

of sir John Seymour, of Wolf-hall, Wiltshire, and Margaret Wentworth, daughter of sir John Wentworth, of Nettlestead in Suffolk. The Seymours were a family of country gentry who, like most holders of manorial rights, traced their ancestry to a Norman origin. One or two had been knighted in the wars of France, but their names had never emerged from the herald's visitation-rolls into historical celebrity. They increased their boundaries by fortunate alliances with heiresses; but, till the head of the family married into a collateral branch of the lordly line of Beauchamp, they scarcely took rank as second-rate gentry. After that event, two instances are quoted of Seymours serving as high-sheriff for Wilts, but no instance can be found of one of the name being returned as knight of the shire. Through Margaret Wentworth, the mother of Jane Seymour, a descent from the blood-royal of England was claimed from an intermarriage with a Wentworth and a daughter of Hotspur and lady Elizabeth Mortimer, granddaughter to Lionel duke of Clarence. Some ancient heralds affirm that this daughter of the house of Percy died childless. Few persons, however, dared dispute a pedigree with Henry VIII.; and it appears that on this ground Cranmer granted a dispensation for nearness of kin between Henry VIII. and Jane Seymour,—rather a work of supererogation, since, even if the Wentworth genealogy held good, the parties could not be related within the forbidden degree; viz. as fourth cousins. Although the royal kindred appears somewhat doubtful, yet it is undeniable that the sovereign of England gained by this alliance one brother-in-law who bore the name of Smith, and another whose grandfather was a blacksmith at Putney,—for Jane Seymour's sister Elizabeth married Gregory the son of Cromwell, and her sister Dorothy became the wife of sir Clement Smith, of Little Baddow, in Essex.¹

Jane's childhood and early youth are involved in great obscurity, but there is reason to suppose that, like Anne Boleyn, her education was finished and her manners formed at the

¹ Collins' Peerage. Elizabeth Seymour was the widow of sir Gregory Oughtred when she married the younger Cromwell. Jane Seymour, like Anne Boleyn, was old enough for her younger sister to have been married before she herself became queen.