

throne with an undisputed right, uniting in his person the claims of the rival houses of York and Lancaster. He was handsome, tall and well-proportioned; "*Nature*," declared the Venetian ambassador, "*could not have done more for him.*" He excelled in manly games and athletic exercises, in which his courage and physical strength showed him off to the best advantage. "He was, moreover, a good musician, spoke French, Latin and Spanish fluently, and heard three masses every day."

Henry's personal character presents a strange combination of good and bad qualities. By some writers he is represented as a monster of iniquity, by others as a noble and patriotic sovereign endowed with the highest ability, and desirous of using it for the good of his country. Probably he was neither so bad as his detractors, nor so good as his admirers have portrayed him. In his selfishness, his love of grandeur, his sensuality, and his ruthless cruelty, he resembled his grandfather, Edward IV., but he was unlike that sovereign, in that he was a far-seeing statesman, a zealous student, and an astute politician. He was no mean judge of character; as his subjects often said, "*King Henry knew a man when he saw him.*" He chose his ministers with a wisdom and foresight, which has seldom been equalled, but he used them as mere tools, and could fling them aside or even put them to death without the slightest remorse, when they had served his purpose or ceased to please him. Like all the Tudors, he was fond of popularity. His affable manner and gracious smile completely won the hearts of his subjects, and although he was ever a harsh, cruel, and remorseless sovereign, and in his later years a relentless tyrant, he never altogether lost his subjects' love. Thus it was that the popularity, which he had secured, enabled him to dispense with a standing army, and for thirty-eight years to rule despotically.

In his destruction of the great mediæval Church System, he was but following the lines of his father's home policy, who had completely swept away every vestige of Feudalism; and in effecting a breach with Rome he carried with him the wishes of a great part of the lay population. But he reversed his father's foreign policy of non-intervention in continental matters, and aimed at raising England to that position among the powers of Europe, which she had held in