How the Protector Killed His Brother, and How He was Overthrown and Slain by the Earl of Warwick

Such bitter enmity arose between the protector and his brother\(^2\) that the protector put his brother to death, then Dudley killed off the protector, then the same Dudley and the duke of Suffolk poisoned King Edward,\(^3\) and finally the two of them were lawfully condemned and executed, along with their children—and all this in the space of a mere four years, which is a wondrous thing, and well worth understanding, to the praise and dread of the secret and righteous judgments of God. The Protector Edward Seymour had a brother called Thomas Seymour, the lord high admiral, who after Henry's death had married his last wife, Katherine Parr.\(^4\) There was a fierce rivalry and deep discord between the protector's wife and Katherine Parr over precedence: for each wished to come before the other, as the wife of the dead king or the wife of the living regent.\(^5\) This dispute passed from the wives to the husbands, egged on by John Dudley, earl of Warwick, who hoped to use it to overthrow both of them. And with this hatred growing stronger by the day (because the protector's wife, who dominated him, would not let him alone), the protector resolved to rid himself of his brother preemptively, so as to avoid any open conflicts or scandals. Because he had no accusation actually worthy of death to use against him, he looked for a false one, and arranged for Hugh Latimer, that arch-heretic (called


\(^2\) Thomas Seymour, Baron Seymour of Sudeley (c.1509–49), the younger brother of Edward and Jane Seymour.

\(^3\) Henry Grey, duke of Suffolk (1517–54), successively the ally of Thomas Seymour and John Dudley.

\(^4\) Thomas Seymour secretly married Katherine Parr in the spring of 1547. George W. Bernard, “Seymour, Thomas, Baron Seymour of Sudeley (b. in or before 1509, d.1549),” in *ODNB*, 49:896–99, here 897.

\(^5\) Anne Seymour (née Stanhope), duchess of Somerset, the protector's second wife. A longstanding tradition—which Sander draws from the Spanish Chronicle—holds that she and Katherine Parr feuded over precedence, but modern scholarship has questioned the veracity of this story. It is true that Somerset took Katherine's jewels and give them to his wife. Retha M. Warnicke, “Seymour [née Stanhope], Anne, duchess of Somerset (c.1510–1587),” in *ODNB*, 49:855–56, here 855.

“the Apostle of England” by those like him), to accuse him openly from the pulpit as a traitor to the king. This he did, and thus Thomas Seymour was imprisoned, condemned to death, and beheaded on March 20, 1548, on the orders of his own brother, while his wife, Katherine Parr, died of grief, envy, and anguish practically on the same day. In this way, the protector was freed of his brother, and his wife of her rival.

But this merely resolved the conflicts and dissensions between the brothers, for many people across England had taken up arms for their faith and surrounded the city of Exeter, where they fought the horsemen from the duchy of Cleves who had come against them, whom they put to flight. Elsewhere there were large disturbances and disruptions, causing damage and devastation throughout the kingdom, while the French took this opportunity to seize certain strongholds near Boulogne (which was still held by the English). And when the blame for these humiliations and injuries fell upon the protector’s bad governance, John Dudley publicly denounced him for incompetence, with the advice and support of other grandees; for his safety, the protector

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6 On March 15, 1548, Latimer preached a sermon before Edward VI in which he cast Seymour as Adonijah, the rebellious son of King David. In the weeks after Seymour’s execution, several more sermons urged obedience to magistrates’ decisions; Latimer even alleged that the imprisoned admiral was still plotting against the king and the protector. Hugh Latimer, *Sermons*, ed. George Elwes Corrie, 2 vols., Parker Society Publications 27, 28 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1844), 1:112–17, 148, 161–62, 164.

7 The Spanish Chronicle correctly places Katherine’s death before her husband’s. Katherine died on September 5, 1548; Thomas was arrested in January of the following year, swiftly attainted of treason, and beheaded on March 20. Bernard, “Seymour, Thomas,” in *ODNB*, 49:898.

8 Risings began in Cornwall, Devonshire, Lincolnshire, Oxfordshire, and Buckinghamshire in the summer of 1549. The rebels’ motivations were largely religious: the restoration of doctrines like transubstantiation and the removal of the new Prayer Book. By July 2, Exeter was under siege; it was not until August 6 that a combined force of Englishmen and foreign mercenaries was able to disperse the uprising. Loach, *Edward VI*, 70–76.

9 Keen to avenge the loss of Boulogne, Henry II declared war on England on August 8, 1549 and laid siege to the city. Though the king took personal command of the campaign, the English resistance proved unexpectedly stout, and France only regained the city by treaty. Ibid., 52–53.

10 The extent to which John Dudley was actually the ringleader of the coup against Somerset is open to question. Discontent was widespread, given the protector’s incompetent handling of the uprisings in the southwest and the conflicts with France. MacCulloch, *Boy King*, 94–95. Loach, *Edward VI*, 89–91.