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Cardinal Wolsey: A Life in Renaissance Europe

Stella Fletcher

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The accession of Henry VIII provided the catalyst for cardinal Wolsey's dramatic rise to power. a month after his receipt of the coveted cardinal's hat in 1515, Wolsey became lord chancellor, making him the king's principal minister and England's senior judge, despite having no formal education in the law. Wolsey's pan-European vision ensured that he was well aware of the threat posed by Martin Luther's theological revolution and campaign against clerical abuses. He therefore sought to nip English heresy in the bud by taking decisive action against known religious radicals and by founding Cardinal College (now Christ Church), Oxford, with a view to forming well-educated priests who would combat heresy and institute ecclesiastical reform from within the hierarchy. Among England's senior churchmen, only Wolsey might have executed such a strategy, but circumstances were combining to thwart his plans. Wolsey was frustrated and ultimately disgraced by the essentially domestic problem of the king's determination that Anne Boleyn should be his wife and the mother of his legitimate heir. This book is an engaging and dramatic biography of this colossus of the Tudor age.

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