

AN INTERESTING DESCRIPTION
of
ENGLAND
IN THE
**SIXTEENTH AND
SEVENTEENTH CENTURIES.**

SHOWING HOW THE PEOPLE LIVED &
DRESSED, FROM THE REIGN OF
HENRY THE 7TH TO THE
DEATH OF WILLIAM THE 3RD

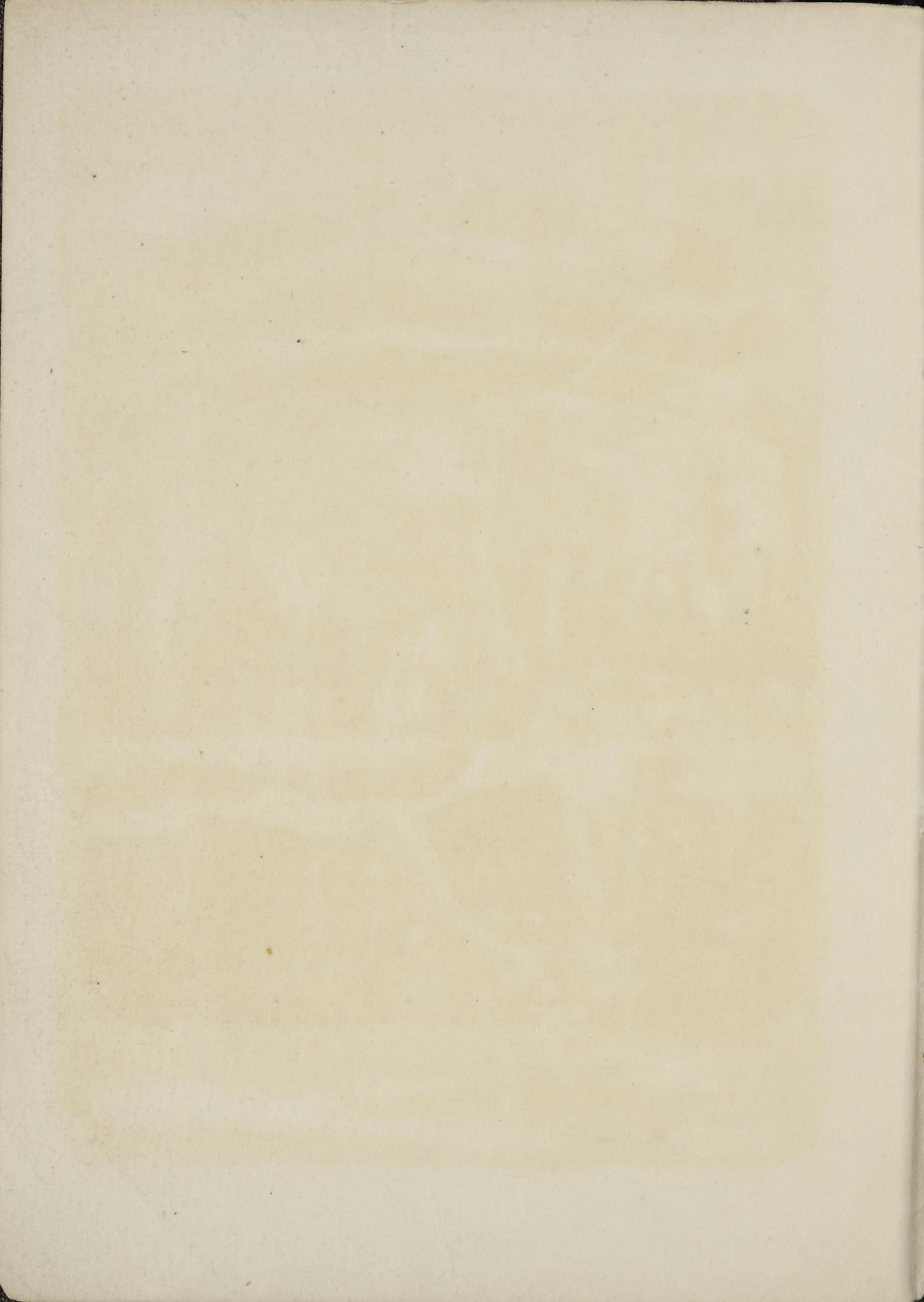
In Easy Language
BY MISS CORNER.

PRICE

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LONDON DEAN AND SON THREADNEEDLE ST





Ship building



Monks begging



Seizing the treasures of the Monasteries

Shepherds

Citizens guarded & lighted by their apprentices.

ENGLAND & ITS PEOPLE

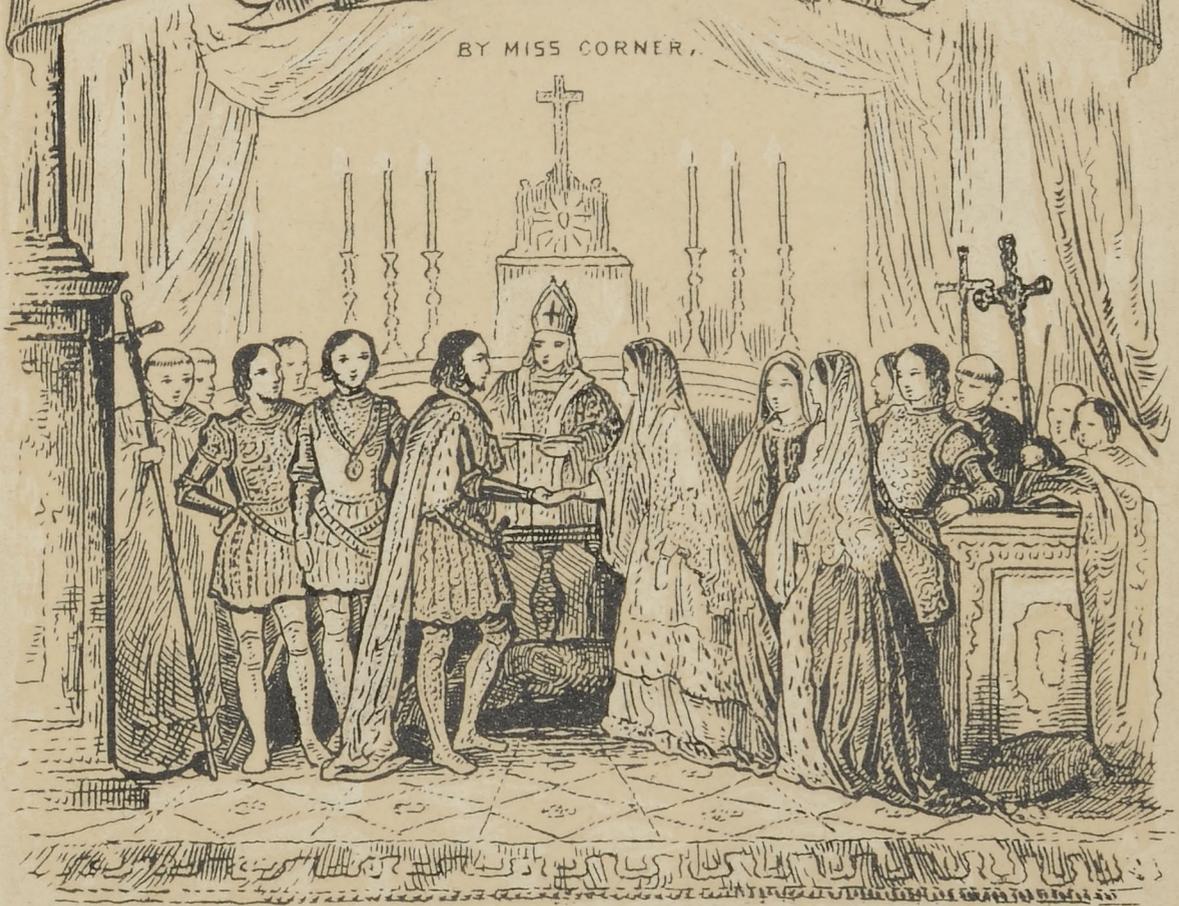
THEIR MANNERS, CUSTOMS, & CONDITION,

IN THE

SIXTEENTH AND SEVENTEENTH CENTURIES;

FROM THE REIGN OF HENRY THE SEVENTH TO THE DEATH OF
WILLIAM THE THIRD.

BY MISS CORNER,

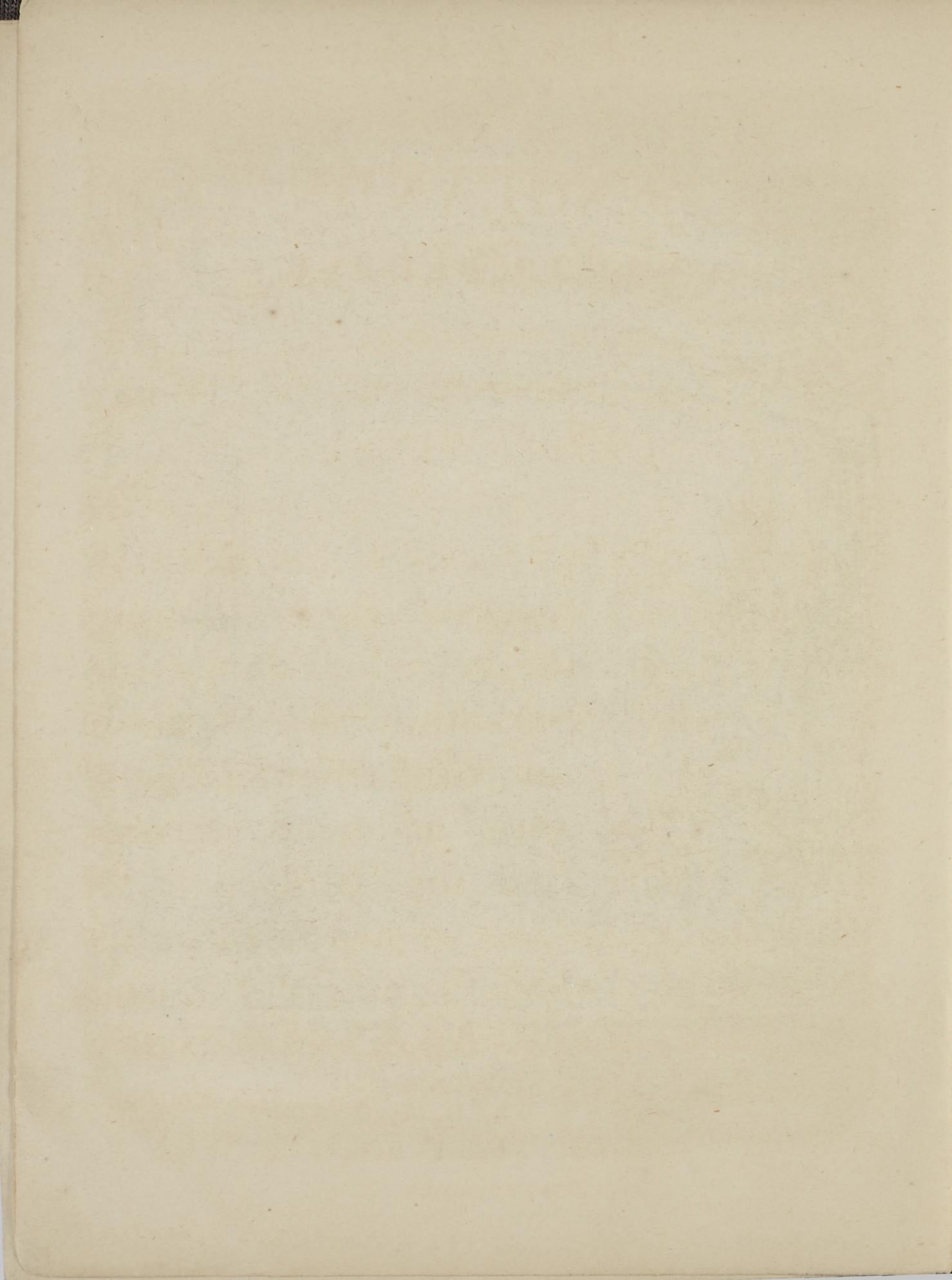


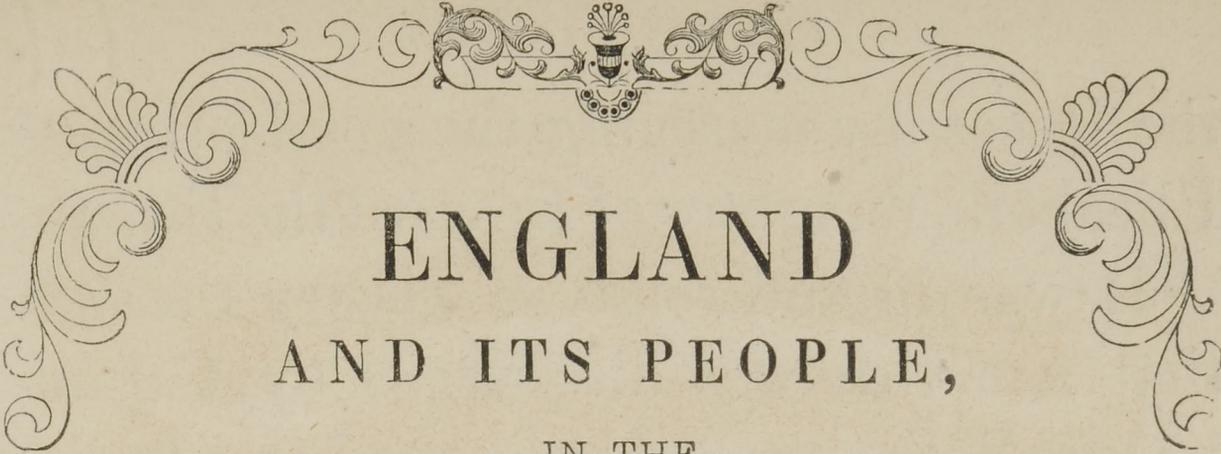
Marriage of the good princess Elizabeth of York to Henry the 7th of Lancaster.

L O N D O N :

T H O M A S D E A N A N D S O N ,

T H R E A D N E E D L E S T R E E T .





ENGLAND

AND ITS PEOPLE,

IN THE
SIXTEENTH AND SEVENTEENTH
CENTURIES.



HIS period of English History commences during the reign of Henry the Seventh, which began in the year 1485, and it ends with the death of William the Third, in 1702.

It has already been related in that part of our history which is called "England during the Middle Ages," how Henry the Seventh became king, and put an end to those dreadful civil wars, the Wars of

the Roses, by marrying the good princess Elizabeth, daughter of Edward the Fourth.

It was in the reign of Henry the 7th that America was discovered by Columbus, and the first voyage made to India, round the Cape of Good Hope. The merit of these, and other great maritime discoveries, belongs to the Portuguese, who were the best sailors of the age; but the example set by them led the English to improve their shipping, and make voyages of discovery also, for the purpose of increasing trade and commerce.

England had no navy at this period; for a shameful custom had long existed of pressing, that is, seizing by force, merchants' vessels for the service of the king, whenever he wanted to raise a fleet. The first ship of the present British navy was built by order of Henry the Seventh, who

named it the Great Harry; but ship-building did not go on very rapidly, for there were only thirteen ships of war in the time of Queen Elizabeth, the government still depending on the unjust system of seizing merchants' vessels whenever ships were required for warfare.

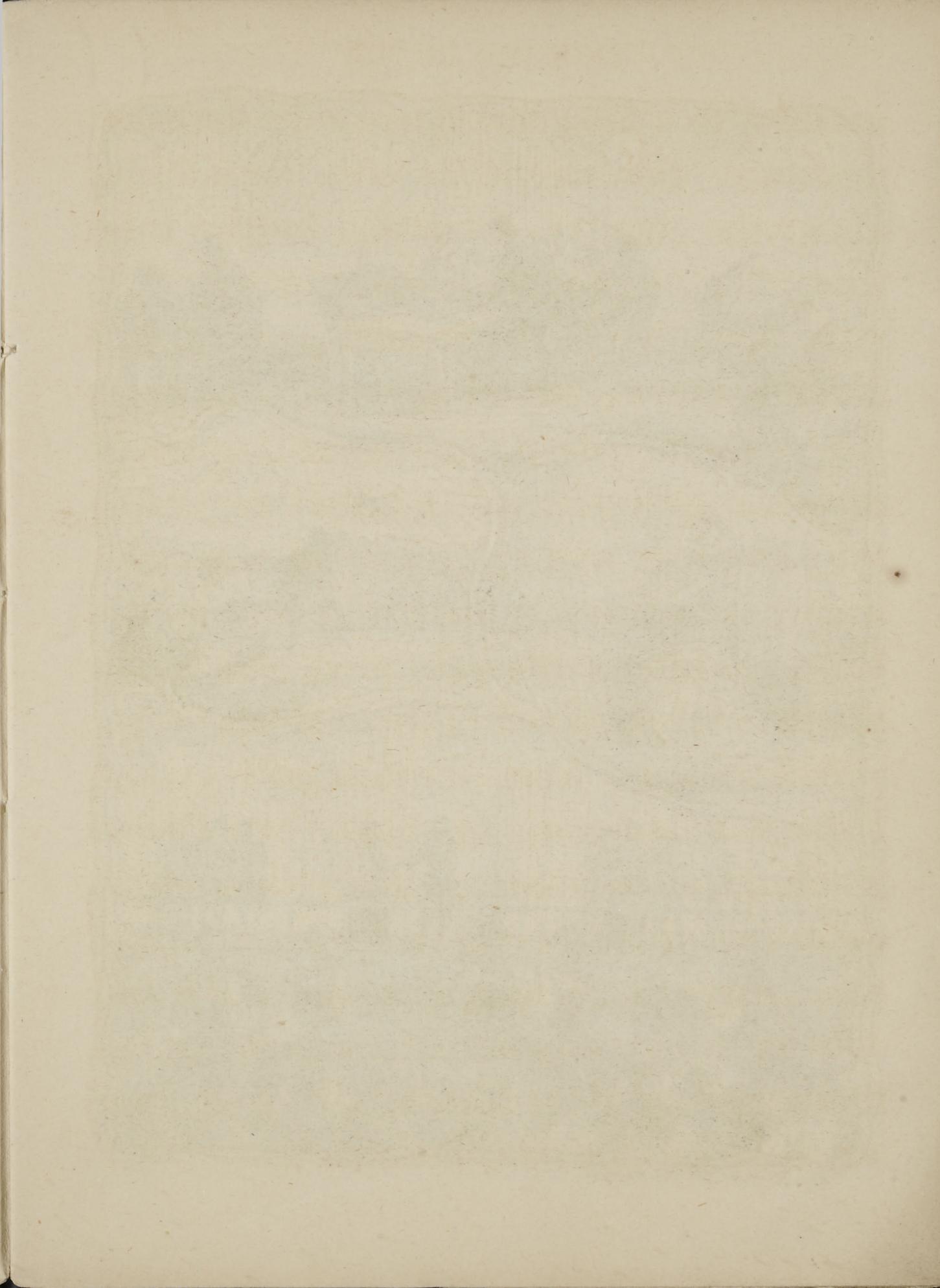
The next king, Henry the Eighth, made a great revolution in this country, by changing the established religion, which till then had been Roman Catholic. Having quarreled with the Pope, he chose that the Protestant form of worship should be adopted; so he abolished all the Catholic churches and monasteries throughout the kingdom, seized all their treasures, and sold the lands belonging to them.

The monks and nuns were turned out of their homes, and their property seized for the use of the state. Pensions were

granted to a few, but thousands were left destitute, and might be seen wandering about the country, or sitting by the waysides, begging for their daily bread.

No people can be treated in so unjust a manner now; but the sovereigns of England were then despotic, that is, they could do what they pleased, without regard to the laws. It was to get rid of this arbitrary kind of government that Charles the First was afterwards beheaded, and James the Second deprived of the crown.

The change from the Catholic to the Protestant religion, was called the Reformation; but it caused great distress at the time, especially among the poor, who had been used to go to the monasteries and convents for relief in all their wants, as there were no poor laws at that time, nor any hospitals for their benefit.





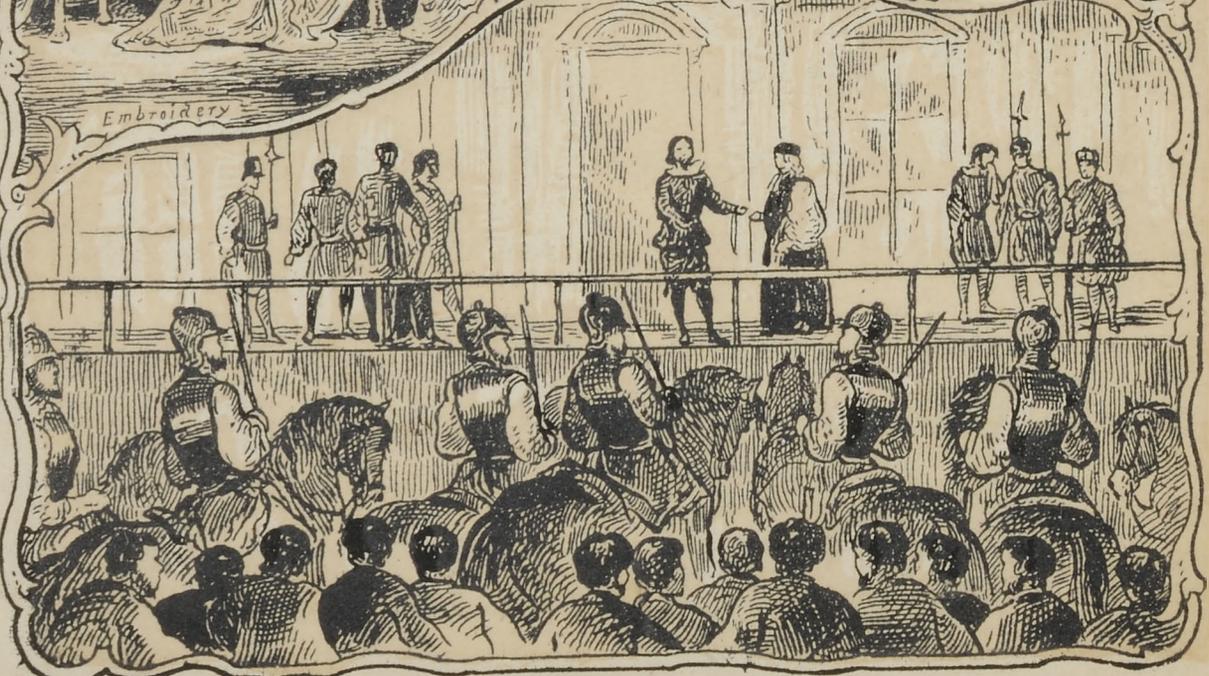
Dining Hall



Embroidery



Bull baiting



Execution of Charles the first.

During the whole of the sixteenth century, there was also great distress among the peasantry, owing to the decrease of farm labour; for the large land-owners, having now no serfs to cultivate their lands, converted vast tracts into pastures for sheep; so that, instead of wanting a great many people to work in the fields at seed time and harvest time, they only required a few shepherds to look after their sheep; and as the wool fetched a great price in Flanders, they found it more profitable than growing corn.

Many landowners, who had become possessed of what were formerly church lands, pulled down whole villages, and enclosed the commons, where the rustics used to feed a few sheep of their own; so that, what with this new system, and the destruction of the monasteries, many thou-

sands of the country people had no means of living but by begging, or stealing; nor was their condition improved till about the middle of the reign of Queen Elizabeth, when laws were made for the relief of the poor, and the lands again brought under cultivation.

The landowners were not all noble, now, as they were in the Feudal Times; as a law had been made by Henry the Seventh, by which Commoners were enabled to purchase landed estates, which, formerly, they were not allowed to do; and thus arose a new class of people in England, such as are now called country gentlemen; that is, great landed proprietors who are not noblemen.

In the reign of Henry the Eighth, most of the vegetables that are common now, such as cabbages, turnips, carrots, and let-

tuces, were first grown in this country, the seeds and roots being brought from Holland; but potatoes were not known in England till the time of Queen Elizabeth, and were then only seen at the tables of very rich people. Market gardening became a trade, towards the end of the reign of Henry the Eighth; but all the best gardeners, at first, were Dutchmen.

Edward the Sixth, Queen Mary, and Queen Elizabeth, were all children of this monarch. Mary was a Roman Catholic, and endeavoured to restore that religion. Elizabeth was a Protestant, and a clever but tyrannical woman. She is sometimes called the good Queen Bess, from a mistaken notion that an old song, which celebrates one of our Queens by that title, related to her. But the real good Queen Bess, was the wife of Henry the Seventh.

In the time of Elizabeth were made severe laws against those who still professed the Catholic faith; and great numbers were fined and imprisoned, because they would not attend the Protestant Churches.

Still the country prospered in her reign, owing to the increase of trade and manufactures. Sir Francis Duke then made his first voyage round the world; colonies were settled in America; and the East India Company was formed. The Royal Exchange was also built by Sir Thomas Gresham, a rich merchant, of London.

The City of London was then very different to what it is now. The streets were very narrow, and as they were neither paved nor lighted, nor well watched, it was usual for all respectable people, when they went out in the evening, to be attended by their apprentices, who car-

ried clubs and lanterns, to protect them from thieves and to light the way. The citizens, at this period, usually had their shops at their houses, which were all built of wood; and as glass was then more generally used, most of their houses had small casement windows.

Coaches were first known in this reign, but did not become general till the time of Charles the Second; and there were no stage coaches till the reign of William the Third; so that the families of country gentlemen scarcely ever came to London, even once in their lives. They lived on their own estates, in large mansions, built of timber, with a great hall, where the whole family, domestics included, took their meals. The furniture was rough, and most of the articles for domestic use were made of wood or pewter; for china-

ware, and glass for the tables, were luxuries unknown at that period.

Children were brought up so strictly, that even when grown to men and women, they dared not sit down, or talk, in the presence of their parents, without permission. The daughters of people of fortune used to assist in all domestic duties, such as washing, cooking, making butter and cheese, and keeping the house in order. These, with spinning, sewing, and embroidery, were the chief accomplishments of young ladies, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; for very few were taught to read or write.

The want of education made the people rough in their manners, so that the middle and higher classes were fond of sports that are now practised only by the worst characters among the lowest orders, such

as bull baiting, dog fighting, cock fighting, and many other such vulgar amusements. Theatres were only just then coming into fashion, and were very small and mean; yet it was in the reign of Queen Elizabeth that Shakspeare wrote his fine plays.

The merriest time in the whole year was Christmas, which, in every house throughout England, was then kept up for twelve days, with feasting, and romping games of all kinds.

The costume of this period was, for men of the middle class, a jacket reaching a little below the waist, fastened with a belt; stockings made of cloth, such as men now wear for coats, and called hose; with boots, a short cloak, a high crowned hat, and a sword. The women, in general, wore gowns and petticoats of woollen stuff, with cloth hose, and high heeled

shoes. The citizens' wives, who used to wear large hoods over their heads out of doors, now appeared in velvet bonnets; their gowns were open in front, with a stiff boddice, and a large ruff round the neck, made yellow with starch. Rich silks were much worn by rich people of both sexes. Knitted stockings were invented in this reign; and a pair being presented to the Queen, she would never afterwards wear those made of cloth.

Queen Elizabeth was succeeded by her cousin James, king of Scotland, whose family name was Stuart; and thus England and Scotland were united into one kingdom, called Great Britain, but had separate parliaments till the time of Queen Anne.

The next king was Charles the First, who wanted to exercise too much power, and to govern without a parliament, con-



Cromwell appointed Protector

Fire of London

The great Plague

Flight of James

The Bill of Rights passed

trary to the laws; so many of the people thought it would be better to have no king; and a civil war was commenced, which lasted several years, when Charles was made prisoner, tried, and beheaded, January 30th, 1649. Then Oliver Cromwell, the leader of the Republicans, that is, of those who wished to have no king, took the head of the government, with the title of Protector of the Commonwealth. He was the son of a country gentleman, and ruled with great ability for six years; but it was not a very merry time in England; for the greater portion of the republicans were of a religious sect, called Puritans, who considered it sinful to indulge in any kind of gaiety; therefore, all private entertainments, as well as public amusements and festivals, were forbidden by law; so that even at Christmas,

if any body indulged in mirth and feasting, it was in secret. Still the condition of the people had become much better; the value of land had more than doubled; and the foreign trade of England was greatly increased. Coffee was first brought from Turkey during the Commonwealth; and sugar from the West Indies; but tea was not brought here till some time afterwards.

When Oliver Cromwell died, Charles the Second, the son of the late king, was restored to the throne. The great plague, or fever, which in a few months destroyed one-third of the inhabitants of London, and the great fire, which laid the city in ruins, both happened in this reign; after which the city was rebuilt in a better manner, the houses being constructed of brick, instead of wood, and the streets made wider, and paved.

About this period, but more especially in the reign of the next king, James the Second, many thousands of French artisans, driven from France by religious persecution, came to settle in this country, and greatly improved our useful arts and manufactures, which, till then, were far inferior to those of France. Glass, paper, silks, cutlery, clocks, and watches, were now made as well in England as abroad, and these, with the woollen manufactures, afforded plenty of employment for the working people. The first charity schools were founded in this reign.

The arbitrary conduct of James the Second, who succeeded Charles, caused a conspiracy of the nobility and landed gentry to be formed against him, and he was obliged to give up the crown, and take refuge in France; while his son-in-

law, William, Prince of Orange, who had married his daughter Mary, was invited to come over from Holland, and take possession of the throne. This had been offered to him on account of his being a Protestant, and on condition that he would sign an act, called the Bill of Rights, by which he, and all future sovereigns, were bound to govern entirely according to the laws of the land, and not by their own will. This event, which is called the Revolution, took place in the year 1688, and the people of England have enjoyed more liberty ever since.

In this reign the Bank of England was established; and Greenwich Hospital, which had been a palace, was made into an asylum for old and disabled sailors. William the Third died in 1702.

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