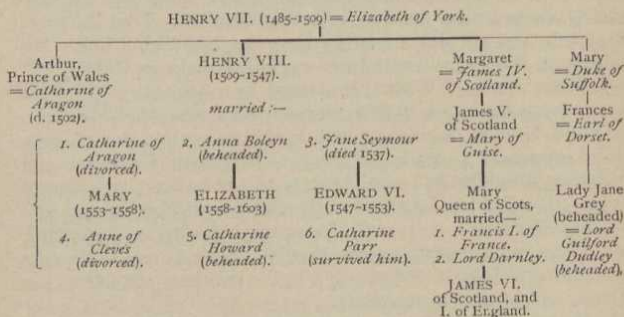


HOUSE OF TUDOR.

SHOWING DESCENT OF JAMES I.



CHAPTER XXXV.

POLITICAL AND SOCIAL STATE OF ENGLAND UNDER
THE TUDORS.

1. The rule of the Tudors was a partial or modified despotism. This was due, in the first place, to the arbitrary natures of the sovereigns themselves. Henry VII., Henry VIII., and Elizabeth, whose reigns cover most of the Tudor period, were fond of power, and in the highest degree self-willed. In the second place, the decay of parliamentary power was caused by the sweeping away of the nobility of England by the War of the Roses. Under the Angevin Kings, the barons held a powerful check on the personal will of the monarch. They compelled the King to govern according to the expressed desires of Parliament. The absence of this check, and the fact that the power of the *commonalty*, or great middle class, was then but partially developed, enabled the Tudor monarchs to impose their own will upon the nation. They observed to some extent the *forms* of parliamentary government, but they set aside its *real principles*. This was particularly seen in the levying of money by means which Parliament had never sanctioned. The Tudors exhibited the same arbitrary tendency in violating, by means of such bodies as the Star Chamber and the Court of High Commission, the rights which Magna Carta guarantees to every Englishman. Instead of being tried by his "peers," many a man was convicted and condemned by secret tribunals entirely unknown to law. But during all the Tudor period elements of popular power were growing, that