

Explain and illustrate the growth of the power of the Crown during the Tudor Monarchy.

The Tudor dynasty in England followed the turbulent years of the fifteenth century. Upon the heels of the 100 years War there came the War of the "Two Roses", which ended in 1485 at the expense of the greater part of English Feudalism, although the whole situation of the country was not the ideal from many points of view, political, social, economic, religious. Disorder and wrongs were existing to a great extent.

In History, as a rule, out of the contrasts and conflicts, civil wars and general disorder, a situation emerges under a certain Government, the main task of which is to put things right and lay the foundations of a new more or less prosperous life. The new period is constructive and has autocracy its main characteristic (cf. "tyrannis" of Peisistratus in the 6<sup>th</sup> cent. B.C. in Athens or the "Napoleonic hereditary Empire" in France or the Russian, German and Italian political models of today). But autocracy, in these cases, must be always understood as the embodiment in a strong personality of the creative powers, which in their turn come to the forefront and counterbalance the

previous catastrophe.

In the period concerned the strong personality was Henry VIII. Although the austere Henry VII <sup>had</sup> prepared the way to a centralisation of the administration by his frugal policy and wise measures, it was Henry VIII, his son, that totalized centralisation and established <sup>irrevocably</sup> royal supremacy over both, Nobility and Church.

Around him, during the first half of the sixteenth century, there was turning the whole political, social and religious life in a positive or negative way. Great statesmen, prominent thinkers, religious creeds, political dogmas, social aspects, persons and things, ideas and realities in that epoch, were related to this extraordinary man and had to fight or to be fought in a harsh struggle for supremacy. But above these mêlée of ideas and things the seal of a competent despot was imposed and the whole nation from top to feet was subject to his will. It was he, who created the Modern State. The succeeding Kings of the Tudor Monarchy, except perhaps Elizabeth to a degree, reigned along the lines drawn by Henry VIII. <sup>so complete</sup> ~~Such~~ was the thoroughness of his original and deciding achievements ~~that~~ that the royal power, accomplished by him and bequeathed to his successors, stood unshaken throughout the Tudor period.

To explain how this was done would take volumes; the question



is multilateral and a student essay must be concise. It will suffice, we think, to give a short account of the causes and consequences of Henry's important deeds, which determine the whole matter:

- a. Henry's strong, despotic and rude personal character combined with a shrewd political "Συμβόλιον".
- b. His collaborators, the statesmen, whom he chose to help him.
- c. The increasing national feeling in England together with the revival of commerce, industry and the rising Middle Class, i.e. with the social and economic factors.
- d. <sup>the</sup> Humanism and the new ideas, spread all over Europe; the spirit of the period.

When Henry acceded to the throne of England was a lad of 18 years, full of animal vigour and skilled in all manly exercises. He had a great interest in the sea; he built two royal dockyards and founded a school for pilots, being himself a pilot at the launching of "Princess Mary", in 1519, when the whole court attended the ceremony and the people's spirit was allured to match that of the King. He also was an orthodox confidant of the Catholic Faith and merited the title of "Fidei Defensor" in the early years of his reign.

As a politician he knew how to stand between the two extremes, ~~in~~ social or religious matters, and keep them

separate but both under his own control, to the benefit of  
 the Crown. He also pretended himself to be the safeguard  
 of the order and of the prosperity of <sup>the</sup> People, whenever trouble  
 would arise. But it is in the struggle with the Church, connec-  
 ted with the Divorce case, that he showed his political in-  
 sight and shrewd sense. He <sup>arbitrarily</sup> divorced queen Mary and had  
 his new marriage sanctioned through a bribed Body of Clergy,  
 who had, by force, recognized people's jurisdiction in the  
 religious controversies. Taking the Divorce case as an oppor-  
 tunity he summoned, after an interval of fourteen years,  
 the Parliament to assist him in his conflict with the Pope.  
 But Henry had "a priori" secured success as regards assisting  
 favourable decisions, because, according to an Act, already  
 passed, Parliament could not make institutions without  
 the consent of the King and the Privy Council; and the  
 Council was now his. In this case, anyhow, he knew well  
 that supporting the anti-clerical Parliament he would strength-  
 ened his own power. Henceforth (since 1529) he kept Lords  
 and Parliament sitting at in Westminster for seven years,  
 and made through them the various Acts, which secured  
 the independence of the English Church from the Holy See  
 and its subjection to the Crown - The King assumed the title  
 of the "Holy Caesar"; he became the supreme of the Church, the Pope



of England.

In the assemblies the King dictated, the Council made statutes, and the Parliament ratified by saying only "nay" or "yay".

To the King's supremacy over <sup>the</sup> Church this political sovereignty ~~is~~ now added and the royal prestige became so ~~respectful~~ respectable throughout the Tudor period, that no Tudor Government was ever seriously shaken by popular disorders. It ~~was~~ only in the seventeenth century that the Parliament, having got consciousness of ~~the~~ political authoritative life and been badly treated, overthrew the King and prepared Oliver Cromwell's dictatorship. The imposing air of the strong personality of Henry VIII annulled every resistance; his capacity of a monarch was acknowledged and his decisions <sup>were</sup> ~~respected or~~ astonishing and therefore awful and respected.

Of the statesmen, who contributed to the growth of the royal power of Henry, it will suffice, to mention only ~~two~~ two:

Thomas Wolsey, a pluralist in the Government service and a "legatus a latere" of the Pope, was the Chancellor of the State and the only man, who governed England in the early years of Henry's reign. He proved himself <sup>an</sup> ~~stable~~ able statesman and, in some degree, a reformer. He has been the father of the political doctrine of the "Balance of powers"; and in the period from 1524-28 he dissolved 29 religious houses,

a part of the wealth of which he granted to set up Oxford and Ipswich Colleges, though he did so obeying the commands of his Sovereign, who wanted money. His sympathies with the Pope made him wane in significance ~~and~~ and lastly he was expelled from his post, ~~but~~ in general, it may be said, that "gathering up into his hands all the reins of ecclesiastical power, Wolsey taught Henry to be master in his own house" (Fisher).

- Thomas Cromwell, a layman, who had been trained in the Cardinal's service, taking Wolsey's place, after his death in 1530, set out to bring all <sup>the</sup> aspirations of his King to a fruitful end, not caring about the kind of the means by whereby he ~~had to~~ <sup>would have</sup> succeeded. The trend of events was making towards secularization. He saw it and promptly undertook the task of dissolving the Monasteries. He became the Inspector of the monastic life and published his Black Book, that served as a basis to the Parliament to dissolve more than 600 Monasteries, the estates of which have been computed to make the one fifth of the land of England. This wealth passed entirely to <sup>the</sup> King, the Lords and Cromwell himself - he became the possessor of the estates of six monasteries. He was also the first to help the King and the Council to pass, ~~with the~~ <sup>Royal</sup> ~~bet~~ through the Reformation Parliament the act of Supremacy, that of the "Annates".



and any other act during the period after 1530 to Henry's death. He sent prominent men to the scaffold. But the terror and admiration inspired by this "plus royalist que le roi" statesman and by the passionate King himself established order where previously confusion and chaos prevailed. The enriched new Nobility was always prompt to support Henry's political and religious ideas.

It may be allowed, I think, to omit dwelling upon Crommer's, Somerset's and Cecil's assistance to the Kings of the Tudor Monarchy and their contribution to the rise of the royal power. They, generally, did little but continued the policy of their predecessors.

We come now to the social and economic factors:

The constituent Council, during Henry's reign and after his death, consisted not only of the enriched landowners; In the Council as well as in the Parliament there was a large number of the people of the Middle Class, the rich merchants and men of business, whose rise in the community was due to the revival of commerce and industry.

The circumnavigation of the Earth and the various geographical discoveries, around 1500, widened the knowledge, and changed the routes of commerce - Atlantic now is the sea of commerce instead of Mediterranean - and pushed

the people of England to industry and <sup>to the</sup> sea. We have seen that Henry the VIII had laid the foundation of the best navy. Later on, the individual initiative, so encouraged made all seas familiar to English people by Elizabeth's time. The victory over the Spanish Armada brought exaltation to the growing national feeling, which was the result of the new social situation <sup>and</sup> the <sup>new</sup> political theory of popular jurisdiction. This feeling was more strengthened during the conflict between England and Rome, when the King and the Council styled themselves as the apostles of the prosperity of the English nation, that did much to centralisation. The same feeling grew in France through the struggles between the King and the Pope and between the King and the Nobles.

Great humanists, like Th. More and Colet, stand side by side with Erasmus to illumine the minds of the contemporary English ~~people~~ people by the light of the intellectual Renaissance; they created liberal thought among the ranks of the rising Middle Class; books such as More's "Utopia" or Erasmus's "Moriae Encomium" brought forth new ideals of life, social or individual, and made the changing of political things be felt as a necessary demand; and we know, as Götte taught, that



no general change in human affairs may be done, unless this change formerly first be accomplished in human souls and minds. W. Tyndalle's translation of the testament, the "Book of Prayers", new scientific methods - Bacon's Empiricismus - ; new conceptions of life presented to the Nation by excellent thinkers and artists as Shakespeare etc. are eloquent examples of this change. The religious settlement of religion, contrasts in Elizabeth's reign and the thoroughness of the change of minds at the end of the sixteenth century together with the consolidation of political affairs and the thriving of commerce and more than this, the national pride led to the high peaks of Classical England.

To this amazing rise of the nation it was Henry VIII who contributed much by his setting up of the Modern State together with the royal Supremacy.

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