

LADY JANE GREY'S CLAIM TO THE THRONE

July 1553

Jane, by the grace of God, Queen of England, France, and Ireland, Defender of the Faith and of the Church of England, and also of Ireland, under Christ, on Earth the supreme head. To all Our most loving, faithful, and obedient subjects, and to every of them, greeting.

Whereas Our most dear cousin Edward VI, late King of England, France, and Ireland, Defender of the Faith; and on earth supreme head, under Christ, of the Church of England and Ireland; by his letters patents, signed with his own hand, and sealed with his great seal of England, bearing date 21 June, in the seventh year of his reign; in the presence of the most part of his nobles, his counselors, judges, and divers other grave and sage personages, for the profit and surety of his whole realm, thereto assenting and subscribing their names to the same, has, by the same his letters patent recited, that forasmuch as the imperial crown of this realm, by an act made in the 35th year of the reign of the late king, of worthy memory, King Henry VIII, Our progenitor and great-uncle, was, for lack of issue by his body lawfully begotten; and for lack of issue of the body of Our said late cousin King Edward VI, by the same act limited and appointed to remain to the Lady Mary, his eldest daughter, and to the heirs of her body lawfully begotten: and for default of such issue, the remainder thereof to the Lady Elizabeth, by the name of the Lady Elizabeth his second daughter, and to the heirs of her body lawfully begotten; with such conditions as should be limited and appointed by the said late king of worthy memory, King Henry VIII, Our progenitor and great-uncle, by his letters patent under his great seal, or by his last will in writing, signed with his hand.

And forasmuch as the said limitation of the imperial crown of his realm being limited, as is aforesaid, to the said Lady Mary, and Lady Elizabeth, being illegitimate and not lawfully begotten, for that the marriage had, between the said late king, King Henry VIII, Our progenitor and great-uncle, and the Lady Katherine, mother of the said Lady Mary; and also the marriage had between the said late king, King Henry VIII, Our progenitor and great-uncle, and the Lady Anne, mother of the said Lady Elizabeth, were clearly and lawfully undone by sentences of divorce, according to the Word of God and the ecclesiastical laws; and which said several divorcements have been severally ratified and confirmed by authority of Parliament, and especially in the 28th year of the reign of King Henry VIII, Our said progenitor and great-uncle, remaining in force, strength, and effect, whereby, as well the said Lady Mary as also the said Lady Elizabeth, to all intents and purposes are, and have been, clearly disabled to ask, claim, or challenge the said imperial crown, or any other of the honours, castles, manours, lordships, lands, tenements, or other hereditaments as heir or heirs to our said late cousin King Edward VI, or as heir or heirs to any other person or persons whatsoever, as well for the cause before rehearsed as also for that the said Lady Mary and Lady Elizabeth were unto our said late cousin but of the half-blood, and therefore by the ancient laws, statutes, and customs of this realm be not inheritable unto Our said late cousin, although they had been born in lawful matrimony; as indeed they were not, as by the said sentences of divorce, and the said statute of the 28th year of the reign of King Henry VIII, Our said progenitor and great-uncle, plainly appears.

And forasmuch also, as it is to be thought, or at the least much to be doubted, that if the said Lady Mary, or Lady Elizabeth, should hereafter have or enjoy the said imperial crown of this realm, and should then happen to marry with any stranger born out of this realm, that then the said stranger, having the government and the imperial crown in his hands, would adhere and practice not only to bring this noble, free realm into the tyranny and servitude of the bishops of Rome, but also to have the laws and customs of his or their own native country or countries to be practised and put in use within this realm, rather than the laws, statutes, and customs here of long time used; whereupon the title of inheritance, of all and singular the subjects of this realm to depend, to the peril of conscience, and the utter subversion of the common-weal of this realm.

Whereupon Our said late dear cousin, weighing and considering within himself which ways and means were most convenient to be had for the stay of the said succession in the said imperial crown, if it should please God

to call Our said late cousin out of this transitory life having no issue of his body; and calling to his remembrance that We, and the Lady Katherine and the Lady Mary, our sisters (being the daughters of the Lady Frances, Our natural mother, and then, and yet, wife of Our natural and most loving father, Henry, Duke of Suffolk; and the Lady Margaret, daughter of the Lady Elianor, then deceased, sister of the said Lady Frances, and the late wife of our cousin Henry, Earl of Cumberland) were very nigh of his grace's blood, of the part of his father's side, Our said progenitor and great-uncle; and being naturally born here, within the realm; and for the very good opinion Our said late cousin had of Our said sisters' and cousin Margaret's good education, did therefore, upon good deliberation and advice herein had, and taken, by his said letters patents declare, order, assign, limit, and appoint that if it should fortune himself, Our said late cousin, King Edward VI, to decease, having no issue of his body lawfully begotten, that then the said imperial crown of England and Ireland, and the confines of the same, and his title to the crown of the realm of France; and all and singular honours, castles, prerogatives, privileges, pre-eminencies, and authorities, jurisdictions, dominions, possessions, and hereditaments to Our said late cousin, King Edward VI, or to the said imperial crown belonging, or in any-wise appertaining, should, for lack of such issue of his body, remain, come, and be to the eldest son of the body of the said Lady Frances, lawfully begotten, being born into the world in his life-time, and to the heirs males of the body of such eldest son lawfully begotten; and so from son to son, as he should be of vicinity of birth of the body of the said Lady Francis, lawfully begotten, being born into the world in Our said late cousin's life-time, and to the heirs male of the body of every such son lawfully begotten.

And for default of such son born into the world in his life-time of the body of the said Lady Frances, lawfully begotten; and for lack of heirs males of every such son lawfully begotten, that then the said imperial crown, and all and singular other the premises, should remain, come, and be to Us, by the name of the Lady Jane, eldest daughter of the said Lady Frances, and to the heirs male of Our body lawfully begotten, and for the lack of such issue, then to the Lady Katherine aforesaid, Our said second sister, and the heirs male of her body lawfully begotten, with divers other remainders, as by the same letters-patents more plainly and at large it may and does appear.

Sithence the making of Our letters patents, that is to say, on Thursday, which was the 6th day of this instant month of July, it has pleased God to call unto His infinite mercy Our said most dear and entirely beloved cousin Edward VI, whose soul God pardon; and forasmuch as he is now deceased, having no heirs of his body begotten; and that also there remains at this present time no heirs lawfully begotten of the body of Our said progenitor and great-uncle, King Henry VIII; and forasmuch also as the said Lady Frances, Our said mother, had no issue male begotten of her body and born into the world in the life-time of Our said cousin King Edward VI, so as the said imperial crown, and other the premises to the same belonging, or in any-wise appertaining, now be, and remain to Us, in Our actual and royal possession, by authority of the said letters patents.

We do therefore by these presents signify unto all Our most loving, faithful, and obedient subjects that like as We for Our part shall, by God's grace, show Ourselves a most gracious and benign sovereign queen and lady to all Our good subjects in all their just and lawful suits and causes; and to the uttermost of Our power shall preserve and maintain God's most holy word, Christian policy, and the good laws, customs, and liberties of these Our realms and dominions; so We mistrust not but they, and every of them, will again, for their parts, at all times and in all cases show themselves unto Us, their natural liege queen and lady, most faithful, loving, and obedient subjects, according to their bounden duties and allegiance, whereby they shall please God, and do the things that shall tend to their own preservation and sureties; willing and commanding all men, of all estates, degrees, and conditions to see Our peace and accord kept, and to be obedient to Our laws, as they tender Our favour, and will answer for the contrary at their extreme perils. In witness whereof, We have caused these Our letters to be made patents. Witness Ourselves, at Our Tower of London, the tenth day of July, in the first year of our reign.