

# HISTORY OF ENGLAND

FROM

THE FALL OF WOLSEY  
TO THE DEFEAT OF THE SPANISH ARMADA.

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VOLUME I.

*HENRY THE EIGHTH.*

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## PREFACE.

THE occasion of my undertaking the present work was, as regards myself, an involuntary leisure forced upon me by my inability to pursue the profession which I had entered, but which I was forbidden by the law to exchange for another; and, secondly, the attitude towards the Reformation of the 16th century which had been assumed by many influential thinkers in England and on the Continent.

Goethe had said of Luther and Calvin that they had delayed the intellectual growth of Europe for centuries by calling in the mob to decide questions which should have been left to the thinkers. Our own Reformers, who for three centuries had been the object of enthusiastic panegyric, were being assailed with equally violent abuse by the High Churchmen on one side, and by Liberal statesmen and political philosophers on the other. Lord Macaulay had attacked Cranmer as one of the basest of mankind. It had become the fashion to

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speak with extreme severity of the persecution of the Catholics by Elizabeth. Even writers on the whole favourable to the Reformation described the English branch of it as a good thing badly done.

My own impression about it was, that the Reformation was both a good thing itself and that in England it had been accomplished with peculiar skill and success. The passions called out by religious controversy, which in France and Germany were the occasions of long and bloody wars, were controlled in England by the Government. I considered that on the whole the control had worked beneficially, and that those who condemned the repressive measures adopted towards the Romanists by Elizabeth's ministers had made imperfect allowance for the temper of the times and for the impossibility of tolerating opinions which led immediately to rebellion. My original purpose was to confine myself to the reign of the great Queen for whom, looking to the spirit in which her Government had been conducted, I felt great admiration. The attacks of Lingard and others upon her personal purity I believed to be gratuitous and unjust. I intended as briefly as I could to undertake her vindication. With Cranmer and his companions, unwilling as I was to accept Lord Macaulay's judgment upon them, I had not proposed to meddle. I shared the prevailing views of the character of Henry VIII.; and though I considered that if all the circumstances