



III. from the Tudors Period to the End of the Napoleonic Wars

After a century of wars, England enjoyed a century of almost unbroken peace under the Tudors. When this strong dynasty ended, England was a modern nation.

The Tudor period can be regarded as the beginning of modern times: an absolute monarchy and the National Church controlled by the state were established, and England laid the foundations for its maritime supremacy. But the temporary balance of power that marked the period collapsed in the Stuart era, and the conflict between the Crown and Parliament resulted in the Civil War. The principles of constitutional monarchy were laid in the 1688-89. In the 18th century, Britain became a great maritime, trading and financial power, as a result of successful wars with France and the Industrial Revolution.

1/ the Tudor period (1485-1603)

Henry VII, First of the Tudors

Henry VII (1485-1509), first of the Tudor line became king by defeating and slaying Richard III in the battle of Bosworth Field (1485). He crushed the barons and made Parliament once more obedient to the king's will. He made use of the situation after the end of the Wars of the Roses to establish an **absolute monarchy**. He created new nobility from the upper middle class: the new noblemen were entrusted with state offices, especially in the **Privy Council**, the predecessor of the modern Cabinet, and in the prerogative courts Henry had set up.

Only the medieval church still wealthy and powerful remained an obstacle to his authority. He was popular with the commons the middle classes in town and country because he built up and orderly government, aided commerce and industry, and kept the country at peace and out of debt. With his encouragement, John Cabot in 1497 piloted an English ship across the Atlantic Ocean to Newfoundland, five years later after Columbus discovered the New World.

He avoided military conflicts, but protected trade and manufacturing and encouraged overseas expeditions, that is why Tudor absolutism was supported by practically the whole nation.

The English Reformation

Henry's son and heir, Henry VIII ruled 1509-47, was a typical prince: handsome, learned, ambitious and unscrupulous. He was famous as the king who had six wives in succession. When he put aside first wife, Catherine of Aragon, the pope excommunicated him. Henry, enraged, had Parliament cut the ties that bound the English Church to the papacy (1534) and forced the English clergy to acknowledge the king rather than the pope as the supreme head of the Church of England.

The Church was subjected to the state power, as a result of Henry's quarrel with the pope over divorcing his first wife (the **English Reformation**, Act of Supremacy 1534) was made easier by the Protestant Reformation. This act removed the last power of the feudal period that hampered the development of parliamentary government. Though Henry was acknowledged Head of the **Church of England**, he remained Catholic.

Yet Henry claimed to be a devout Roman Catholic. He burned Protestants at the stake almost as readily as he hanged and beheaded those who upheld the pope. His attack on the papacy was prompted in part by greed. By dissolving the monasteries, he was able to seize their lands and buildings and the costly ornaments of the shrine. Protestantism penetrated into England after his death.

He used some of his new riches to fortify the coasts and build England's first real navy. He also had an instinctive understanding of his times. It was his creation of the Royal Navy that enabled England to realize her imperialistic ambitions under Elizabeth and defy the pope and the catholic powers of Europe. At his death the royal fleet numbered 71 vessels, some of which were fitted out with cannon.

Henry VIII's only son, Edward VI, was ten years old when he came to the throne (1547), and he died at the age of 16. The Lord Protectors who ruled in his stead favored the Protestants cause. They forbade the Catholics to hold Mass and required Thomas Cranmer's **English Prayer Book** to be read instead of the Latin Mass.

These laws were speedily repealed when Mary, daughter of Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon, ascended the throne. Mary had been brought up in the Catholic faith and she held resolutely to it.

Elizabeth I and England's Golden Age

Elizabeth I, Mary's half-sister, in turn repealed Mary's laws. In her reign the Church of England took the form it has today. It kept the Catholic government organization of archbishops, bishops, and deans, but it rejected the headship of the pope. It permitted the clergy to marry, and it again ordered the reading of the English Prayer Book. Many people accepted this way. But it was bitterly opposed by the Roman Catholics (Pepists), and also by the extreme Protestants (Puritans), who insisted on a simpler, from the service with no rites.

The long reign of Elizabeth I, 1558-1603, was England's Golden Age. *The Renaissance*, which began in Italy in the 14th century, at last reached the northern island. England, in love with life, expressed itself in music and literature, in architecture, and in adventurous seafaring. William Shakespeare, poet and dramatist, mirrored the age in verse that lifted the English language to its fullest beauty.

Throughout the land could be heard the sound of hammers and saws of builders a sure sign of prosperity. Elizabethan manor houses, usually built around an open court, blended the English style with the new Italian. English glassworks supplied small clear panes for lattice windows. The increasing use of brick made it easier to build chimneys and fireplace even for common houses.

Exploration: Defeat of the Spanish Armada

English seamanship and shipbuilding reached the highest point they had yet attained. Francis Drake sailed around the world. Walter Raleigh made the first attempt to found an English colony in America. These and other courageous privateers reaped rich rewards chiefly at the expense of Spain from plundering, piracy, smuggling, and the slave trade. Elizabeth encouraged them on the ground that they protected Protestant England against Catholic Spain.

The defeat of **the Spanish Armada** (1588) established the superiority of English ships and sailors and made the English conscious of their ocean destiny. English merchants began to seek distant markets for their goods. In 1600 the now old queen chartered the famous East India Company, giving it a monopoly of trade with the Far East. From this small start Britain's Indian Empire was to grow.

Wales was fully incorporated into England in 1535. **Ireland** was, however, treated like a colony: revolts against English attempts to impose Protestantism on Ireland were crushed and followed by "*clearance and plantation*", i.e. driving Irish people away from their land and resettling it with Englishmen.

The Tudor **economy** was afflicted by:

- Galloping *inflation* aggravated by a *rise in population*;
- *Vagrancy* resulting from intensified *enclosures*.

On the other hand, both internal trade and overseas *commerce* flourished.

2/ the Stuart Era (1603-1714)

Birth of the British Empire

The Tudor Dynasty came to an end when Elizabeth I died in 1603. The crown of England then passed to the Stuart line of Scotland. The new king was called James VI in Scotland and James I in England. The two countries having the same ruler were now bound together in a personal union, but for another century they had separate parliaments.

James boldly announced that he would rule as an absolute monarch, responsible to God alone. This view of monarchy was called the Divine Right of Kings. It was generally accepted on the continent of Europe, but it ran counter to the nature of the English people. Parliament resisted James at every point. By insisting that all people conform to the Church of England. He won the enmity of the Puritans and the Catholics. A small band of Catholic extremists, including Guy Fawkes, formed the Gunpowder Plot to blow up king and parliament together.

James allowed the navy to decay and suppressed privateering. Yet it was in his reign that colonial expansion began and the British Empire was born. The colony of Jamestown, Virginia was started in 1607. In 1620 the Pilgrims landed on the rocky shore of New England. Other colonists swiftly followed. Some went to escape religious persecution and some to find free land. They spread English civilization into the wilderness.

An organized opposition to the Crown emerged, however, under his son **Charles I** (1625-49) due to his desire for absolute power, as well as his unparliamentary methods of obtaining money. The growing conflict led to the outbreak of the **Civil War** (1642-49) between the supporters of the King (Royalists or "*Cavaliers*") and of Parliament (parliamentary party or "*Roundheads*"). Also, an active colonization continued. Charles was glad to have the troublesome Puritans leave England. Great wealth flowed into London from American tobacco, the African slave traffic, and the skills and spices of India.

England's Civil War

Charles was as obstinate a despot as his father. In 1629 he dissolved Parliament. Determined to rule by himself alone. Eleven years later he became involved in a war with Scotland and was obliged to summon

Parliament to raise money for his armies. When Parliament refused to vote the money, Charles dissolved it. Before the year ended he summoned it again. This time Parliament forced the king to agree not to dissolve it without its consent. It lasted, with some interruptions, from 1640 to 1659 and is known as **the Long Parliament**.

Puritans dominated the House of Commons. Instead of aiding the king, they passed laws to curb his power. The king went in person to the House, determined to arrest five of its leaders, but birds had flown. Parliament issued a call to arms, a revolutionary act. The powerful new middle class put its great resources behind the Puritans. The king rallied the royalist aristocracy, High Church Anglican, and the Catholics to his standard.

The Parliamentary army went into battle singing psalms. In 1644 the Puritans defeated Charles's Cavaliers at Marston Moor. In his battle **Oliver Cromwell**. The Puritan leader won the name Ironsides. The next year he gained a decisive victory at Naseby.

In 1648 Colonel Pride stood at the entrance to the Commons with a force of soldiers and allowed only Roundheads to enter. (the Puritans were called Roundheads because they cut their hair short. The Cavaliers wore long flowing locks). The group that remained after Pride's Purge was called the Rump Parliament.

The Rump sentenced Charles to execution, and he was beheaded on Jan.30, 1649. The Rump then declared England a **Commonwealth** (that is, a republic), without a king or a House of Lords.

The Commonwealth and the Protectorate

The Rump Parliament governed England while Cromwell put down revolts in Ireland and Scotland with great cruelty. Scotland and Ireland were annexed to England. In 1653 he came back from the wars, dismissed Parliament, and a Parliament of his own (called Bare bone's Parliament after one of its members, Praise god Bare bone). The Commonwealth then took the name of Protectorate, with Cromwell as **Lord Protector**.

The Puritans closed the theaters, suppressed horse racing, cockfighting, and bearbaiting, and made Sunday strictly a day of worship. Cromwell's rule was more despotic than the king's. Yet the revolution accomplished its purpose. When the monarchy was revived it became a limited monarchy. The Church of England never again tried to include all Englishmen.

When Cromwell died in 1658 his eldest son, Richard Cromwell, became Lord Protector. Too weak to control the army, Tumbledown Dick resigned the next year. In 1660 George Monk, one of Cromwell's generals brought an army from Scotland and had the Rump of the Long Parliament recalled to dissolve itself. A new Parliament was elected and at once offered the crown to the exiled son of Charles I.

The levelers: was an important group on parliament's side were the Levelers, who presented a radical document which included strict **separation** between the different branches of government.

3/ From the Restoration of the Monarchy to the End of the Stuart era

England under the Restoration

The people of London joyously welcomed **Charles II** (1660-85) when he arrived from France with the gay court of Cavaliers that had been exiled with him. The bleak Puritan age was suddenly ended. Theaters

opened again. Footlights, curtains, and painted scenery were introduced. For the first time women appeared on the stage. In spite of renewed censorship, Restoration dramatists delighted Londoners with sparkling comedies that laughed at Puritan virtues. John Dryden best represented the Restoration period. Its greatest poet, however, was still the Puritan John Milton, who had faithfully served Cromwell. Now blind, he retired from public life to write the greatest epic in the English language, *Paradise Lost*.

England's greatest architect, Sir Christopher Wren, rebuilt St. Paul's Cathedral, following London's Great fire of 1666. Science flourished along with the arts. Isaac Newton formulated laws of the universe. An observatory was established Greenwich.

Catholics fared somewhat better than Puritans under Charles II. His Parliament in 1662 passed an Act of Uniformity depriving of their offices all clergymen who did not accept everything in the Anglican Prayer book. This act tended to throw all nonconformists (Independents, Presbyterians, Baptist, and the new Quaker sect) into a single class, called dissenters. To make things easier for Catholics. Charles issued a Declaration of Indulgence in 1672. Parliament forced him to retract this and passed a Test Act (1673), which made it impossible for Catholics to hold public office.

The Birth of Political Parties

Together with the monarchy, represented by **Charles II**, the House of Lords and the Anglican Church were restored in 1660. Two factions developed in parliament, the **Tories** (defenders of divine right monarchy and Anglicanism) and the **Whigs** (supporters of Parliamentary monarchy and religious toleration); they gradually formed two distinct political parties.

Charles II leaned toward Catholicism. His brother James, heir to the throne, was an avowed Catholic. In 1679 a Bill was presented in Parliament to bar James from the kingship. Charles prevented its passage by dissolving Parliament. The governing classes at once split into bitter factions the Tories, who opposed the bill, and the Whigs, who favored it. Thus were born the first great political parties in history.

The name of **Whig** and **Tory** were both terms of decision. Tory was Irish slang for an outlaw. Whig was a term of contempt in Scotland for a fanatic Presbyterian. The Tories, descended from the Cavaliers, represented the landed aristocracy. They upheld the divine right of the kings and the Anglican Church. The Whigs, descended from the Roundheads, represented the commercial classes of the cities. They championed Parliament against the king and urged toleration for nonconformists.

Following the decline of Spanish and Portuguese sea power. The Dutch Netherlands became a serious rival of England in the Far East. In Africa, and in America. In the late 17th century England fought three commercial wars against the Dutch (1652-54, 1665-67, and 1672-74). The Netherlands then dropped out of the race for world commerce and American dominions. In the third war the English joined forces with the French not yet aware that France was to be the next rival England had to face.

The Glorious Revolution of 1688

Charles II died in 1685, and his brother, James II, stepped quietly to the throne. However, when a male heir to James was born, in 1688, Tory and Whig leaders joined together and decided to set aside the Catholic line of kings. They invited **Mary**, a daughter of James, and her Dutch husband, **William III** (of Orange, 1689-1702) to occupy the throne as joint sovereigns. Thus the basic principles of the constitutional monarchy were established. William and **Queen Anne** (1702-14) kept executive power, but their policy was controlled by Parliament. When William arrived from Holland, James fled to the continent.

Parliament was careful to lay down conditions for the new sovereigns. William and Mary accepted its Declaration of Rights, and Parliament speedily enacted it into law as the famous **Bill of Rights**. The act made the king responsible to Parliament and subject to the laws and provided that henceforth no Roman Catholic could wear England's crown. Parliament, and not inheritance or divine right, would determine the succession to the throne. This was the fruit of the so-called **Glorious Revolution** a revolution without bloodshed. John Locke published a defense of the Revolution in which he proclaimed the supremacy of the legislative assembly as the voice of the people.

The Struggle with France

While England was in the throes of revolution, France, under Louis XIV, was achieving a dominant position in Europe. With internal conflict ended, England turned its attention abroad. In 1689 it joined with Holland and several German states in the War of the Grand Alliance against France. The war spread to America, where it was called King William's War. It marked the beginning of a long struggle to decide whether France or England was to control India and North America.

When William died, in 1702, Louis XIV proclaimed James Stuart, son of James II, king of England, Scotland, and Ireland, however, had provided that if William and Mary had no children, the crown should pass to Anne, a Protestant daughter of James II by his first wife. James Stuart kept up his claim to the throne for 65 years and became known as the Old Pretender. His son, Bonnie Prince Charlie, known as the Young Pretender, made an unsuccessful attempt to obtain the throne.

4/ the 18th Century

Queen Anne's Reign

As soon as Anne came to the throne in 1702, England entered upon another war with France to break up a threatened combination of France and Spain. This was called in Europe the War of the Spanish Succession. In America it was known as Queen Anne's War. The Duke of Marlborough led the English, Dutch, and Germans to brilliant victories, and the Treaty of Utrecht (1713) gave England important territories (all Nova Scotia and Newfoundland) in the world.

Birth of the Kingdom of Great Britain

The most notable event in Anne's reign was the union of England with Scotland. Since 1603 the two nations had been loosely associated under the same king. The Act of Union (1707) united them in a single kingdom, called Great Britain, and joined their parliaments. Parliament then assumed almost absolute responsibility for running the country during the reigns of **George I** and **George II**, with the king's most influential minister becoming known as **Prime minister**. Thereafter the government and parliament in London were called British rather than English throne in 1745. Parliament pursued a vigorous trading policy which led to large areas of Canada and India being colonized at the expense of the French.

Towards the end of this century of the **Enlightenment**, when people felt they could use their reason to dominate both nature and society, some of the profound political changes in British history occurred and began to shake this belief. They included the traumatic loss of the American colonies in 1776 after a seven-year war and the revolutions in agricultural and industrial methods at home.