

**THE WORLD'S EPOCH-
MAKERS; CRANMER AND
THE REFORMATION IN
ENGLAND**

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The World's Epoch-Makers; Cranmer and the Reformation in England by Arthur D. Innes

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ARTHUR D. INNES

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THE WORLD'S EPOCH-MAKERS

EDITED BY
OLIPHANT SMEATON

Cranmer and
The Reformation in England

By Arthur D. Innes, M.A.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

BRITAIN AND HER RIVALS IN THE 18TH CENTURY

SEERS AND SINGERS: A STUDY OF FIVE POETS

VERSE TRANSLATIONS FROM GREEK AND LATIN

THE SIKHS AND THE SIKH WARS

THE WORLD'S EPOCH-MAKERS

Cranmer and
The Reformation
in England

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PREFACE



THE purpose of this volume is not so much to present a biography of Cranmer as to give a sketch of that ecclesiastical period throughout which he remains a consistently prominent figure: a period during which he, more than any other single individual, left his personal impress upon a national institution.

It is a peculiarity of the Reformation in England that it is not associated with any one figure of heroic proportions. Germany has her Luther; the Netherlands, William the Silent; Calvin dominated half the Protestant world, and more; Knox, dour and grim as he was, had no little of the heroic quality. In England neither Cranmer nor any other occupies a corresponding position. There is a sense in which the historian may legitimately speak of a person as having created a movement; but he may not say it of Cranmer. He does not absorb the interest while associates fall into the background; we feel that it is the mediocrity of his associates which enables him to absorb so much as he does.

This is apt to be the way with England. The Reformation has its political counterpart, not in the Great Rebellion with its Hampden and its Cromwell, but in

the "Glorious Revolution" with its inglorious Whigs. To them we owe our constitutional liberties; and it is to men of a similar calibre that we owe our religious emancipation.

Amongst the various figures, however, Cranmer holds the position of pre-eminence. Our Reformation in the sixteenth century may be described as having had four stages. During the first there is a movement intellectual and moral, but legislation does not intervene. This closes in 1529. In the second stage the fundamental feature is the assertion of Secular supremacy over Ecclesiastical administration; in the third it is the revision of ecclesiastical ordinances. The fiery interlude of Mary's reign leads to the fourth stage—in effect the confirmation of the two preceding in a recognised and established system. The Reformation becomes an accomplished fact. From that time the body ecclesiastical, as recognised by the State, alters very little in character; any vigorous reforming movements thereafter, the lines of which extend beyond the scheme of the Elizabethan settlement, tending to result in separation from the established organisation rather than in changes within it.

In the first of these four stages Cranmer does not appear. He belonged to the movement, but he had no active part in it. In the second stage the leading figures are Henry VIII. and Thomas Cromwell: Cranmer flutters through it, sometimes encouraging, generally acquiescent, occasionally offering a somewhat ineffective resistance, never more than an influence. In the third he is the controlling character; not indeed displaying a vigorous mastery, but on the whole successfully maintaining a position which but for him would

assuredly not have been maintained at the time nor accepted—as it was—in the fourth stage, when he had already earned the martyr's crown. In these two stages, the second and third, the work of the Reformation was wrought, and the course shaped which it should take in the future. It is right, therefore, that his should stand as the representative name. The first stage is in this volume treated as an extended prologue; the fourth only as epilogue.

The telling of this story involves certain difficulties. An attitude of enthusiasm would be pleasant; but for the most part the subject forbids enthusiasm. To play the advocate for a party is easy; but with Henry and Cromwell, Cranmer and Gardiner, Northumberland and Mary Tudor to depict, it is in no wise easy to "nothing extenuate nor set down aught in malice." It appears all but impossible to write of those times without yielding either to the Roman, the Anglican, or the Puritan bias. Till a comparatively recent period there was no hearing for any but the last school; of late years those Anglicans who reject the name of Protestant have held the field, save for some acute, if not always convincing, expositions of the Romanist point of view. It is hardly possible to make a single statement as to the beliefs, motives, intentions, or character of any one of our *dramatis personæ* which will not be quite honestly and quite flatly contradicted by the adherents of one or other of the three schools: so that the discovery of truth becomes a highly complicated process.

To this must be added a special perplexity—party terminology. Convenience brought about the practice of using the term Catholic as equivalent to Romanist,