



The Wives of Henry the Eighth: And the Parts They Played in History (Classic Reprint)

Martin Hume

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Excerpt from The Wives of Henry the Eighth: And the Parts They Played in History


Either by chance or by the peculiar working of our constitution, the Queen Consorts of England have as a rule been nationally important only in proportion to the influence exerted by the political tendencies which prompted their respective marriages. England has had no Catharine or Marie de Medici, no Elizabeth Farnese, no Catharine of Russia, Do Caroline of Naples, no Maria Luisa of Spain, who, either through the minority of their sons or the weakness of their husbands, dominated the countries of their adoption; the Consorts of English Kings having been, in the great majority of cases, simply domestic helpmates of their husbands and children, with comparatively small political power or ambition for themselves. Only those whose elevation responded to tendencies of a nationally enduring character, or who represented temporarily the active forces in a great national struggle, can claim to be powerful political factors in the history of our country. The six Consorts of Henry VIII., whose successive rise and fall synchronised with the beginning and progress of the Reformation in England, are perhaps those whose fleeting prominence was most pregnant of good or evil for the nation and for civilisation at large, because they personified causes infinitely more important than themselves.

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