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# LADY KATHERINE ✻ KNOLLYS ✻

*The Unacknowledged Daughter of King Henry VIII*

SARAH-BETH WATKINS



Lady Katherine Knollys:  
The Unacknowledged  
Daughter of  
Henry VIII

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Winchester, UK  
Washington, USA

First published by Chronos Books, 2015  
Chronos Books is an imprint of John Hunt Publishing Ltd., Laurel House,  
Station Approach,  
Alresford, Hants, SO24 9JH, UK  
[office1@jhpbooks.net](mailto:office1@jhpbooks.net)  
[www.johnhuntpublishing.com](http://www.johnhuntpublishing.com)

For distributor details and how to order please visit the 'Ordering' section on our website.

Text copyright: Sarah-Beth Watkins 2014

ISBN: 978 1 78279 585 8

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A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Design: Stuart Davies

Printed and bound by CPI Group (UK) Ltd, Croydon, CR0 4YY

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## Chapter One

## Mother Mary

Mary Boleyn placed her hand on her stomach. It was time to shut herself away from the world and enter her darkened chambers. Richly embroidered tapestries lined the room, shutting out the light and keeping in the warmth from the banked-up fire. Mary was going to give birth to her first child; born of lust and passion, a child whose father was not the man she had married, a child whose father was secretly the King. A child she named Katherine.

Katherine would grow up never to be acknowledged as King Henry VIII's daughter. Henry had every reason not to acknowledge her. He had his daughters, one already born when Katherine came into the world, and he needed no more. His denial of his affair with Katherine's mother, Mary, would be something that would always position Katherine as a bastard. Yet Katherine joined the Tudor court as maid of honour to Queen Anne of Cleves and she went on to serve Catherine Howard as well as becoming one of Elizabeth I's closest confidantes - cousins for definite, more likely half-sisters. Katherine lived through the reigns of Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary I and on into Elizabeth I's. Never far from court, she lived in a world where she would never be a princess but a lady she was born to be.

As a young girl, Katherine's mother, Mary journeyed to France in Mary Tudor's entourage, travelling in the same ship. At fourteen years old, it was a great adventure and her first time away from England. Her father had arranged for her to become a chamberer for the King's sister, a step down from a lady-in-waiting but her first position away from home. She must have looked up to the red-haired, delicately featured Mary who was being sent to marry the ageing King of France, Louis XII, with awe and respect. Here was a princess who was doing her duty for England by becoming Louis' third wife and Queen Consort of France.

They set sail on 2nd October 1514 crossing the Channel to Boulogne in a flotilla of 14 ships but a fierce storm made their journey last four days. Mary Tudor's ship ran aground and the women had to be carried to shore to meet the French ambassadors that were awaiting their arrival. All the women were windswept, soggy and seasick as they landed on the beach in such an unceremonious fashion. Not a good start to Mary's time in France.

From there, they travelled on to Abbeville where, on 9th October, the feast day of St Denis, Mary Tudor wed King Louis XII in the Hotel de la Gruthuse. The couple wore matching costumes of gold and ermine as they took part in the ceremony officiated over by the Bishop of Bayeux and Mary was bedecked in jewels that Henry had given her to show off England's wealth and riches.

The Venetian ambassador commented, 'The mass by the Cardinal de Bayeux being ended, he gave the consecrated wafer, one half to the King and the other to the Queen, who kissed and then swallowed it; and after making a graceful curtsey she departed, the King and Queen going each to their own apartments to dine. In the evening the Queen arrayed herself in the French fashion, and there was dancing; the whole Court banqueting, dancing, and making good cheer; and thus, at the eighth hour before midnight, the Queen was taken away from the entertainment by Madame to go and sleep with the King.

...She appears to me rather pale, though this I believe proceeds from the tossing of the sea and from her fright. She does not seem a whit more than 16 years old, and looks very well in the French costume. She is extremely courteous and well mannered, and has come in very sumptuous array...'<sup>1</sup>

When the fuss of the wedding had died down, King Louis decided to rid Mary Tudor of most of her entourage, fearing that amongst them were spies who would report back to Henry VIII. When other servants were sent home, Mary Boleyn stayed on with the newly crowned Queen as she adjusted to her new life at the French court. King Louis had allowed Mary Tudor to retain only her six youngest maids but his control over Mary's household was short-lived. The King died just three months after Mary Tudor had arrived in France - some said from the exertions of his marriage bed - but not by being smothered to death by his new wife as a popular historical TV series would have us believe. Still the new Queen Consort Mary was not allowed home. Mary Boleyn stayed with her through the forty days of traditional mourning as all eyes were on Henry's sister waiting to see if she carried King Louis' child. When no pregnancy showed, Mary was allowed to return to England and Louis' son, François, was crowned King of France. But the ending of Mary Tudor's time in France was not without scandal. Knowing her brother, the King, would marry her off to the next politically advantageous suitor, she married his friend and confidant, Charles Brandon, whilst still in France thus enraging her brother, the King of England.

During this time, while Mary was attending Mary Tudor, her sister, Anne, who was yet to become the most infamous of the Boleyn family, was sent to

the French court in service to François' wife, Claude, and is noted in records of the time but we lose sight of Mary for while her sister stayed at court, Mary's whereabouts are unknown. She may have travelled back to England and joined her mother in service to Queen Catherine of Aragon or she may have been sent to consider her actions if the rumours about her conduct were true.

This is the time in Mary's life where historians have surmised that she became the mistress of the new King François, giving her historical notoriety for being the sexual plaything of Kings. It is true she spent time at the court of King Louis but the suggestion she was a great and infamous whore came not from François but from Rodolfo Pio, the Bishop of Faenza, who wrote "per una grandissima ribald et infame sopra tutte" - 'for a very great whore, and infamous above all'<sup>2</sup>. Pio was the Papal Nuncio in Paris and as such would have been extremely biased against the Boleyns when he wrote this some twenty years after Mary's time in France. Mary was at the court of the King Louis XII from around 1514 - 1515 and she may well have been his son's mistress for a time but there is no other evidence for it or that she was passed on to his companions as a sexual plaything as some writers have indicated.

Wherever she was, Mary next appears at the English court of King Henry and she might have caught his eye by being in service to the Queen as many of Henry's other women did. Henry was not the notorious womaniser he has been made out to be at this time but he had just come out of a relationship with Elizabeth Blount, or Bessie, as she was known, the daughter of Sir John Blount and Catherine Pershall of Kinlet near Bridgnorth in Shropshire, who was one of Queen Catherine's maids-of-honour.

In 1519 Bessie was sent to 'Jericho' to give birth to the King's illegitimate son. This was an affair that had lasted some time and resulted in the birth of a child that Henry did acknowledge, unlike Katherine. Jericho was a private, moated house leased by the King from St Lawrence's Priory at Blackmore, Essex. It was a house of poor reputation, a meeting place for the King and his lovers where the pages and grooms were warned 'not to hearken or enquire where the King is or goeth, be it early or late'. Bessie gave birth to Henry Fitzroy (Fitzroy meaning son of the king) on 15th June. Henry Fitzroy later became the Duke of Richmond and Somerset and Earl of Nottingham, reaping the rewards of an illegitimate but acknowledged son. Henry may have accepted his first male offspring but he wanted nothing more to do with Bessie and she was married off to Gilbert Tailboys in the same year of Henry's birth. The King had started to look for someone else to warm his bed.

Mary Boleyn was his choice. Her red hair, pert lips and wide eyes suggested innocence and succour at a time when Henry was troubled by his marriage to the Queen and his lack of any legitimate male heirs. Mary represented youth when Catherine was visibly ageing and the strain of several miscarriages and stillbirths were taking their toll on her body. Catherine was heading for the menopause and Henry was beginning to realise that his wife would never give him what he held most dear - a son to follow him to the throne.

Catherine's mother, Mary, became Henry VIII's lover at a time when Henry was in his prime. The life and soul of the Tudor court and England, Henry was a larger than life King, young and virile, enjoying all the pleasures of his sovereignty. He had not yet received the wound that would blight his later years and still enjoyed the pleasures of court; hunting, jousting, playing tennis and admiring women with his notions of courtly love.

In 1522, with all the panache and intrigue of a courtly love affair, Henry made his affections clear towards Mary at a joust held to welcome visiting ambassadors sent by the Emperor Charles V to negotiate a marriage between himself and the Princess Mary, Henry's daughter by Catherine of Aragon. Henry rode a horse whose caparisons were embroidered with the motto *Elle mon coeur a navera* - she has wounded my heart. Henry was in pursuit of Mary but his motto hints that the love was unrequited. Henry was in pursuit but perhaps Mary wasn't such a pushover as some historians have led us to believe. Certainly if the rumours of Mary and François did have any truth in them and her return to England had been in disgrace, she would hardly have been willing to risk that disgrace again. She was now a married woman and would have her husband's feelings to consider.

In that Easter's Shrove Tuesday celebrations, Mary played the role of Kindness in the pageant *The Assault on the Castle of Virtue* along with seven other women at court including her sister, Anne, who took the role of Perseverance. The eight ladies of Kindness, Perseverance, Beauty, Honour, Constancy, Bounty, Mercy and Pity were mirrored by women (who were played by boys) of dubious qualities such as Danger, Jealousy, Unkindness, Scorn, Disdain, Malebouche (bad-mouthing), Strangeness and an eighth that is unrecorded. Eight lords had to rescue the women of good virtue from those that were dubious and amongst them was King Henry. The theme of the pageant was unrequited love and leading the lords who rescued the women was Ardent Desire. Although Henry did not take the main role, this was given to William Cornish, the court musician, its meaning was clear. Henry was in

love and was pursuing a new mistress while still being married to Catherine of Aragon.

And Mary was married too so perhaps this affair would have less risk than his liaison with Bessie Blount. If any child were to be born, they would take Mary's husband's name and spare the King from having to acknowledge any more illegitimate offspring.

Mary had become the wife of William Carey on 4th February 1520. William Carey was the second son of Sir Thomas Carey of Chilton Foliat in Wiltshire, and his wife, Margaret Spencer, daughter of Sir Robert Spencer and Eleanor Beaufort. His aunt on the maternal side was Katherine Spencer, Countess of Northumberland, and through her, he was first cousin to Henry Percy, the 6th Earl of Northumberland, a former suitor of his sister-in-law Anne Boleyn. Katherine took William Carey's surname and William might never even have known of his wife's affair with the King but given his closeness to Henry he must surely have had his suspicions. It has been suggested that Henry VIII picked William as a compliant courtier to marry his mistress. He attended their wedding and gave the couple a gift of 6s 8d but William although compliant was not just an ordinary courtier. He had joined the King's household in 1519 and became close to the King through his role as a Gentleman of the Privy Chamber and Esquire of the Body to the King. As Mary's husband was a courtier in his own right, William was awarded grants from 1522 -1526 and this payment could have been for Mary's services. Whether through Mary's liaison with the King or because of his own merits, William did well out of the whole affair. In 1522, he was made keeper of the manor and estate of New Hall in Essex, a year later he was made chief steward and bailiff of the manor of Wittell and Wittell Park in Essex. The last grant William received came at around the time of the birth of Mary's second child, Henry Carey, in 1526 when William was made keeper of the manor, gardens and tower of Pleasance in Greenwich and granted the keepership of Ditton manor and park.

William may have just received grants because he was favoured by the King. Alternatively, he may have received them for being an obliging husband and to nurture his acquiescence while the King made love to his wife. Whatever the reason, both William and Mary were players in the King's game. They could not have refused him even had they have wanted to. Mary might well have endured the King's attentions but felt nothing for him or could she have felt genuine affection and been love-struck by such a king who at the time was in his magnificence? Either way she was left with two children who

were rumoured to be the offspring of King Henry VIII.

Henry kept his affair with Mary a secret but his closest companions and men of his chambers knew what was happening. They collected Mary and took her to his rooms or arranged for their love trysts elsewhere. They may have met at Hever, Mary's family home, but that seems unlikely and there is no recorded evidence of him visiting her there although in 1521, Henry took possession of Penshurst Place which lay close to Hever and would have made a possible rendezvous point. Penshurst was a crenellated manor house set in idyllic surroundings. Built in the 14th century, beautiful countryside and surrounding parklands made it an impressive residence just a day's ride from London and the Tudor court. Mary may also have met Henry at Jericho where Bessie Blount had had her son and where he was known to meet with other women or Mary could have just been escorted to the King's rooms when he called for her. If Mary was travelling with the court and her husband, she would have been available wherever the King resided.

Henry not only failed to acknowledge Katherine, he also never once admitted to having an affair with Mary, but it is in his omission that we see his guilt. In 1533, a Catholic MP, George Throckmorton, in conversation with the King accused him of meddling with both Mary and her mother, Lady Boleyn. Henry replied, 'Never with the mother'. It took Thomas Cromwell to add 'Nor never with the sister either, and therefore put that out of your mind'. But this came at a time when Anne Boleyn was made Queen of England and to admit to relations with her sister would have had serious implications for their marriage. Henry had divorced Catherine of Aragon based on her previous relationship with his brother, Arthur. To admit that he had had close relationships with Mary would make his marriage to Anne incestuous. As we shall see later, this is why Katherine was never acknowledged as Henry's child as to do so was to jeopardise his marriage to her aunt.

Mary was sleeping with the King but surely she was aware of the risks. Did she try to do anything to prevent her pregnancy? Contraception in Tudor times was illegal and methods for preventing pregnancy were not reliable. Women sometimes used pessaries made from wool and soaked in vinegar, herbs, beeswax or even stones and wooden blocks to prevent conception. Essences of mint, rue or savin (a type of juniper) were drunk as abortants but could be deadly in high doses. Failing that, amulets were worn to ward off fertility and were as bizarre as the testicles of a weasel or the liver of a cat. If Mary had tried any of these, they had failed and with her belly extended before her, she entered the birthing chamber.

Mary took to her chamber four to six weeks before Katherine's birth and surrounded herself with good luck charms and she may even have used an eagle stone<sup>3</sup>. This was a time when superstition was rife and anything that could be done to ward off evil spirits and ensure a safe birth was done. An eagle stone - a hollow stone which has sand, a pebble or other noisy substance within it - was believed to help relieve labour pains during childbirth. As soon as her labour started, Mary's closest companions and the midwife were called. Men were not permitted in the birth chamber and there were no doctors as such to help with the birth.

The birthing chamber was the realm of the midwife, usually a respectable married woman, and not the dubious witch-like woman that is often depicted. The role of the midwife was to see her charge through labour and to supply the various ointments, poultices and herbal preparations needed to aid the child's birth, including pig fat to be used as a lubricant. This was a time of high mortality rates both for the mother and child and midwives were often called upon to baptise the newborn babe if it was thought they would not survive.

We don't know how long Mary was in labour for or how healthy Katherine was when she was born but both mother and baby survived against the odds of the time. Mary may have drunk the restorative drink, 'mother's caudle' - a spiced wine meant to give her renewed strength after the birth whilst Katherine was cleansed and swaddled as soon as she was born. Swaddling consisted of wrapping the baby in strips of linen or similar cloth to keep their bones straight and help them to grow up without physical deformity. The baby was kept immobilised by the cloth bands and also sometimes a swaddling board (or cradle board) for the first eight to nine months of their life, only being unbound to be cleaned and bathed.

Mary would have stayed in her bed in the darkened room for about three days after Katherine's birth until her 'upsitting' when she would begin to move about her chamber and receive more visitors. The norm was to stay in your chamber for a week or more before being allowed back into the household although not outside the house until the 'churching' ceremony had taken place. The churching ceremony was a way of purifying a woman where a short service would be held and the new mother would make an offering to the church which was wrapped in her newborn's christening gown. Unlike today, mothers did not attend their child's christening. They usually took place as quickly as possible and so were at a time when the mother was still confined to her birthing chamber.

Katherine was Mary Boleyn's first and only living daughter, born in 1524 at the height of her affair with King Henry VIII. There has been some conjecture over her date of birth - in Ive's study of Anne Boleyn, he suggests that her brother, Henry, was in fact the first born child of Mary Boleyn - but there is mounting evidence that Katherine was born in 1524 and Henry two years later. As births weren't recorded in the Tudor age, no certificates or Parish records exist but other evidence can be used to gauge when she was born.

The first piece of evidence is that she became a maid of honour to Anne of Cleves in 1539. This position was usually taken up by young girls at the age of sixteen or thereabouts and coincides with Katherine being in her early teenage years. The recent discovery of her husband's Latin dictionary, the first volume of a *Dictionarium Seu Thesaurus Latinae Linguae*, has provided the birth dates of Katherine and Sir Francis Knollys' 14 children and corroborated their date of marriage. Their last son, Dudley, was born in 1562 and this date coincides with a portrait believed to be of a heavily pregnant Katherine by Steven van der Meulen, whose inscription gives the sitter's age as 38. This confirms that if Katherine was 38 in 1562, she would have been born in 1524.

This portrait of Katherine is the only one that has been attributed to her. Art historians, Croft and Hearn suggest that there is 'a plausible resemblance between the sitter and the effigy of Lady Knollys' (Katherine's married name) in Rotherfield Greys church. It was sold at Sothebys by Katherine's descendents in the 1970s and as such its provenance proves it came from the Knollys family. As well as the portrait being attributed to Katherine, it also shows her resemblance to Henry VIII - the red hair, the same nose and a very similar set of the lips. Although we cannot go on looks alone, Katherine does show a remarkable likeness to Henry in this portrait and no resemblance to William Carey at all.

When Mary took to her birthing chamber, where was she? Some sources indicate that Mary gave birth in Hampton Court Palace while she was attending on Queen Catherine of Aragon as a lady-in-waiting, although as Wolsey didn't grant King Henry the palace until at least 1525, this would have been difficult, while others believe she was confined in her husband William's childhood home at Chilton Foliat. It seems unlikely that if Mary was indeed pregnant with the King's child that she would have gone to her husband's ancestral home for her confinement but then his family may never have known about her affair with the King. Although it became general knowledge in later years, at the time it was conducted with great secrecy. She

may have given birth in any one of the King's residences whilst there with her husband, secluded herself away at Jericho as Bessie Blount had done or returned home to Hever to present her parents with their first grandchild.

We will never know how much King Henry pushed Mary into the affair but he was definitely capable of taking a woman by force should he so desire. An incident recorded in the State Papers tells us of one William Webbe who was charged with treason because he had 'cried vengeance on the King'<sup>4</sup>. He only did so because the woman he had been travelling with caught the King's eye. Henry kissed her and made her ride off with him, to become one of his mistresses or so William thought. Mary may have had no choice but to succumb to the King's attentions.

Mary continued her affair with Henry VIII after Katherine's birth which has lent further credence to him being her father. Henry forbade his mistresses to sleep with their husbands while they were in a relationship with him. He would not have taken her back if she'd just given birth to her husband's child.

In 1526, Katherine's brother, Henry, was born and by this time, Mary's affair with the King was over and his attentions had turned towards her sister, Anne. In one of Henry VIII's letters to Anne Boleyn he says '...also that I will take you for my mistress, casting off all others that are in competition with you, out of my thoughts and affection...'<sup>5</sup>. Was this Henry's way of letting Anne know that her sister, Mary, now meant nothing to him?

Mary was no longer a royal mistress and was soon to be a widow. She had not profited from her time with the King and when her husband, William Carey died of the sweating sickness in 1528, he was just 32 years old. Mary Boleyn was now a single mother with two children of questionable parentage. Mary was in dire straits.

Katherine's aunt Anne, who was high in the King's favour by now, interceded on their behalf. In King Henry's letter to Anne concerning their situation, he says 'As touching your sister's matter, I have caused Walter Welche to write to my lord mine mind therein, whereby I trust that Eve shall not have the power to deceave Adam. For surely, whatsoever is said, it cannot so stand with his honour, but that he must needs take her his natural daughter now in his extream necessity.'<sup>6</sup>

Sir Thomas Boleyn, father of both Anne and Mary, was told to allow Mary to return to the family home to live with her disapproving mother and her ageing grandmother, Lady Margaret Butler. Katherine too, was to return with her mother to the family home at Hever Castle where she would reside for the next five years of her life. The King also granted Mary a yearly annuity of

£100 and it has been suggested this was primarily to make sure that Katherine was well looked after.

Mary had had a difficult relationship with the formidable Sir Thomas. Some historians have berated Thomas for using his daughters as bargaining chips to gain financial rewards and prestige, prostituting first Mary and then Anne in a callous bid to rise high in the King's favour but he was a typical Tudor man in that he saw his daughters as women who were under his control; they were his property to do with as he saw fit even if that included bringing his daughters to the attention of the King. Mary and Anne may well have caught the King's eye without any encouragement from their father.

In the girls' early days, he definitely took care to make sure they were well educated and sent to further their education by attending at foreign courts but in later years, he fell out with Mary and watched as Anne's momentous downfall took place. Sir Thomas took part in the trial that condemned Anne for her supposed actions without even once trying to save his daughter from her fate. We will never know how much his daughters' involvement with the King was out of his hands or whether he really did push them to catch Henry's eye. For both Mary and Anne, the consequences of their liaisons would be disastrous.

Returning to the family home of Hever Castle, near Edenbridge in Kent, must have been an upsetting journey for Mary and Katherine, now four years old. Hever was a 13th century castle of the Norman de Hever family. Sir Thomas' ancestor, Sir Geoffrey Boleyn made his money in trading in mercantile London and bought both Blickling and Hever estates for his family. When Thomas' father, Sir William, died in 1505, he was left the estates as his father's heir. He gave Blickling to his brother, James, and concentrated on making Hever Castle a family residence. He continued the renovation of Hever Castle to a manor house as started by his ancestors, specifically adding a 90ft long gallery above the great hall to be used as an area for exercise during bad weather when hunting or riding was not permissible.

The running of Hever Castle was conducted by Lady Elizabeth, Katherine's grandmother, who was rarely at court whether due to her own preference or Sir Thomas' orders. There would have been a steward to help collect rents or deal with tenants' disputes and many other servants to ensure the smooth running of the Boleyn home. Lady Elizabeth would have been responsible for overseeing the servants and making sure her home was well-kept and everybody's needs were catered for, including Mary and her daughter, Katherine. Lady Elizabeth may not have welcomed home two more mouths to

feed, nor might she have been happy to see her disgraced daughter, and Katherine surely felt the tension between her grandmother and mother as she was growing up. It would be an uneasy start for a woman who was to become a Lady in her own right.

Katherine would never be afforded the luxury of being called princess but in Tudor times, being a princess wasn't a safe and secure position. Nor did it bring happiness to either of the Princesses Mary and Elizabeth, Henry's acknowledged daughters, especially throughout their childhood. The next few tumultuous years would see Katherine watching from the sidelines as the Tudor age unravelled and the fate of her once helpful aunt Anne was sealed.

## Chapter Two

## Aunty Anne

We will never know how Katherine's mother felt about her sister, Anne Boleyn, usurping her in the King's affections. Was it a relief to no longer be the bedfellow of the King of England or did Mary miss her life at court? Did Katherine watch in horror as her aunt became the most talked about woman in Christendom and subsequently lose her life in a mass of intrigue and political manoeuvring? It was an upbringing that would have shocked any child and could have meant their disgrace from court but Katherine was always welcome.

King Henry was pursuing Katherine's aunt, Anne Boleyn, from as early as 1526. In February of that year, as he had done with Mary, he attended a joust riding a horse whose caparisons were embroidered with a message from his heart. This time he was wearing the motto 'Declare I dare not' along with a depiction of a heart surrounded by flame. At this time, the King's courtship of Katherine's aunt was in its early stages. Henry had no intention at this time of making Anne his next wife but Anne had other ideas. She had seen how Katherine's mother, her sister, was treated and refused to accept her role just as a mistress. She kept Henry dangling, never giving in to his protestations of love but encouraging him nonetheless. When the going got tough, she retreated to Hever and provoked a flurry of ardent letters and gifts.

Henry could not bear to be parted from Anne. She was rapidly becoming constant in his thoughts. He wrote to her:

*My Mistress and friend, my heart and I surrender ourselves into your hands, beseeching you to hold us commended to your favour, and that by absence your affection to us may not be lessened: for it would be a great pity to increase our pain, of which absence produces enough and more than I could ever have thought could be felt, reminding us of a point in astronomy which is this: the longer the days are, the more distant is the sun, and nevertheless the hotter; so it is with our love, for by absence we are kept a distance from one another, and yet it retains its fervour, at least on my side; I hope the like on yours, assuring you that on my part the pain of absence is already too great for me; and when I think of the increase of that which I am forced to suffer, it would be almost intolerable, but for the firm*

*hope I have of your unchangeable affection for me: and to remind you of this sometimes, and seeing that I cannot be personally present with you, I now send you the nearest thing I can to that, namely, my picture set in bracelets, with the whole of the device, which you already know, wishing myself in their place, if it should please you. This is from the hand of your loyal servant and friend, H.R.<sup>1</sup>*

This letter shows a vulnerable side to Henry. He wanted Anne to return the love he felt for her but none of her letters remain for us to see her replies. However, her replies must have given the King hope as she did manage to keep him interested over the course of seven years before their marriage in 1533. At a private ceremony at Whitehall Palace, attended by few family and friends, Anne got what she had held out for, the hand in marriage of the King.

King Henry's infatuation with Anne resulted in his divorce from Queen Catherine of Aragon. They had been married for over twenty years and what is clear is that Henry desperately needed a son and heir which Catherine could no longer give him. The politics involved in the King's 'great matter' are long and convoluted and many authors have written volumes on this time in Henry's life.

What interests us here is how this related to Katherine's life as it directly impacts on why she was never acknowledged by her father. King Henry's main conviction in seeking a divorce from his Queen was that their marriage was frowned on in the eyes of God and was the reason why they had no sons (at least, no living sons). He quoted the bible - 'If a man shall take his brother's wife, it is an unclean thing he hath uncovered his brother's nakedness; they shall be childless' (Leviticus 20:21) - as confirmation that his marriage to Catherine was unwholesome. Henry had already made up his mind to put aside his wife but he was looking for proof and who could deny the word of God?

What was also at stake was his relationship to Anne if it became public knowledge that he had slept with her sister, Mary. If a marriage between a man and his brother's wife was so abominable then a marriage between a man and his mistress's sister was also. Leviticus also says 'Neither shalt thou take a wife to her sister, to vex her, to uncover her nakedness, besides the other in her life time' (Leviticus 18:18). Henry had placed himself within the 'first degree of affinity' or relatedness. To this end, we see another confirmation that Henry truly did have an affair with Mary when in 1527 he asked for a legal dispensation to remarry and to marry a woman with whom he had that first degree of affinity.

Even with a legal dispensation granted, others were aware of what Henry had done. His cousin, Cardinal Pole, went so far as to publish *Pro ecclesiasticae unitatis defensione* (*A Defence of the Unity of the Church*) which strongly accused him of having an affair with Mary and then getting rid of his wife so that he could marry Anne.

*At your age in life, and with all your experience of the world, you were enslaved by your passion for a girl. But she would not give you your will unless you rejected your wife, whose place she longed to take. The modest woman would not be your mistress; no, but she would be your wife. She had learned, I think, if from nothing else, at least from the example of her sister, how soon you got tired of your mistresses; and she resolved to surpass her sister in retaining you as her lover.*

*Now what sort of person is it whom you have put in place of your divorced wife? Is she not the sister of her whom first you violated and for a long time after kept as your concubine? She certainly is. How is it then, that you now tell us of the horror you have of illicit marriage? Are you ignorant of the law which certainly no less prohibits marriage with a sister of one with whom you have become one flesh, than one with whom your brother was one flesh? If one kind of marriage is detestable, so is the other. Were you ignorant of the law? Nay, you knew it better than others. How did I prove it? Because, at the very time that you were rejecting your brother's widow, you were doing your very utmost to get leave from the Pope to marry the sister of your former concubine.*

This treaty infuriated King Henry who wasn't used to being questioned and publicly attacked in this way. It also brought up the whole issue of his affair with Mary - '*for a long time after kept as your concubine*' that he had tried to keep secret but was now being brought into the open not just as a brief affair but one that had lasted some duration. It is precisely why Katherine would never be acknowledged by her father. His desire for her aunt overrode everything in his life at that time. To admit Katherine was his daughter, would admit his affair with her mother and thus jeopardise his marriage to the woman he wanted above all else.

Anne too may not have wanted Katherine to be acknowledged for her own reasons. Although she had a close relationship with her mother and her brother, George, she seems to have had little contact with Mary. She may even have despised her for being with the man she wanted as her husband. To know that she had had a child by the King must have galled her. She detested his other daughter, the Princess Mary, Henry's daughter by Catherine, and saw her sole mission as giving the King the legitimate heir he so wanted,