LADY JANE GREY

A Tudor Mystery

ERIC IVES

WILEY-BLACKWELL
A John Wiley & Sons, Ltd., Publication

‘A highly ingenious solution to the mystery of Jane Grey’s thirteen-day usurpation of the throne. Ives’s research skills are formidable and will make this book essential, if provocative reading.’

John Guy

‘Eric Ives has provided the first full-scale account of one of the most surprising sequences of events in the politics of Tudor England. It is an engrossing tale, here presented in incisive style by a scholar who has an instinctive grasp of how to bring the surprises back to life.’

Diarmaid MacCulloch,
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Susan Brigden,
Lincoln College, Oxford

To my many friends who have grappled with
The Reign of Edward VI

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This edition first published 2009
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Blackwell Publishing was acquired by John Wiley & Sons in February 2007. Blackwell's publishing programme has been merged with Wiley's global Scientific, Technical, and Medical business to form Wiley-Blackwell.

Registered Office
John Wiley & Sons Ltd, The Atrium, Southern Gate, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 8SQ, United Kingdom

Editorial Offices
350 Main Street, Malden, MA 02148-5020, USA
9600 Garsington Road, Oxford, OX4 2DQ, UK
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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Ives, E. W. (Eric William), 1931–
Lady Jane Grey : a Tudor mystery / Eric Ives.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 978-1-4051-9413-6 (hardcover : alk. paper)
1. Grey, Jane, Lady, 1537–1554. 2. Great Britain–Kings and rulers–Succession–History–16th century. 3. Queens–Great Britain–Biography. I. Title.

DA345.1.D9I94 2009
942.05′3092–dc22
[B]

2009005159

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Set in 10.75/13.5pt Galliard by SPi Publisher Services, Pondicherry, India
Printed in Singapore

1 2009

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PREFACE

JANE Grey, the rightful queen of England, was deposed on 19 July 1553 and beheaded on 12 February 1554. This may not be what the text books say, but it is the conclusion offered by this study. The book is not a conventional biography. Jane Grey did not live to see seventeen and the successive crises which destroyed her lasted, each of them, for only a fortnight. It is, rather, 'a mystery', a detective story, in English parlance, 'a whodunnit'. It asks how it was that in 1553 England came suddenly and desperately close to civil war and why those involved behaved as they did. It surveys the facts, discusses the options, suggests where the evidence leads, and weaves the discussion around as much as can be known of the remarkable girl who in right was the fourth of the Tudor monarchs and the first of the Dudley line. As with the solutions offered to every 'mystery', it is for the jury of readers to be persuaded or otherwise.

The notion of 'a mystery' determines the structure of the book. It looks first at the available evidence and then assesses each of the protagonists in turn. Next the complexities of the key decisions are unravelled. The narrative of Jane's thirteen-day reign follows and finally the focus switches back to the sixteen-year-old and the last six months which elevated her to martyrdom.

In the course of what has been a tortuous investigation I owe a debt of gratitude to many archivists and librarians, notably Philippa Bassett (University of Birmingham), Andrea Clarke (British Library), Bridget Clifford (Royal Armouries), Tanya Cooper (National Portrait Gallery), Michael Frost (Inner Temple Library), Wayne Hammond (Williams College, Mass.), Sonje Marie Isaacs (the Lady Jane Internet Museum), Alexandra Kess-Hall (University of Zurich), Sheila O'Connell (British Musuem), Michael Page (Surrey History Centre), Jayne Ringrose (University of Cambridge), Susan Tomkins (Beaulieu), Naomi van Loo (New College, Oxford University) and Martin Killeen (University of Birmingham). I am also indebted to discussions with and generous help from Diarmaid MacCulloch and many other scholars and critics, particularly Benjamin S. Baum, Dermot Fenlon, Christopher Foley, Meg.Harper, Susan Ives, Leanda de Lisle, Nicholas Orme, Inga Walton and Barry Young. Not least, this book owes much to Tessa Harvey and her colleagues at Wiley-Blackwell. Finally the dedication bears tribute to the students who, over the years, have joined me in wrestling with 'the mystery' of 1553.

TITLES AND OFFICES

IN the years covered by this study, titles and office-holders changed. What follows lists the principal identifications; see also the index.

Admiral		*see:* Dudley, John [I]; Seymour, Thomas; Fiennes, Edward
Brandon, Charles	1514–45	duke of Suffolk
	1539–45	lord great master and president of the council
Brandon, Frances	1533	marchioness of Dorset
	1551–9	duchess of Suffolk
	1555–9	Lady Stokes
Canterbury, Archbishop of	1533–55	*see:* Cranmer, Thomas
Chancellor	1544–7	Thomas Wriothesley
	1547–52	Richard Rich
	1552–3	Thomas Goodrich
Clinton, Lord		*see:* Fiennes, Edward
Cranmer, Thomas	1533–55	archbishop of Canterbury
Darcy, Thomas	1550–1	vice-chamberlain of the household
	1551	Lord Darcy of Chiche
	1551–3	lord chamberlain of the household
Dorset, marchioness of		*see:* Brandon, Frances
Dorset, marquis of		*see:* Grey, Henry
Dudley, John [I]	1542	Viscount Lisle
	1543–7, 1549–50	admiral
	1547	earl of Warwick
	1547–50	lord great chamberlain
	1550–3	lord great master and president of the council
	1551	duke of Northumberland

Dudley, John [II]	1553–4	earl of Warwick
Durham, bishop of	1530–52, 1554–9	Cuthbert Tunstal
Ely, bishop of	1534–54	*see:* Goodrich, Thomas
Fiennes, Edward	1515–85	Lord Clinton
	1550–4	admiral
French Ambassadors	1551–3	René de Laval de Boisdauphin
	1553–6	Antoine de Noailles
Goodrich, Thomas	1534–54	bishop of Ely
	1552–3	chancellor
Grey, Henry	1533	marquis of Dorset
	1551–4	duke of Suffolk
Hastings, Francis	1529	Lord Hastings
	1544–60	earl of Huntingdon
Hastings, Henry	1544	Lord Hastings
	1560–95	earl of Huntingdon
Herbert, William [I]	1551	Lord Herbert
	1551–70	earl of Pembroke
Herbert, William [II]	1551	Lord Herbert
	1570–1601	earl of Pembroke
Hertford, earl of		*see:* Seymour
Huntingdon, earl of		*see:* Hastings
Imperial Ambassadors	1529–45	Eustace Chapuys
	1544–1550	François Van der Delft
	1550–3	Jehan Scheyfve
	1553–5	Simon Renard
Lisle, Viscount		*see:* Dudley, John [I]
Lord chamberlain	1551–3	Thomas lord Darcy of Chiche
Lord great chamberlain		*see:* Parr; Dudley, John [I]
Lord great master and president of the council		*see:* Brandon, Charles; Paulet; Dudley, John [I]
Lord privy seal		*see:* Russell, John
Lord protector		*see:* Seymour, Edward [I]
Lord treasurer		*see:* Paulet
Northampton, marquis of		*see:* Parr
Parr, William	1543–53	earl of Essex
	1547–53	marquis of Northampton
	1559–71	marquis of Northampton
	1550–3	lord great chamberlain

Paulet, William	1539	Lord St John
	1546–50	lord great master and president of the council
	1550	earl of Wiltshire
	1550–72	lord treasurer
	1551–72	marquis of Winchester
Protector		*see:* Seymour, Edward [I]
Radcliffe, Henry	1542–57	earl of Sussex
Radcliffe, Thomas	1542	Lord Fitzwalter
	1557–93	earl of Sussex
Russell, John	1539	Lord Russell
	1542–55	lord privy seal
	1550–5	earl of Bedford
Russell, Francis	1550–5	Lord Russell
	1555–85	earl of Bedford
Salisbury, countess of	1514–39	Margaret Pole
Secretaries of state	1543–7	William Paget
	1544–57	William Petre
	1550–3	William Cecil
	1553	John Cheke
Seymour, Edward [I]	1536	Viscount Beauchamp
	1537	earl of Hertford
	1547–9	lord protector
	1547–52	duke of Somerset
Seymour, Edward [II]	1547–52	earl of Hertford
Seymour, Thomas	1547–9	Lord Seymour
	1547–9	admiral
Southampton, earl of		*see:* Wriothesley, Thomas
Suffolk, duke of		*see:* Brandon, Charles; Grey, Henry
Sussex, earl of		*see:* Radcliffe
Vice-chamberlain of the household		*see:* Darcy
	1551–3	John Gates
Winchester, bishop of	1531–51, 1553–5	Stephen Gardiner
Winchester, marquis of		*see:* Paulet
Wriothesley, Thomas	1544–7	chancellor
	1544	Lord Wriothesley
	1547–50	earl of Southampton

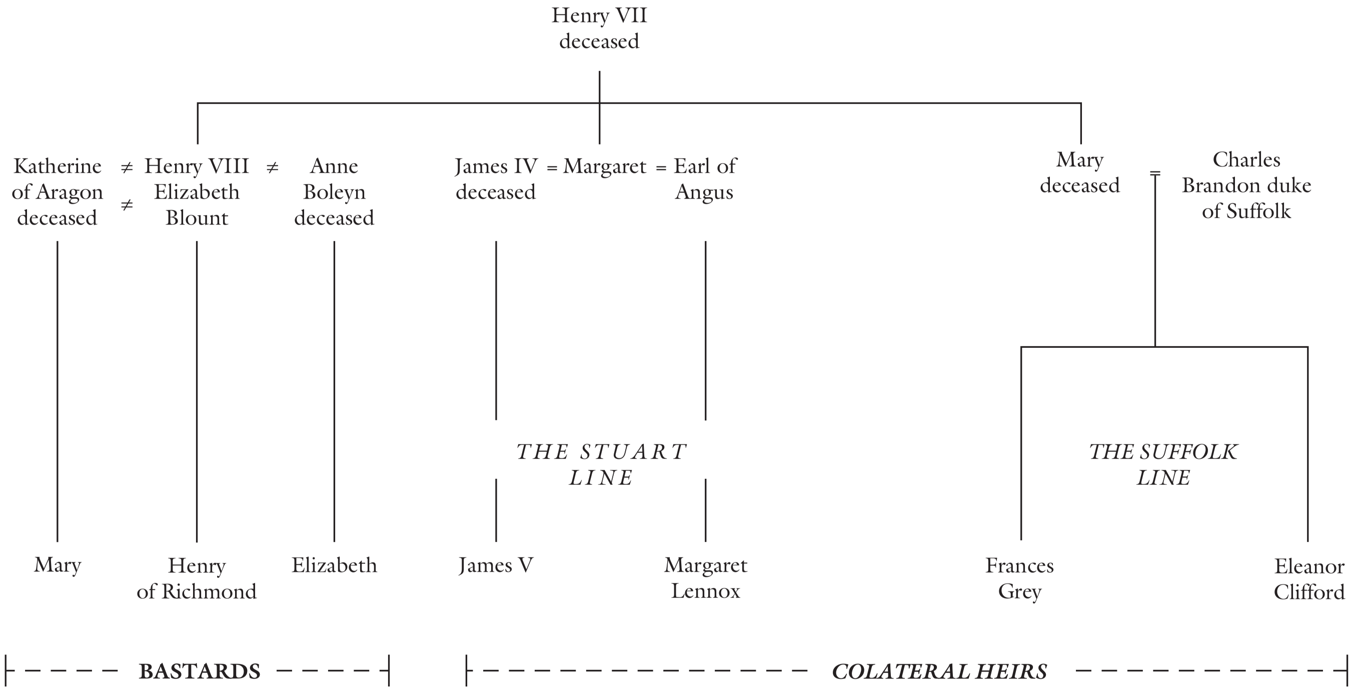

Henry VII
deceased
Katherine of Aragon deceased
≠
Henry VIII
≠
Elizabeth Blount
≠
Anne Boleyn deceased
James IV deceased
=
Margaret
=
Earl of Angus
Mary deceased
=
Charles Brandon duke of Suffolk
THE STUART LINE
THE SUFFOLK LINE
Mary
Henry of Richmond
Elizabeth
James V
Margaret Lennox
Frances Grey
Eleanor Clifford
BASTARDS
COLATERAL HEIRS

Figure 1 The Tudor family in June 1536

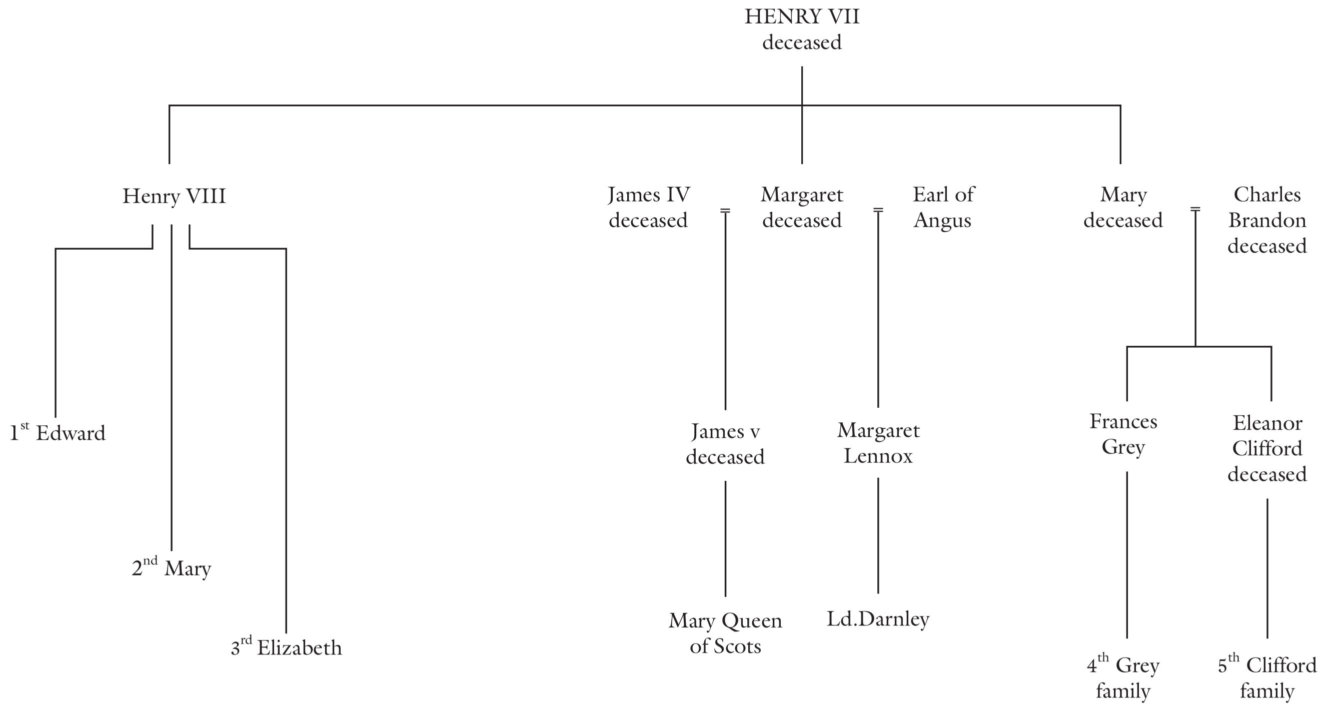
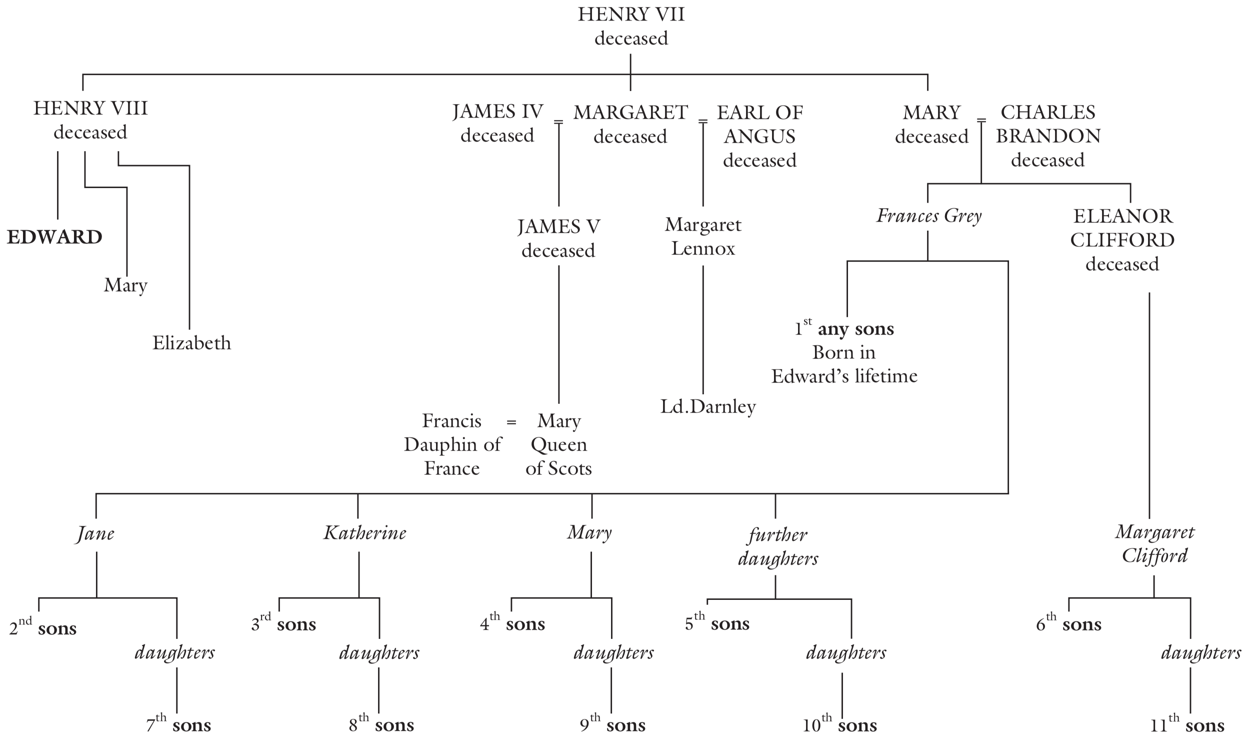

HENRY VII deceased
Henry VIII
1st Edward
2nd Mary
3rd Elizabeth
James IV deceased
Margaret deceased
Earl of Angus
James v deceased
Margaret Lennox
Mary Queen of Scots
Ld.Darnley
Mary deceased
Charles Brandon deceased
Frances Grey
Eleanor Clifford deceased
4th Grey family
5th Clifford family

Figure 2 The succession according to Henry VIII's will


HENRY VII deceased
HENRY VIII deceased
EDWARD
Mary
Elizabeth
JAMES IV deceased
=
MARGARET deceased
=
EARL OF ANGUS deceased
JAMES V deceased
Margaret Lennox
Francis Dauphin of France
=
Mary Queen of Scots
Ld.Darnley
MARY deceased
=
CHARLES BRANDON deceased
Frances Grey
ELEANOR CLIFFORD deceased
1st any sons Born in Edward's lifetime
Jane
2nd sons
daughters
7th sons
Katherine
3rd sons
daughters
8th sons
Mary
4th sons
daughters
9th sons
further daughters
5th sons
daughters
10th sons
Margaret Clifford
6th sons
daughters
11th sons

Women who do not inherit but whose **sons** can
Mary and *Elizabeth* are debarred by illegitimacy

Figure 3 Edward VI's 'deuise', VERSION ONE

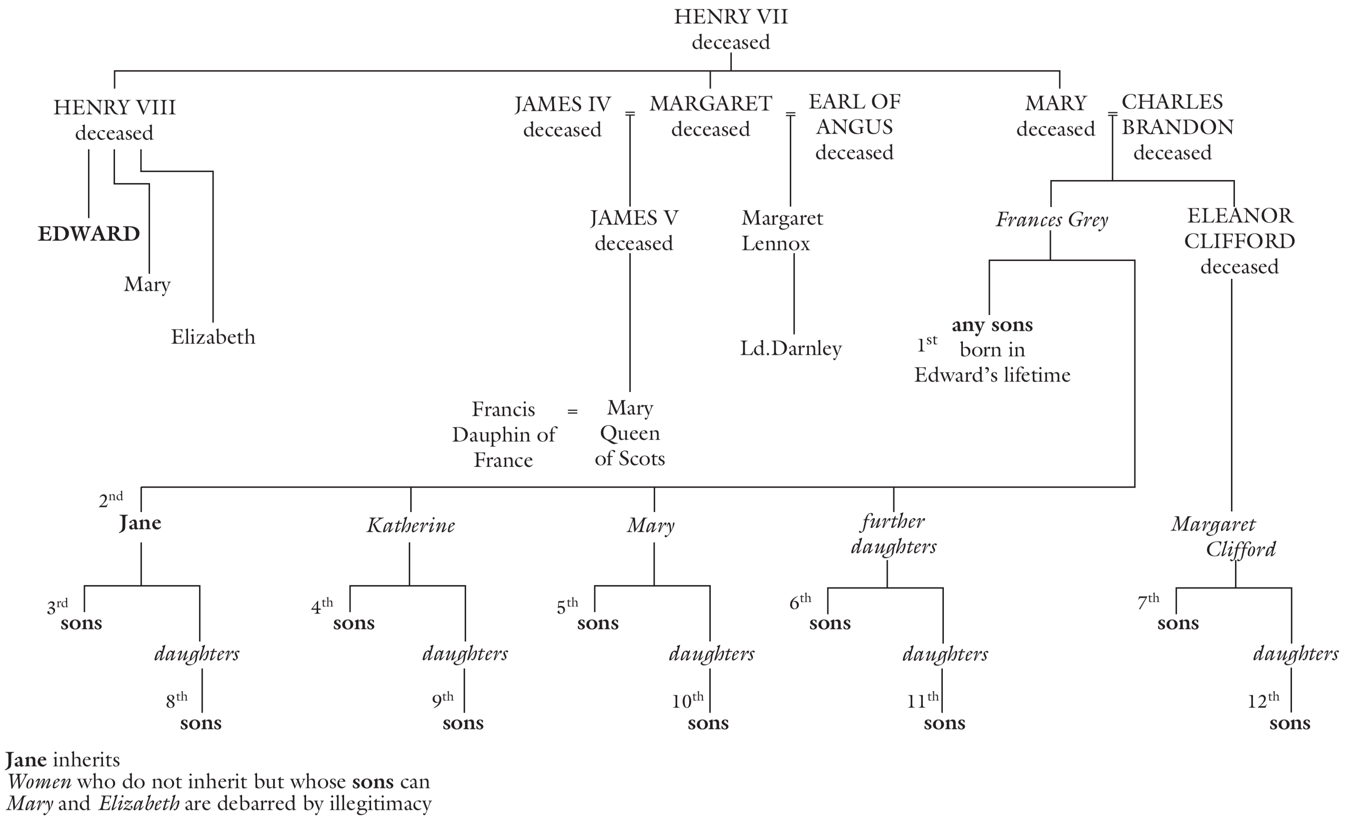
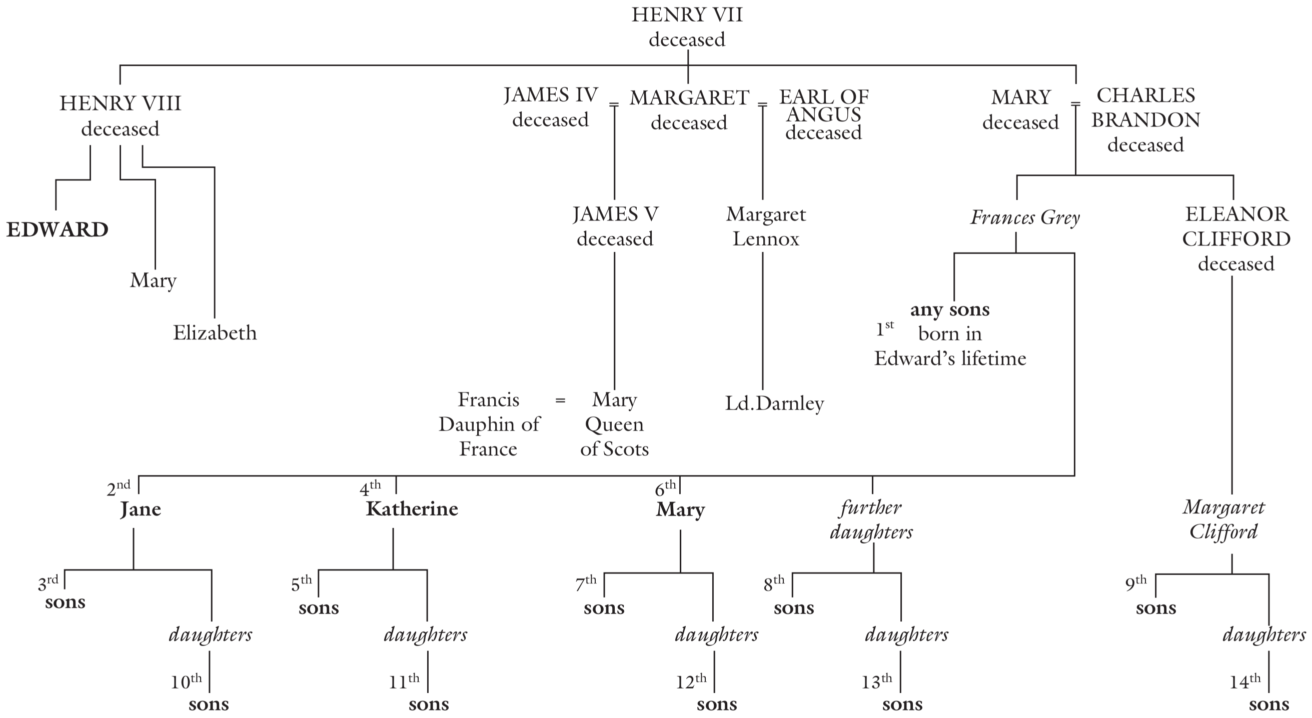
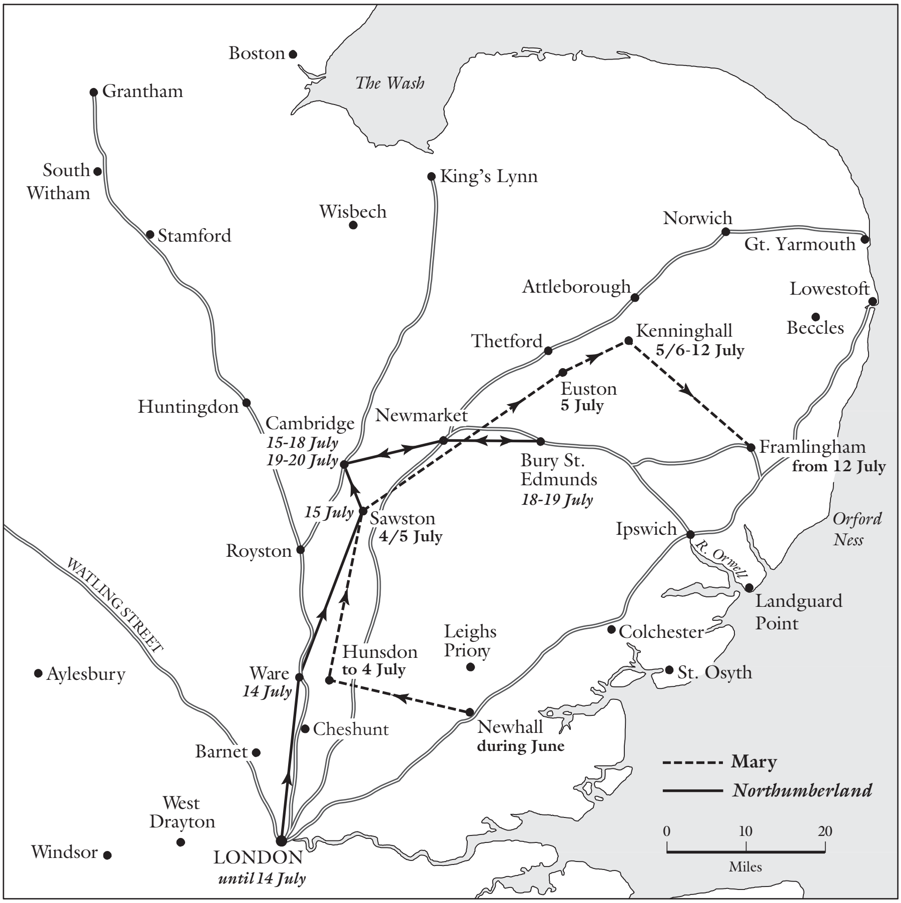

HENRY VII deceased
HENRY VIII deceased
EDWARD
Mary
Elizabeth
JAMES IV deceased
=
MARGARET deceased
=
EARL OF ANGUS deceased
JAMES V deceased
Margaret Lennox
Ld.Darnley
Francis Dauphin of France
=
Mary Queen of Scots
MARY deceased
=
CHARLES BRANDON deceased
Frances Grey
ELEANOR CLIFFORD deceased
1st any sons born in Edward's lifetime
2nd Jane
Katherine
Mary
further daughters
Margaret Clifford
3rd sons
daughters
8th sons
4th sons
daughters
9th sons
5th sons
daughters
10th sons
6th sons
daughters
11th sons
7th sons
daughters
12th sons
Jane inherits
Women who do not inherit but whose sons can
Mary and Elizabeth are debarred by illegitimacy

Figure 4 Edward VI's 'deuise', VERSION TWO


HENRY VII deceased
HENRY VIII deceased
JAMES IV deceased
MARGARET deceased
EARL OF ANGUS deceased
MARY deceased
CHARLES BRANDON deceased
EDWARD
Mary
Elizabeth
JAMES V deceased
Margaret Lennox
Frances Grey
ELEANOR CLIFFORD deceased
1st **any sons** born in Edward's lifetime
Francis Dauphin of France
=
Mary Queen of Scots
Ld.Darnley
2nd **Jane**
4th **Katherine**
6th **Mary**
further daughters
Margaret Clifford
3rd **sons**
daughters
10th **sons**
5th **sons**
daughters
11th **sons**
7th **sons**
daughters
12th **sons**
8th **sons**
daughters
13th **sons**
9th **sons**
daughters
14th **sons**

Jane, Katherine and **Mary** inherit, their daughters do not
Women who do not inherit but whose **sons** can
Mary and *Elizabeth* are debarred by illegitimacy

Figure 5 Edward VI's 'declaracion', 21 June 1553


Boston
The Wash
Grantham
South Witham
Stamford
King's Lynn
Wisbech
Norwich
Gt. Yarmouth
Attleborough
Lowestoft
Beccles
Thetford
Kenninghall
5/6-12 July
Euston
5 July
Huntingdon
Cambridge
15-18 July
19-20 July
Newmarket
Bury St. Edmunds
18-19 July
Framlingham
from 12 July
15 July
Sawston
4/5 July
Ipswich
Orford Ness
R. Orwell
Royston
WATLING STREET
Landguard Point
Leighs Priory
Colchester
Hunsdon
to 4 July
Aylesbury
Ware
14 July
St. Osyth
Cheshunt
Newhall
during June
Barnet
Mary
Northumberland
West Drayton
0
10
20
Miles
Windsor
LONDON
until 14 July

The movement of forces, July 1553

PROLOGUE

ON the evening of Sunday 11 February 1554 Jane Grey sat writing in the gentleman-gaoler's house in the Tower of London. She was sixteen. Slightly built, 'prettily shaped and graceful' but short enough to require platform shoes, Jane had brown eyes, hair nearly red, and a fair complexion with freckles.[1] She was also frighteningly precocious; her scholarly reputation was talked of as far away as Zurich. But that evening she was not composing one of her elegant Latin missives to a foreign scholar. Jane was saying farewell. In twelve hours she would be dead, beheaded on the scaffold she had watched being built on the other side of Tower Green. Except for its horrifying finality, her death would be a piece with the whole of Jane's previous life. From birth she had been treated as an object to be passed around to the advantage of first one Svengali and then another. Now she was to be disposed of finally at the behest of her cousin, the ageing Queen Mary I, the daughter of Henry VIII and Katherine of Aragon.

Jane had by then been in the Tower for seven months, but not originally on Mary's instructions. On Monday 10 June 1553 Jane had been escorted to the royal apartments next to the White Tower with pomp and ceremony as, following the death of her cousin Edward VI the previous Thursday, leading magnates of the realm united to proclaim her queen. Taking over the fortress was a symbolic act of possession required of all incoming English monarchs. All that remained was Jane's coronation. But ten days later the Tower changed into a prison, ten days which had seen Mary displace her in a wholly unexpected political coup.

That, of course, is not the way in which the events of 1553 have been remembered. Over the centuries there has been almost a tacit agreement to play down Jane Grey's revolt as 'not quite English', a piece of naked self-seeking in contrast to morally acceptable rebellions which are driven by principle, by genuine grievances or by loyalty to a 'king over the water'. The name by which Jane Grey is universally remembered says it all: 'the nine days queen' – not so much because she ruled for nine days (the more correct figure is thirteen), but because her reign was a proverbial 'nine days wonder'. Yet when Edward died, Jane's succession had looked secure. Nobody in the know gave Mary any chance at all; even the envoys of her cousin and supporter, the emperor Charles V, had concluded that 'her promotion to the crown will be so difficult as to be well-nigh impossible'.[2] Jane's backers held all the cards. They controlled the machinery of government; the whole of the political establishment was sworn to her, so too the royal guard; the Tower (the nation's armoury) was held in her name, the navy similarly. We have to turn tradition on its head and recognize that it was not Mary but Jane who was the reigning queen; her so-called 'rebellion' against Queen Mary was, in reality, the 'rebellion of Lady Mary' against Queen Jane. Mary's achievement was unique in the century and a half which separates the fifteenth-century wars of York and Lancaster from the seventeenth-century Civil War of king and parliament. It was the single occasion when the power of the English crown was successfully flouted. She alone of all the challengers succeeded in taking over government, capital and country, and in so doing ousted an incumbent ruler who had all the state's resources behind her. Had Mary failed as was expected, Jane Grey would have been the fourth monarch of the Tudor line and her rival, yet one more illegitimate contestant in the competition for the English throne which had been going on since 1399.

Of course, no sooner had Mary won than the country became unanimous that she was and always had been the legitimate heir to her brother. History is always written by the winners. In popular memory, the story of Lady Jane Grey and the rebellion of 1553 has become one of the great mythic dramas of English history. When the curtain rises, Edward VI is centre stage, two months short of his sixteenth birthday, coughing away his life, tortured in equal portions by disease and Tudor medicine. Who is to succeed him? Enter Edward's half-sister Mary, Henry VIII's elder daughter and the young king's 'rightful' heir. Also enter Mephistopheles, John Dudley, duke of Northumberland, Edward's chief minister, dragging with him the teenage Jane Grey whom he has forced to marry his son Guildford. Determined to oust Mary in favour of this daughter-in-law and his son her husband, the duke is willing to endanger everything the Tudor kings have achieved in rescuing England from the lawlessness and political collapse of the Wars of the Roses. Around the duke is a gaggle of noble sycophants cowed into supporting him, but from the wings comes the chorus, common folk, loyal-hearted Englishmen, who surge on to the stage, win Mary the crown and bring the curtain down on the duke's machinations. Right triumphs. England's future is saved, and Jane and Guildford, innocent victims, go to the Tower and death.

The script for this drama virtually wrote itself. When Mary won, those who had backed Jane – who, as we shall see, included virtually the whole of the English political establishment – had to find a fall guy. It was in everyone's interest to depict the crisis as the evil action of one overbearing individual. When the earl of Arundel arrived to arrest Northumberland, the duke reminded Arundel that he had only acted to implement properly authorized decisions for which the earl and the rest of the council were equally responsible. The reply was the most cynical brush-off in Tudor history: 'My lord, you should have sought for mercy sooner.'[3] Nor did Dudley's reputation benefit from any rehabilitation. With the English elite vying with each other to express loyalty to the Tudor line, there was every reason not to ask how the duke had seen things. It was not in the interest of his family to say anything either. 'The axe was home' and the overriding concern of the Dudleys was to escape the family ruin which went with condemnation for treason. Within months, Jane's surviving brothers-in-law were out of the Tower, jousting before Mary and her husband Philip, on the road to restoration.[4] Nothing changed even when Elizabeth's accession effectively brought back the Dudley ascendancy of 1553 – minus the duke. With those brothers-in-law, Robert and Ambrose, secure in the new queen's favour and on the way to earldoms, with their sister Mary the most intimate of Elizabeth's companions and with William Cecil, the duke's erstwhile henchman, her most trusted adviser, it was a case of 'least said soonest mended'. Not that all consciences were clear. Cecil spent twenty years devising excuses for his behaviour in 1553![5]

The effect of this collective *omertà* has been to discourage interest in the actual crisis of July 1553. The case has become progressively colder. Overwhelmingly, concern has been diverted to Jane's personal tragedy. Furthermore, the evident importance of both the progress of religious reformation under Edward and of the attempt under Mary to reverse that progress has made the fortnight that intervened between the one and the other appear insignificant. Commenting on the episode the great Restoration judge, Matthew Hale, spoke for the majority. It was 'only a small usurpation ... which lasted but a few days and soon went out.'[6] In consequence the crisis of 1553 today offers the components of a detective story, both a ‘whodunnit’ of the early genre – concerned with ways and means – and the emphasis on character and psychology of more recent writing. Certainly the episode was not simple. Many things and many people came into conflict – the provinces with the centre, the general populace with the political elite, the new Protestant religion with the old religion of Rome, the will of the dying Edward with the political calculation of men around him, legitimist loyalty to Mary against Northumberland’s loyalty to Edward VI, the brilliantly effective duke against men whose hatred of him conjured effectiveness out of nothing. The episode poses question after question. That it was also a struggle between two women, Mary and Jane, seems almost incidental. Mary Tudor herself played a key role in her victory; Jane Grey was the least influential figure in the crisis. On Sunday 9 July 1553 Jane was informed that she was queen of England, on Thursday 19 July Jane was told that she was not, and she had as little say in the one as the other. The victorious Mary recognized as much. She left Jane and her husband in the Tower, in isolation and obscurity. Only by a subsequent turn of events Jane knew nothing about was she awaiting the headsman on that Sunday in February 1554.

PART I

THE SCENE

1

THE YEAR OF THREE SOVEREIGNS

IN England, 1553 had opened with hope. The crises which had darkened recent years seemed to be receding. The 1552 harvest had been good; prices, though high, had of late been weakening; debasement of the coinage had been stopped and the currency was stable; the pound had recovered its international value; royal debt was under control; law and order was back and the epidemic of 'the sweat' had eased. Fundamental problems remained, notably the inadequate revenue, but even here modest steps towards reform were in hand. Abroad, England had successfully avoided entanglements and the two 'big beasts' of Europe – France and the Habsburg empire – were once more at each other's throats. Best of all, the country had a young and vigorous king on the verge of manhood – some three months past his fifteenth birthday. At that particular time Edward was at Greenwich enjoying the Christmas season. The festivities were lavish, with the Lord of Misrule descending on the court with a large cast of assistants and an elaborate programme for appearances at Greenwich and in London.[1] On New Year's eve the lavish programme included a juggler, a mock joust on a dozen hobby horses and a Robin Hood sequence; on Twelfth Night there was a play, 'The Triumph of Cupid'.[2] No expense was spared; overall it cost nearly £400. Whether Edward took part is not clear, but evidently he enjoyed himself because a further play was ordered for February. One unexpected absentee from court was John Dudley, duke of Northumberland, the minister who had presided over much of the nation's recovery thus far. He was confined to his Chelsea home by, as he put it, 'extreme sickness' and a hope for some 'health and quietness'.[3] The country's other duke, Henry duke of Suffolk, probably spent the twelve days of Christmas with his family, including his eldest daughter Jane Grey. This could have been at their Leicester home at Bradgate but possibly, as in 1550–1, with their Willoughby cousins at

Tilty in Essex, perhaps with theatricals again provided by the earl of Oxford's players and others.[4] Barely twenty-five miles from Tilty was Hunsdon, the principal home of Henry VIII's daughter, the Princess Mary, though whether any of the Greys visited her that year is not known.[5] What Mary must certainly have had on her mind was the ceremonial visit to court she was due to make in a few weeks. Nothing, nationally or personally, gave warning that, before the year was out, Edward and Northumberland would be dead, Jane a prisoner in the Tower and Mary the acknowledged queen of England.

The first indication that all might not be well came on 6 February when Mary arrived to visit her brother and found he was confined to bed with a feverish cold. She had to wait until the 10th to see him.[6] The condition was dismissed as a chill – Edward was a healthy youth – but it was enough to cause the postponement of the play which had been called for 'by occasion that his grace was sick'.[7] Throughout the month the king's condition continued to give concern, even putting in doubt his fitness to attend the meeting of parliament due on 1 March.[8] Precisely what the trouble was is unclear. Medical opinion at the time eventually diagnosed tuberculosis, the disease which was believed to have killed his illegitimate half-brother, the duke of Richmond, seventeen years earlier. Modern diagnosis – in so far as the symptoms can be identified – is more cautious and has suggested that the presentation of the illness could indicate that the cold led to a suppurating pulmonary infection which developed into septicaemia and renal failure, a condition incurable before modern antibiotics.[9] In the event Edward improved sufficiently to make it only necessary to transfer the opening formalities of the parliament to Whitehall Palace, and by 31 March he was well enough even to preside over the tiring, two-hour-long dissolution ceremony.[10] In the second week in April he was allowed out, first to walk in St James's Park and then to travel to Greenwich.[11] Very probably it was during this illness that Edward began to speculate about the succession. It would be some years before he would marry and there was no certainty of a child arriving at the earliest opportunity. His father had to wait for a son until he was 46. Who should succeed if he died before becoming a father? The result was that Edward worked out what he called 'my deuise [device] for the succession'.[12] This survives as a rough draft in the king's own handwriting, and specifies how the crown should pass if he died without children of his own and how royal power should be exercised in a minority, depending on the age of the prospective heir. Although Jane Grey's marriage to the duke of Northumberland's son Guildford Dudley must have been arranged early in