

SECTION I.—THE REGENCY OF SOMERSET AND ESTABLISHMENT OF PROTESTANTISM.

1. **Character of Edward VI.** The young King was a bright and intelligent boy of ten years of age at the time of his accession. He was grave and precocious, and delighted much in reading, and at a very early age showed a wonderful proficiency in general knowledge. He was very religious, and took great pleasure in reading the Scriptures and in listening to long sermons. His sympathies were wholly on the side of the Reformers, and he gave his undivided support to those, who were entrusted with the administration of the Government.
2. **Somerset becomes Protector.** By will, Henry VIII. had left the Regency to a Council of Sixteen, called "Executors," in the selection of which, he had so arranged that all persons of rash and violent character should be excluded, that the adherents of the "Old" and "New Religions" should be about equally balanced, and that no one member should have precedence over the rest, so that the responsibility of the government should rest with the whole Council. But as soon as Henry was dead, Hereford upset the whole scheme. By promises of peerages and large gifts of money, he prevailed upon his colleagues to set aside Henry's plan of government, and allow himself to take the office of "President of the Council and of the King's person," under the title of the Duke of Somerset.
3. **Character and Policy of Somerset.** Somerset was in many ways a very remarkable man. His undaunted courage, his generous disposition and real sympathy for the poor and suffering had gained him much popularity, but he attempted too many things at one time, and had an unbounded confidence in his own ability. "Commissions for this matter, new laws for that, and proclamations for another, followed each other in such quick succession, that the people utterly disregarded them." As a politician he may best be described as one, "*who always took the second step before he took the first.*" Moreover he had neither the moderating influence, nor the well-balanced mind, which Henry VIII. with all his faults possessed. His idea of government was far too "Utopian." Under his rule,