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This 19th-century painting, by Henry Nelson O'Neil, provides the artist's interpretation of Catherine of Aragon pleading her case against divorce from Henry VIII. Click on the image for a better view.

Henry VIII is not faithful to his Queen. Among his many mistresses, throughout the years, is a pretty girl named Mary Boleyn. She is Anne Boleyn's older sister.

The girls, and their brother George, are the children of a very ambitious man—Thomas Boleyn—and his wife, Lady Elizabeth Howard. Boleyn has a master plan to elevate his family and increase his wealth. He isn't afraid to use his children to achieve his objectives.

Boleyn doesn't mind that his daughter Mary becomes the King's mistress. He doesn't mind that his daughter Anne catches Henry's eye when she returns from France to serve as a maid of honor for Catherine of Aragon. Boleyn especially doesn't mind when the King starts to think about marrying Anne (and gives *him* the title of 1st Earl of Wiltshire).

For the newly minted 1st Earl of Wiltshire, how great would it be to have his daughter become Queen of England? The King, after all, has told Anne—in a letter—of his "unchangeable intention" to marry her.

The King ends that same letter—sometimes referred to as "Letter 5" and depicted in this image which is online via a photographic handout from the British Library—with "H. aultre A. B. [AB in a heart] ne cherse R."



What does this mean? “H. seeks no other than AB” (or, as we might put it today, “HR 4 AB 4 Ever,” written inside a heart).

After the fall of Cardinal Wolsey, Henry VIII turns to Thomas Cromwell to help him figure-out how to divorce Catherine and marry Anne. The King seems besotted with the young woman who dares to argue with him. The BBC, in its biography about Anne, tells us:

It was said that she was the only woman who ever dared to argue and answer back to Henry.

As Thomas Cromwell works with the King, to make His Majesty head of a new church—the Church of England—he has a formidable job to do. People in Britain are Catholics, and they look to the Pope, not the King, as head of the church.

So ... Cromwell has to initiate a mind-changing process. He doesn't have much time to change an entire culture. He has nothing like Twitter, FaceBook or any other form of social media to help him.

But ... he does know how to start, and he capitalizes on the seeds of papal disbelief already sown by the Lollards (who believed the Pope was nothing more than a foreign power who interfered with life in Britain).

Cromwell seems like a public-relations visionary. Not only does he encourage written propaganda against the Pope, he commissions the painter Hans Holbein (“The Younger”) to craft anti-papal woodcuts. He also subsidizes playwrights to create works which will help publicize the Protestant message.

The road to the King's divorce is being paved.

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Media Stream



Henry VIII Love Letter to Anne Boleyn

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Thomas Boleyn, Father of Anne Boleyn

Hans Holbein the Younger (1498–1543) created this portrait, circa 1537, which features black-and-colored chalk, pen-and- brush in Indian ink and watercolors on pink-primed paper.

Part of the Royal Collection, this portrait was traditionally believed to depict Thomas Boleyn whose various titles included Earl of Wiltshire and Earl of Ormond (as of the 8th of December, 1529).

The painting notes “Ormond” at its top.

However, in the 20th century, historians began to doubt that the painting depicts Anne Boleyn’s father. Instead, leading scholars (such as K. T. Parker and David Starkey) expressed their opinions that the painting shows James Butler, the 9th Earl of Ormond (and Thomas Boleyn’s cousin).

Click on the image for a better view.

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Anne Boleyn

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