready with their chronometers, to observe and note the precise instant of its fall. When there are only a few seconds remaining, the ball ascends the remainder of the distance by a very deliberate motion, and then drops suddenly when the instant arrives. The ships depart to their various destinations, and months afterward, when thousands of miles, away their safety in dark and stormy nights and among dangerous reefs and rocky shores depends on the accuracy of the time this descending ball had given them.

This is Greenwich. At the time when the events occurred which are to be related in this narrative, it was most renowned for a royal palace which was situated there. This palace was the residence of the then queen consort of England. The king reigning at that time was Henry VIII. He was an unprincipled and cruel tyrant, and the chief business of his life seemed to be selecting and marrying new queens, making room for each succeeding one by discarding, divorcing, or beheading her predecessor. There were six of them in all, and, with one exception, the history of each one is a distinct, but dreadful tragedy. As there were so many of them, and they figured as queens for so short a period, they are

commonly designated by their personal family names, and even in these names there is a great deal of similarity. There were three Catharines, two Annes, and a Jane. The only one who lived and died in peace, respected and beloved to the end, was Jane.

Queen Elizabeth, the subject of this narrative, was the daughter of the second wife in this strange succession, and her mother was one of the Annes. Her name in full was Anne Boleyn. She was young and very beautiful, and Henry, to prepare the way for making her his wife, divorced his first queen, or rather declared his marriage with her null and void, because she had been the wife of his brother before he married her. Her name was Catharine of Aragon. She was, while connected with him, a faithful, true, and affectionate wife. She was a Catholic.

The Catholic rules were very strict in respect to the marriage of relatives, and a special dispensation from the pope was necessary to authorize the marriage of Henry and Catharine. Nevertheless, this dispensation had been obtained, and Catharine had consented to become Henry's wife. However, when she was no longer young and beautiful, and Henry had become enamored with Anne Boleyn, who was so, he discarded Catharine and married the beautiful girl in her stead. He wanted the pope to annul his dispensation, which would of course annul the marriage. Since the pontiff refused, and all the efforts of Henry's government were unavailing to move him, he abandoned the Catholic faith and established an independent Protestant church in England, whose supreme authority *would* annul the marriage. Thus, in a great measure, came the Reformation in England. The Catholics reproach us and, it must be confessed, with

some justice, with the ignominiousness of the historical origin of the Church of England.

The course which things took created a great deal of delay in the formal annulling of the marriage with Catharine, which Henry was too impatient and imperious to bear. He would not wait for the decree of divorce and took Anne Boleyn as his wife before his previous marriage was made void. He said he was privately married to her. He maintained that he had a right to do this, for he considered his first marriage as void, absolutely and of itself, without any decree. When at length the decree was finally passed, he brought Anne Boleyn forward as his queen and introduced her as such to England and to the world by a genuine marriage and a magnificent coronation. The people of England pitied poor Catharine, but they joined very cordially, notwithstanding, in welcoming the youthful and beautiful lady who was to take her place. All of London gave itself up to festivities and rejoicings on the occasion of these nuptials. Immediately after this the young queen retired to her palace in Greenwich, and little Elizabeth was born two or three months later. Her birthday was September 7, 1533.

The mother may have loved the baby, but Henry was sadly disappointed that his child was not a son. Notwithstanding her sex, however, she was a personage of great distinction from her very birth, as the entire realm looked upon her as heir to the crown. Henry was very fond of Anne Boleyn at this time, though his feelings later completely changed. He was determined to give his infant a very splendid christening.

The Church of England's custom was to make the christening of a child not merely a solemn religious

ceremony, but a great festive occasion of congratulations and rejoicing. The subject of the ceremony is taken to the church. Certain close and distinguished friends, gentlemen and ladies, would attend as godfathers and godmothers to the child. In the ceremony they presented the infant for consecration to Christ and became responsible for its future initiation into the Christian faith. They were hence sometimes called sponsors. These sponsors were supposed to take, from the time of the baptism forward, a strong interest in the welfare of their little charge, and they usually manifested this interest with presents on the day of the christening. These things were all conducted with considerable ceremony and parade in ordinary cases occurring in private life. When a princess was to be baptized, even the minutest details of the ceremony assumed a great importance, and the whole scene was one of great pomp and splendor.

In this case, the baby was conveyed to the church in a grand procession. The mayor and other civic authorities in London came down to Greenwich in tastefully decorated barges to join in the ceremony. The lords and ladies of King Henry's court were also there, in attendance at the palace. When all were assembled and everything was ready, the procession moved from the palace to the church with great pomp. The entire road was carpeted with green rushes spread upon the ground.

Over this road the little infant was carried by one of her godmothers. She was wrapped in a mantle of purple velvet with a long train, which was trimmed with ermine, a very costly fur used in England as a badge of authority. This train was carried by lords and ladies of high rank, who were appointed for the purpose by the



king and who deemed their office a very distinguished honor. Besides these train-bearers, there were four lords, who walked two on each side of the child and who held over her a magnificent canopy. Other figures of high rank and station followed, bearing various insignia and emblems, such as by the ancient customs of England was employed on these occasions. All were dressed sumptuously in gorgeous robes, wearing the badges and decorations pertaining to their rank or the offices they held. Vast crowds of spectators lined the way and gazed at the scene.

On arriving at the church, they found the interior splendidly decorated for the occasion. Its walls were lined throughout with tapestry, and in the center was a crimson canopy, under which was a large silver font containing the water with which the child was to be baptized. The ceremony was performed by Cranmer, the archbishop of Canterbury, which was the office of the highest dignitary of the English Church. After it was performed, the procession returned as it came, with the addition of four persons of high rank, who followed the child with the presents of the godfathers and godmothers. These presents consisted of cups and bowls of beautiful workmanship, some made of silver gilt, and others of solid gold. They were very costly, though not yet highly prized by the infant for whom they were intended. She came and went in the midst of this joyous procession, little imagining what a restless and unsatisfying life all this pageantry and splendor were ushering her into.

They named the child Elizabeth, after her grandmother. There have been many queens of that name,

but Queen Elizabeth of England became so much more distinguished than any of the others that this name alone has become her official designation. Her family name was Tudor. As she was never married—for, though her life was one perpetual scene of matrimonial schemes and negotiations, she lived and died a maid—she has been sometimes called the Virgin Queen. The state Virginia was named after this particular title. She is also familiarly called Queen Bess.

Making little Elizabeth presents of gold and silver plates and arranging splendid pageants for her were not the only plans for her exaltation which were formed during her infancy. The king first had an act of Parliament passed, solemnly recognizing and confirming her claim as heir to the crown, and the title of Princess of Wales was formally conferred upon her.

When these things were done, Henry began to consider how he could best promote his own political schemes by forming an engagement of marriage for her. When she was only about two years of age, he offered her to the King of France as the future wife of one of his sons, on certain conditions of political service which he wished him to perform. But the King of France would not agree to the terms, and so this plan was abandoned.

Notwithstanding this failure, Elizabeth was an object of universal interest and attention, as the daughter of a very powerful monarch and the heir to his crown. Her life opened with very bright prospects of future greatness, but all these prospects were soon apparently cut off by a very heavy cloud which arose to darken her sky. This cloud was the sudden and dreadful fall and ruin of her mother.

Queen Anne Boleyn was originally a maid of honor to Queen Catharine. She became acquainted with King Henry and gained his affections while she was acting in that capacity. When she became queen, she of course had her own maids of honor. Among them was one named Jane Seymour, who was a beautiful and accomplished lady. In the end she supplanted her mistress and queen in Henry's affections, just as Anne had supplanted Catharine. The king had removed Catharine to make way for Anne by annulling his marriage with her on account of their relationship. So what way could he contrive now to remove Anne, in order to make way for Jane?

He began to entertain, or to pretend to entertain, feelings of jealousy and suspicion that Anne was unfaithful to him. One day, at a sort of tournament in the park of the royal palace at Greenwich, a great crowd of brightly dressed ladies and gentlemen was assembled to witness the spectacle, and the queen dropped her handkerchief. A gentleman whom the king had suspected of being one of her favorites picked it up. He did not immediately restore it to her. There was, besides, something in the air and manner of the gentleman and in the circumstances of the occurrence which the king's mind seized upon as evidence of criminal gallantry between the parties. He was, or at least pretended to be, in a great rage. He left the field immediately and went to London. The tournament was broken up in confusion. At the king's orders, the queen was seized, conveyed to her palace in Greenwich, and shut up in her chamber, guarded by a lady who had always been her rival and enemy. She was greatly distressed, but she declared most solemnly

that she was innocent of any crime and had always been faithful to the king.

The next day she was taken up the river from her palace at Greenwich to the Tower of London, probably in a barge well-guarded by armed men. The Tower is an ancient and very extensive castle, consisting of a great number of buildings enclosed within a high wall. It is in the lower part of London on the bank of the Thames, with a flight of stairs leading down to the river from a great postern gate. The unhappy queen was brought to these stairs, conveyed into the castle, and shut up in a gloomy apartment with walls of stone and windows barricaded with strong bars of iron. The king suspected, or pretended to suspect four or five gentlemen, who were attendants of the queen in her palace at Greenwich, of being her accomplices in crime. They were arrested at the same time with her and closely confined.

When the poor queen was taken to her dungeon, she fell on her knees, and in an agony of terror and despair, implored God to help her in this hour of need. She most solemnly called Him to witness that she was innocent of the crime imputed to her charge. Seeking refuge in God calmed her in some small degree, but then again thoughts came over her of the imperious and implacable temper of her husband, of the impetuosity of his passions, and of the certainty that he wished her removed to make room for her rival. When her distracted mind turned to the forlorn and helpless condition of her little daughter Elizabeth, now scarcely three years old, her fortitude and self-possession forsook her entirely. She sank half-insane upon her bed in long and uncontrollable spasms of sobs and tears, alternating with still

more uncontrollable and frightful bursts of hysterical laughter.

The king sent a commission to question her. At the same time, he urged her, by the persons whom he sent, to confess her guilt, promising her that if she did so, her life would be spared. However, she protested that she was innocent with the utmost firmness and steadfastness. She earnestly begged to be allowed to see the king. When this request was refused, she wrote a letter to him, which still remains, and which very strongly expressed the acuteness of her mental suffering.

In this letter, she said that she was so distressed and bewildered by the king's displeasure and her imprisonment that she hardly knew what to think or to say. She assured him that she had always been faithful to him and begged him not to cast a permanent stain upon her own name and that of her innocent and helpless child by such unjust and groundless imputations. She begged him to let her have a fair trial by impartial people who would weigh the evidence against her in a just and equitable manner. She was sure that in this way her innocence would be established and that he and all mankind would see that she had been most unjustly accused.

But if, on the other hand, she added, the king was determined to destroy her in order to remove an obstacle in the way of his possession of a new object of love, she prayed that God would forgive him and all her enemies for so great a sin, and not call him to account for it at the last day. She urged him, in any case, to spare the lives of the four gentlemen who had been accused. She assured him they were wholly innocent of the crime they had been charged with. She begged him, if he had ever

loved the name of Anne Boleyn, to grant this her last request. She signed her letter his "most loyal and ever faithful wife," and dated it from her "doleful prison in the Tower."

The four gentlemen were promised that their lives would be spared if they would confess their guilt. Thus one of them did admit his guilt, and the others persisted to the end in firmly denying it. Those who think Anne Boleyn was innocent, suppose that the one who confessed did so as the most likely mode of averting his destruction, as men under the influence of fear have often been known to confess crimes of which it was afterward proven they could not have been guilty. If this was his motive, it was of no avail. After a very informal trial in which nothing was really proven against them, the four men were condemned, apparently to please the king, and were executed together.

Three days after this, the queen was brought to trial before the peers. There were fifty-three peers in the realm of England at this time. Only twenty-six were present at the trial. The king is charged with making arrangements to prevent the attendance of those who would be unwilling to pass a sentence of condemnation. At any rate, those who did attend professed to be convinced of the queen's guilt, and they sentenced her to be burned, or to be beheaded, at the king's discretion. He decided that she should be beheaded.

The execution was to take place in a little green area within the Tower. The platform was erected there, and the block was placed on it. It was all covered with a black cloth, as was the custom on such occasions. On the morning of the fatal day, Anne sent for the constable

of the Tower to come in and receive her dying protestations that she was innocent of the crimes alleged against her. She told him that she understood she was not going to die until 12 o'clock, and that she was sorry for it, for she wished to have it over with. The constable told her the pain would be very slight and momentary. "Yes," she replied, "I am told that a very skillful executioner is provided, and my neck is very slender."

At the appointed hour she was led out into the courtyard where the execution was to take place.<sup>1</sup> There were about twenty people present, all officers of state or of the city of London. The pain of the execution was over very quickly, for Anne's slender neck was severed at a single blow, and it is likely that all sensibility to pain immediately ceased. Still, the lips and the eyes were observed to move and quiver for a few seconds after the separation of the head from the body. It was a relief, however, to the spectators when this strange and unnatural prolongation of the mysterious functions of life came to an end.

No coffin had been provided. However, they found an old wooden chest made to contain arrows lying in one of the apartments of the tower, which they used instead. They first laid the decapitated trunk in it, and then adjusted the severed head to its place, as if vainly attempting to repair the irretrievable injury they had done. They hurried the body, thus enshrined, to its burial in a chapel that was also within the tower. They did all

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1. Just before the execution, Anne said to one of her maids, "The king has been very good to me. He promoted me from a simple maid to be a marchioness. Then he raised me to be a queen. Now he will raise me to be a martyr."

of this so hurriedly that the whole process was finished before the clock struck twelve. The next day, the unfeeling monster who was the author of this dreadful deed was publicly married to his new favorite, Jane Seymour.

The king had not merely procured Anne's personal condemnation. He had also obtained a decree annulling his marriage to her on the grounds that she had been, as he attempted to prove, previously engaged to another man. This was obviously a mere pretense. The object was to cut off Elizabeth's rights to inherit the crown by making his marriage with her mother void. Thus the little princess was left motherless and friendless at only three years old.







## THE CHILDHOOD OF A PRINCESS.

**E**LIZABETH was about three years old at the death of her mother. She was a princess, but she was left in a very forlorn and desolate condition. She was not, however, entirely abandoned. Her claims to inherit the crown had been set aside, but then she was, as all admitted, the daughter of the king, and she must of course be the object of a certain amount of consideration and ceremony. It would be entirely inconsistent with the notions of royal dignity which then prevailed to have her treated like an ordinary child.

She had a residence assigned her at a place called Hunsdon, and was put under the charge of a governess whose name was Lady Bryan. There is an ancient letter from Lady Bryan, still extant, which was written to one of the king's officers about Elizabeth, explaining her destitute condition and asking for a more suitable