

# HENRY VIII'S DIVORCE

Thomas Cranmer (1489–1556), Archbishop of Canterbury

to Mr. Hawkins, Ambassador to the Holy Roman Emperor

1533

In my most hearty wise I commend me unto you and even so, would be right glad to hear of your welfare, etc. This is to advertise you that inasmuch as you now and then take some pains in writing unto me, I would be loathe you should think your labor utterly lost and forgotten for lack of writing again; therefore and because I reckon you to be some deal desirous of such news as has been here with us of late in the King's Graces matters, I intend to inform you a part thereof, according to the tenure and purport used in that behalf.

And first as touching the small determination and concluding of the matter of divorce between my Lady Catherine and the King's Grace, which said matter after the Convocation in that behalf had determined and agreed according to the former consent of the Universities, it was thought convenient by the King and his learned Council that I should repair unto Dunstable, which is within four miles unto Amptell, where the said Lady Catherine keeps her house, and there to call her before me to hear the final sentence in this said matter. Notwithstanding she would not at all obey thereunto, for when she was by doctor Lee cited to appear by the end of a day, she utterly refused the same, saying that inasmuch as her cause was before the Pope she would have none other judge; and therefore would not take me for her judge. Nevertheless the 8<sup>th</sup> day of May, according to the said appointment, I came unto Dunstable, my Lord of Lincoln being assistant unto me, and my Lord of Winchester, Doctor Bell with diverse others learned in the Law being counselors in the law for the King's part; and so there at our coming kept a court for the appearance of the said Lady Catherine, where were examined certain witnesses which testified that she was lawfully cited and called to appear. And the morrow after Ascension day I gave final sentence therein, how it was indispensable for the Pope to license any such marriages.

This done, and after our re-journeying home again, the King's Highness prepared all things convenient for the Coronation of the Queen, which also was after such a manner as follows. The Thursday next before the feast of Pentecost, the King and the Queen being at Greenwich, all the crafts of London thereunto well-appointed, in several barges decked after the most gorgeous and sumptuous manner, with diverse pageants thereunto belonging, repaired and waited all together upon the Mayor of London; and so, well-furnished, came all unto Greenwich, where they tarried and waited for the Queen's coming to her barge; which so done, they brought her unto the Tower, trumpets, shawms, and other diverse instruments all the ways playing and making great melody, which, as is reported, was as comely done as never was like in any time nigh unto our remembrance. And so her Grace came to the Tower at Thursday at night, about 5 of the clock. In the morning there assembled with me at Westminster church the Bishop of York, the Bishop of London, the Bishop of Winchester, the Bishop of Lincoln, the Bishop of Bath, and the Bishop of Saint Asse, the Abbot of Westminster with ten or twelve more abbots, which all re-vested ourselves in our *pontificalibus*, and so furnished, with our crosses and croziers, proceeded out of the Abbey in a procession unto Westminster Hall, where we received the Queen appareled in a robe of purple velvet, and all the ladies and gentlewomen in robes and gowns of scarlet according to the manner used before time in such business; and so her Grace, sustained on each side with two bishops, the Bishop of Lincoln and the Bishop of Winchester, came forth in procession unto the Church of Westminster, my Lord of Suffolk bearing before her the crown, and two other lords bearing also before her a scepter and a white rod, and so entered up into the high altar, where diverse ceremonies used about her, I did set the crown on her head, and then was sung *Te Deum*, etc....

But now, Sir, you may not imagine that this Coronation was before her marriage, for she was married much about Saint Paul's day last, as the condition thereof does well appear by reason she is now somewhat big with child. Notwithstanding, it has been reported throughout a great part of the realm that I married them, which was plainly

false, for I myself knew not thereof a fortnight after it was done. And many other things be also reported of me, which be mere lies and tales.

Henry Ellis, ed. *Original Letters of Illustrative of English History, Including Numerous Royal Letters* (London: Bentley, 1825), III:34–39.