

NOTES ON THE LIFE OF SIR JOHN BAKER
OF SISSINGHURST, KENT.

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SIR JOHN BAKER, Chancellor of the Exchequer under Henry VIII., Edward VI., Mary, and Elizabeth, was the son of Richard Baker of Cranbrook, and grandson of Thomas Baker. He was born at Cranbrook about 1488, as he gives his age as 62 or thereabouts in 1550. He and his two brothers and three sisters are all mentioned in the will of his grandfather, made on 3 February 1493 (P.C.C., 16, Horne). His grandmother, Mistress Benet Baker, lived until 1509 (will at Canterbury).

His father, Richard Baker, died on 9 August 1504, when John would be about 16. In his will he leaves "to John my son a maser and flat piece of silver on his coming to the age of xxiiii years, and after him to Thomas my son. To my son James my greatest brasse pot." He leaves 20 marks to the marriage of his daughters, and the rest of his goods to the guiding of "Johanne my wyfe." Then follow these words: "My executors to pay to John my sonne yerely until he come at the age of 24 years to find him to scole as well in recompense of the lands in Stapulherst by my father assigned to him and of my bequest to fynde him to his lernyng in Court."

These words are noteworthy, for they imply that his father already had the intention of entering him at one of the Inns of Court. He may have received his early education in the school at Cranbrook, for the will also contains a bequest of 3s. 4d. to John Baker, scolemaster in Cranbrook. On 29 June 1506 we find John Baker at the Inner Temple, when a chamber was assigned to him under the Library.

John Baker became a notable statesman in his day, but, like many others who served King Henry VIII., he owed

little to the circumstances of his birth. As Lodge says in his *Illustrations of British History*, his pedigree in the College of Arms begins with his own name. But the statements of Lodge as to the career of this notable Kentish man are mostly incorrect, and as Lodge has been followed by nearly all subsequent writers, including the *Dictionary of National Biography*, it is worth while to attempt, with the help given by modern publication of records, to give a truer account of Baker's career.

One aspect of his career not noticed in the biographies is his life-long connection with the Inner Temple. He was Clerk of the Kitchen 22 June 1515; called to the Bench 11 Feb. 1517; Attendant on the Reader 1520; appointed Reader 25 April 1521. Under this date is recorded the admission of "William FitzWilliam, of the King's Council and lately Chamberlain to the most reverend Father Thomas, the Cardinal, at the instance of Baker. And it is asserted that he is willing to give to the Society, in the time of Baker's Reading, a pipe of wine." William FitzWilliam is Baker's brother-in-law, as will appear later. On 22 Nov. 1532 he is appointed one of the governors, and in 1533, on All Souls' Day, is made Treasurer, but is excused if his duties as Recorder of London prevent his serving.

Between 1532 and 1557 Baker was twelve times appointed governor of the Inn. On 2 March 1542 "William Ernestede, Master of the Temple, leased to Sir John Baker, a bencher of the Inner Temple, for a rent of 40 shillings per annum, all that Mansion House or messuage and the lodging adjoining the Church of the Temple, called the Master of the Temple's lodging, for 20 years, provided that if either Sir John Baker or William Ernestede should die within 20 years the lease should be void." Sir John Baker died in 1558, and, as William Ernestede did not die until the following year, he probably occupied this house as his London residence until the end of his life.

John Baker married as his first wife Catherine, daughter of Richard Sackville of Withyham, Sussex. Catherine's brother, John Sackville, was married to Margaret, sister of

Sir Thomas Bullen, the father of Queen Anne Boleyn. Here we see a relationship which may have had some influence on Baker's subsequent career. Of Catherine's sisters, Joan married John Parker of Willingdon, Mildred married Sir William FitzWilliam (ancestor of Earl Fitz-William), Mary married Robert Roberts of Glassenbury in Cranbrook (a neighbour therefore of the Bakers), Margaret married Sir Thomas Palmer, and Isabel was prioress of Clerkenwell. His first wife died before 1524, when John Baker is named as an executor under his father-in-law's will, but his wife's name is not mentioned. Some time after 1525 he married, as his second wife, Elizabeth, widow of George Barrett, and daughter and heiress of Thomas Dyneley, lord of the manor of Wolverton, Hants. Elizabeth had a son, Edward Barrett, who afterwards inherited his mother's property. As she was a lady claiming a distinguished ancestry, her children by Sir John Baker added her quarterings to their coat-of-arms.

John Baker's name appears in the Commission of Peace for Kent on 8 July 1515. He was 27 years of age and a rising barrister, and the appointment certainly shows that he was a man of recognized ability and influence. David Lloyd, in his volume of sententious biographies called *State Worthies* (1668), identifies him as Sir John Baker mentioned in Hall's Chronicle under the 8th year Henry VIII. (1517). The story is told of a carpenter who was imprisoned at the suit of the French ambassador. "Sir John Baker and other worshipful persons sued to the ambassador for him, but without avail." Although Sir John Baker was not knighted until 1540, Hall, in writing later, might speak of him under his then well-known title.

His first public appointment seems to have been that of Under-Sheriff of London on 12 May 1520, which was followed by that of Recorder of London on 17 November 1526. The record says: "At a Common Council of the City of London before Sir Thomas Seymer, mayor, and John Baker, Recorder, the office of Under-Sheriff, lately held by Mr. Baker, promoted to the office of Recorder on

the appointment of William Shelley as Justice of the Common Pleas, was conferred on Henry White, late Common Sergeant."

Before considering further the career of John Baker as Recorder of London, we have to notice a statement in Lodge's *Illustrations of British History* (vol. i., p. 51) that in 1524 Sir John Baker, then a young man, was sent as ambassador to Denmark in company with Henry Standish, Bishop of St. Asaph. Here a confusion has arisen with another Sir John Baker, something of whose history may be traced in the State Papers from 1514 to 1527. He could not, however, be the Sir John Baker under consideration, for the latter did not receive his knighthood until 1540.

The references to John Baker, ambassador to Denmark, begin on 14 March 1514. Henry VIII. to Christian II. The King will make the redress asked for by John Holm, with whom he sends back John Backer as his own envoy.

17 March 1514. Henry VIII. to Ove Bilde, Chancellor of Denmark. Credence of John Backer, and thanks for kindness shown last year to Henry's herald of arms.

26 Aug. 1514. Credentials given by King Christian to John Backer charged with a petition that Danish merchants may be admitted to trade in London.

28 April 1515. Letter to Sir John Heron (treasurer) to pay Sir John Baker £100 for costs going in embassy to Denmark.

15 April 1516. For Sir John Baker annuity of 40 marks.

6 Jan. 1517. The King's Epiphany Pageant. Bought of Sir John Baker 6 black velvet bonnets from Milan, lined and lozenged with cloth of gold, 18s. each.

4 June 1523. Letter from Secretary Knight to Cardinal Wolsey. Sir John Baker has come from Zealand upon charges he received from Wolsey. Was desired to get Baker to go with the King of Denmark to England, which he thought very desirable, as De la Motte (the French ambassador) leaves this day for Calais. Has desired Baker to observe what strangers resort to the King on the way.

Then follows 27 Feb. 1524. The commission for Henry

Standish, Bishop of St. Asaph, and Sir John Baker, members of our Council, to visit Hamburg with a view to the restitution of the King of Denmark. This is the commission given in Rymer's *Fœdera*, which was evidently all that Lodge had seen. But the other references plainly show that Sir John Baker, the ambassador, was not John Baker, the recorder of London.

In the famous parliament of 1529, holden at Blackfriars, in which the papal supremacy was repudiated, John Baker, "recorder," was one of the representatives for the City of London. In the following year, on the death of Cardinal Wolsey, John Baker is one of the commissioners for making inquisitions in London concerning the possessions of the Cardinal. At the coronation of Queen Anne Boleyn in 1533, Hall's Chronicle relates that "At the Cross in Cheapside Master Baker, the Recorder, made a speech, and presented the Queen with 1000 marks in the name of the City."

In the same year we find his name in the report of certain speeches of a Mistress Amadas (probably the wife of Henry VIII.'s goldsmith). "Because the King has forsaken his wife, the good Emperor will come shortly and deliver all good wives. That the false Chancellor of England (Sir Thomas Audley), false Norwyge, the chief justice of the common pleas (Sir Robert Norwich), and Baker, the false Recorder of London, shall surely be beheaded." But John Baker did not always support the King. We find in 1534 a reply to the arguments of the Recorder of London, who had defended the prioress of Dartford in her refusal to surrender the manor of Dartford.

On 20 August 1535 Mr. Baker is appointed Attorney of the Duchy of Lancaster, and on 26 August is appointed on a commission to enquire as to the defences of Calais. 28 Nov. 1535, Mr. Baker, Attorney of the Duchy, reports to Lord Lisle concerning Calais.

10 July 1536. Christopher Hales, the Attorney-General, is appointed Master of the Rolls on the surrender of Thomas Cromwell, the King's Chief Secretary, and John Baker is

appointed Attorney-General during good conduct in all courts of record.

A letter from John Baker to Cromwell, dated 12 Sept. 1536, occurs among the State Papers. Certain honest men of Dymchurch have shown me, he says, that Robert Brachie, parson, has not expelled the name of the Bishop of Rome out of his service books. He has committed him to gaol until Cromwell's pleasure be known.

Under Gostwick's expenses (as Treasurer of the household) in 1536, we find the following payments: To John Baker, the King's Attorney, for his pains in the time of Parliament, £26 13s. 4d. To Sir Richard Riche, speaker, £100.

In Lent 1540 John Baker is one of the commissioners to enquire into a heresy case at Calais, where one Adam Damply had been preaching contrary to the Statute of the Six Articles set forth in 1539.

22 March 1540, the commissioners arrived at Calais. On 5 April the commissioners report that Adam Damply has argued against the Real Presence, and Thomas Brooke, customer, eats flesh in Lent. Signed: Robert (Earl of) Sussex, William (Paulet, Lord) St. John, John Gage, Richard Coren, Edward Leighton, John Bakere.

On 8 April Henry VIII. writes to the commissioners: Our Attorney (Baker), Mr. Coren, and Mr. Leighton shall consider what may be done against Thomas Brooke. If you may condemn him as a heretic or traitor, cause him to be executed (Draft in Sir Thomas Wriothsley's hand.) 17 April, Henry VIII. to the commissioners: Lord St. John, Mr. Baker, Mr. Coren, and Mr. Leighton, your business being finished, you may return.

A long account of the troubles at Calais may be read in Fox's *Acts and Monuments*.

In July 1540 came the attainder and execution of Thomas Cromwell, Earl of Essex (28 July 1540). Through his fall promotion came to Mr. Attorney-General Baker.

This appears first in the grants made in July 1540.

To John Baker, the Attorney-General, and Elizabeth his

wife : grant in fee of Delmynden in the parish of Cranbrook Kent, lands in Cranbrook, Benynden, Hedcorne, Staplehurst, and Frittenden, which premises were granted by Thomas Cromwell, late Earl of Essex, and Keeper of the Privy Seal, to John Baker and Elizabeth, by charter 31 August 31 Henry VIII., and should be forfeited on account of (Cromwell's) heresies and treasons.

In August 1540 is the patent of Baker's appointment as Chancellor of the Exchequer, given in Rymer's *Fœdera* :—

“ In consideration of the faithful service which our beloved and faithful servant and counsellor, John Baker, Esquire, our Attorney-General, has shewn, We grant by these presents to the aforesaid John the office of Chancellor of our Exchequer, by the attainder of Thomas Cromwell, Earl of Essex, for divers heresies and for high treason now dead : and we make and constitute John Baker our Chancellor of the Exchequer for the term of life in the same manner and form as Thomas Lovell, Knight, or any other lately holding the same office,” etc.

On his appointment as Chancellor of the Exchequer John Baker receives knighthood, as on all subsequent occasions he is called Sir John Baker.

The first reference is a list of papers found in the boxes of Cromwell, Earl of Essex, by Sir John Baker.

It will be noted that Sir John Baker holds also the office of Under-Treasurer. The two offices were not always held together.

On 10 August 1540 his name appears in the first recorded list of the Privy Council. The list is of interest and importance. It is as follows :—

Thomas (Cranmer), Archbishop of Canterbury.

Thomas, Lord Audley of Walden, Chancellor of England.

Thomas (Howard), Duke of Norfolk, High Treasurer of England.

Charles (Brandon), Duke of Suffolk, President of the Council.

William (FitzWilliam), Erle of Southampton, Lord Privy Seal.

Robert (Radcliffe), Erle of Sussex, Great Chamberlain of England.

Edward (Seymour), Erle of Hartford.

John, Lord Russell, Great Admiral of England.

Cuthbert (Tunstall), Bishopp of Duresme.

Stephen (Gardiner), Bishopp of Winchester.

William, Lord Sandys, the King's Chamberlain.

Sir Thomas Cheyney, Knt., Lord Warden of V Ports, Treasurer of household.

Sir William Kingston, Knt., Comptroller of the household.

Sir Anthony Browne, Knt., Mr. of the King's horses.

Sir Anthony Wingfield, Knt., the King's Vice-Chamberlain.

Sir Thomas Wriothesley, Knt., the King's Secretary.

Sir Rafe Sadler, Knt., the King's Secretary.

Sir Richard Riche, Knt., Chancellor of the Augmentations.

Sir John Baker, Knt., Chancellor of the tenths and first frutes.

William Paget, late the Queene Secretary, was appointed Clerk.

It may be noted that Sir John Baker is not styled Chancellor of the Exchequer. It is only on 11 Nov. 1540 that we find that Sir John Baker, late Attorney-General, is to be "Chancellor of the Court of First Fruits and Tenths and Keeper of the Privy Seal of that Court." Perhaps, as this was a newly-formed Court, it was thought to be a more important office.

John Fox, in *The Acts and Monuments*, gives the following somewhat inaccurate list of the religious leanings of the Council:—

Protestants.

Archbishop of Canterbury.

Duke of Suffolk.

Viscount Beauchamp.

Viscount Lisle.

Papists.

Bishop of Winchester.

Bishop of Durham.

Duke of Norfolk.

Earl of Southampton.

Lord Russell, Treasurer.
 William Paget.
 Ralf Sadler.
 Audley, Lord Chancellor.

Sir Anthony Browne.
 William Paulet.
 John Baker.
 Richard Riche.
 Anthony Wingfield.

There were in the Council, at any rate, two parties in religious matters, led respectively by Canterbury and Winchester, and in political questions by the Duke of Norfolk and the Earl of Hertford (here called by his earlier title Viscount Beauchamp).

John Baker evidently followed the Bishop of Winchester, but in political matters supported the Earl of Hertford.

Professor Pollard, in the *Historical Review*, 1923, notes that "on 10 August 1540 four new members were appointed to the Privy Council: Sir John Baker, who had been appointed Chancellor of the Exchequer, vice Cromwell; Sir Richard Rich, Chancellor of the Augmentations; Sir William Kingston, comptroller of the household; and Sir Thomas Wriothesley, one of the principal secretaries. Kingston, Rich and Wriothesley appear to have helped Cromwell to his fall, and to have been promoted as a result." It is to be presumed that Sir John Baker was promoted on his merits, and not for any disloyalty to his former patron.

In May 1543 the King took a loan of money of all such as were valued at £50 and upwards in the Subsidy Book. The Lord Privy Seal, the Bishop of Winchester, Sir John Baker and Sir Thomas Wriothesley were commissioners for the loan in London, who so handled the matter that of some of the chief citizens they obtained 1000 marks imprest for the King's use.

22 April 1543, at Westminster. Sir John Baker, Chancellor of the Tenths, and Mr. Dacres, Dean of Arches, to declare a book of articles against Dr. Haynes. Dr. Haynes was the Dean of Exeter, and had been brought before the Council on 16 March, and after certain things objected

against him touching his own evil opinions (*i.e.*, his reforming views) was committed to the Fleet.

22 July 1543, at Oatlands. A letter to Sir John Baker, Knight, to search out one Turner, a priest dwelling about Canterbury. This is another clergyman of the new learning, Richard Turner, curate at Chartham. Turner became Vicar of Dartford in 1547. Cranmer wished to make him Archbishop of Armagh in 1550.

In the "Ancient Calendars and Inventories of the Exchequer" there is printed a record that "the 4 June, 35 Henry VIII. (1543), Sir John Baker, Knight, Under Treasurer of England, hath delyvered into this Treasury these Treaties and wrytyngs concerning our Sovereign Lord and the Emperor . . . , of which said Treaties and wrytings the said Sir John Baker hath a bill of the receipt subscribed with the hands of John Lambe and William Walter, under-chamberlaynes, bearing date as above."

Among references to Sir John Baker's work at the Treasury is this letter:—

26 Dec. 1544. "The Privy Council to Sir John Baker. The King's pleasure is that you deliver to bearer, Mr. Wynter, paymaster of the sea matters, immediately £1000 st. Grenewich. Signed: Wriothesley, Suffolk, Russell, Lisle, Winchester, Westminster, St. John, Gage, Brown. To our very loving frende Sr. John Bakere, Knight, vice-treasurer of England. In his absence to the Tellers of the receipt of the Exchequer. In haste, haste, haste."

4 Feb. 1544. A Bill for giving Henry VIII. the title of King of Ireland was sent to the Commons. A Committee of the Lower House consisting of Sir Richard Rich, Chancellor of the Augmentations, Sir John Baker, Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Sir Robert Southwell, Keeper of the Rolls, was sent to desire a conference with the Lords about it. This was agreed to. (Journal of the House of Lords.)

In 1543 Sir John Baker takes part with Bishop Gardiner in the so-called conspiracy against Archbishop Cranmer.

John Fox tells the story that Bishop Gardiner, being a privy councillor, had an understanding with some of the Council, who were of his mind, and ready to second his aims, as, among the rest, Baker, the Chancellor of the First Fruits. Some of the prebendaries of Canterbury compiled a book of articles against various preachers of the new learning, and chiefly against the Archbishop's Commissary. This book came at last into the King's hand. Having received them, he bade Baker, being a Kentish man, to send to Canterbury for someone to prove the articles. The said Chancellor sends for Shether and Serles. Being come before him, he said to them "That the King had a book against the Archbishop delivered to him, which he had himself perused. And because he perceived that they could say somewhat, he told them the King willed them to say what they knew, fearing no man, but to dread only one God and one King." From him they applied again to Winchester, and showed him what Baker had said unto them.

In the end, we know, the King took the side of Archbishop Cranmer, and the aims of Winchester and his friends were frustrated.

In June 1544 a commission to sell Crown lands, leases, and wardships was appointed, consisting of the following members:—

Sir John Baker, Chancellor of the First Fruits and tenths.

Sir Robert Southwell, Master of the Rolls.

Sir Edward North, Chancellor of the Augmentations.

Sir Thomas Moyle, one of the general surveyors.

In December 1544 the commission reconstituted as follows:—

Sir William Pawlett, Lord St. John, Sir Richard Riche,
Sir John Baker, Sir Robert Southwell, and Sir
Edward North.

9 Jan. 1545. The Council's warrant to Sir John Baker to deliver to bearer, Sir Brian Layton, for the garrisons in the North, £5000 st.

12 Jan. 1545. Council's warrant to Sir John Baker to be conveyed to Guisnes £3000 st.

In the last parliament of Henry VIII., which met on 23 Nov. 1545, it would seem that Sir John Baker was elected Speaker. The name of the Speaker is not given in the records, but in the Privy Council Register for 7 Feb. 1547 (one week after the accession of Edward VI.), Sir John Baker had warrant to the Treasurer and Chamberlains of the Exchequer for one *Cl.*, to be given him in consideration of his service in the roome of Speaker in the last session of Parliament, as hath been heretofore accustomed.

The first session of this parliament lasted from 23 Nov. to 24 Dec. 1545, when it was prorogued by the King in person. On this occasion the King delivered his famous exhortation to Unity and Charity, recorded by Hall, and in it he replies to the eloquent oration made to him by the Speaker: "I take upon me to answer your eloquent oration, Master Speaker, and say that, where you in the name of our well-beloved Commons hath both praised and extolled me for the notable qualities that you have conceived to be in me, I most heartily thank you all, of which gifts I recognize myself to be bare and barren."

In the summer of 1546 occurred the prosecution of Anne Askew for heretical opinions. Sir John Baker is mentioned by Fox as having gone to the Tower, with other counsellors, to examine the unfortunate woman. But it appears from what follows that it was really Sir Richard Riche and Lord Chancellor Wriothsley who examined her and put her to the torture. In John Bale's account, printed in the following year, only these two counsellors are mentioned, so we may believe that the introduction of Sir John Baker's name is only due to Fox's invention or malice.

In the end of the year 1546, when Henry VIII. was on his deathbed, occurred the prosecution of the Duke of Norfolk and of the Earl of Surrey for high treason. This would appear to be due to the growing influence of the Earl of Hertford with the King.

On 13 Dec. 1546 the Earl of Surrey writes as follows

from the Tower to the Council: "Four years ago the Lord Chancellor (Wriothesley), the Lord Privy Seal (Russell), Winchester, and Sir Anthony Brown examined him. My desire is that you IIII, and only you, may be sent to me to whom I intend to discharge my conscience. Albeit Mr. Baker was present at the 'formall' examination, he should not be at this. Nevertheless my matter is prejudicial to no creature, unless to myself."

At the examination of the Earl of Surrey as to his assumption of the arms of the Plantagenets, these questions are given:—

"What inheritance ye think ye ought to have in this realm? Item, what person and of what estate ye suppose to be the best of the blood ye come of and to be inheritor unto?"

"The interrogatorys of Mr. Baker."

The Earl of Surrey was tried at the Guildhall and executed on 19 January.

In January 1547, under the will of Henry VIII., Sir John Baker is constituted one of the assistant trustees of the Crown during the minority of Edward VI., and receives a legacy of £200.

King Henry VIII. died on 28 Jan. 1547.

Edward VI.

On 28 Aug. 1547 a letter from the Council to Sir Thomas Chenye, Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports, to recommend Sir John Baker so to those that have the namyng of Knightes of the Shire at the next Parliament, he may be made Knight of the Shire of Kent accordingly.

28 Sept. 1547. To the Sheriff of Kent: that where the Lords wroté to him afore to the end to make his friends for the election of Sir John Baker to be Knight of the Shire, understanding that he did abuse those of the Shire their request into a commandment; their lordships advertise him that they ment not nor meane to deprive the

Shire by any their commandment of their liberty of election whom they should think meete, so nevertheless if they would in satisfaction of their lordships' request graunte their voices to Mr. Baker they would take it thankfully.

But the electors refused to accept him. He found a seat in this parliament for Huntingdon and was elected Speaker. This first parliament of Edward VI. sat for $4\frac{1}{2}$ years, and Sir John continued in office throughout this time. This correspondence is interesting. It shows the growing independence of the constituencies.

We do not see much of Sir John Baker in the next two years.

On 28 Jan. 1548 the Exchequer had the usual warrant for 100*li.* to Sir John Baker for the accustomed fee for Speaker of the Parliament.

January 1549. Lord Thomas Seymour, the Protector's brother, was attainted by Parliament. A conversation is reported by Henry Grey, Marquis of Dorset, with Lord Huntingdon, Thomas Grey, his brother, and Sir Michael Poyntz, in which they advise Lord Seymour to appeal to his brother for mercy. "As this communication was in hand, Mr. Secretary Smith and Mr. Baker came in; upon whose coming I departed and went to my chamber."

Professor Pollard, in his *England under Protector Somerset*, refers to a letter which suggests peculation in the Court of First Fruits. It is a letter from William Wightman to Mr. Cecill, 10 May 1549. It refers to the same Lord Thomas Seymour. "The Lord Admiral was in great heat and said, By God's precious soul! my Lord, my brother is wondrous hot in helping every man to his right, saving me. But he maketh nothing of the loss that the King's Majesty hath by him in his Court of the First Fruits and Tents, where his revenue is abated, as I have heard say, almost ten thousand pounds a year. I told him I thought it was not so much, for the whole land that had been surrendered since the King's death was by all men's guesses far under that sum. Well, well, said he, they are at this point now that there can neither Bishopric, Deanery

nor Prebend fall void, but one of them will have a fleece of it.”

Such exaggerated testimony can hardly be said to prove much against the honesty of Sir John Baker as Chancellor of the Court of First Fruits.

16 March 1549. The Exchequer had warrant for 420*li.* to be distributed by order of the Lord Chancellor in reward for those whose names ensue in respect of their pains in the last session of parliament; among these are Sir John Baker, speaker of the nether House of Parliament, £100, Chief Justice Montague £30, King's Attorney £30, Clerk of Parliament £40.

In 1550 a commission was appointed to examine Bishop Gardiner, who was a prisoner in the Tower. The commission consisted of the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Bishops of London, Ely and Lincoln, Sir William Petre, Secretary of State, and Sir James Hales, Attorney-General.

The depositions of many witnesses, members of the Privy Council and others, were taken, and are given in full in Fox's *Acts and Monuments*. Sir John Baker evidently defends Bishop Gardiner. His deposition is as follows:—

Sir John Baker, Knight, one of the King's Majesty's Council, of the age of 62 or thereabouts, sworn and examined as witness.

I. He hath not heard that the Bishop hath spoken against the King's supremacy, for he never heard him preach but one sermon, and that was at St. Saviour's, Southwark.

II. That certain things have been commanded the said Bishop of Winchester to be done, in the King's time that dead is, but whether the King found any fault in him of the doing of them he cannot say.

III. He doth not know but that the said Bishop hath been and is a just man of his promise, until such time as he was committed to the Fleet and Tower.

IV. He thinketh he is not bound to make answer to the contents of this article, for that he was then attendant upon

the King's Council that dead is, and sworn not to disclose anything that should be done in the same Council. Nevertheless, if he be further compelled to declare his knowledge, he is ready to do the same.

John Baker.

When the Earl of Warwick raised a party in the Council against the Duke of Somerset, who had retired to Windsor with the King in October 1549, those who stood off for a time at length united themselves with the prevailing party. Sir John Baker appears to have been one of the last to come in. But it is clear that he was not happy with the Earl of Warwick's government, which threw itself into the hands of the reforming party. Sir John Baker seems rather to have retired to his new house at Sissinghurst. In Edward VI.'s diary the only notice of Sir John Baker is dated 8 July 1551, when the King records that Marechal St. André, French ambassador, was received by Mr. Baker at his house at Cranbrook.

In October 1551 a letter was sent from the Privy Council to Sir John Baker to repair immediately to the Court.

In November 1551 came the second arrest of the Duke of Somerset, who was accused and tried by a Committee of the Council, and executed on 22 January 1552 by order of Warwick, now Duke of Northumberland. Parliament met again on the following day for the last session under the speakership of Sir John Baker, and sat until 14 April, when it was finally dissolved. This parliament imposed the second Act of Uniformity, and the second Prayer Book. A bill was brought in for the deprivation of Tunstall, Bishop of Durham, but was rejected by the Commons. A bill sent down from the Lords on 12 April to confirm the attainder of the Duke of Somerset met a like fate, which led to the dissolution of parliament.

On 17 June 1552 there is a letter from the Privy Council to Sir Robert Bowes (Master of the Rolls) "to delyver to Sir John Baker, knight, to the use of the Inner Temple, a cuppe of sylver and gylt and graven, with a cover, remaining in the custody of the sayd Master of the Rolls."

The confiscation of chantry lands and church plate was now carried out by orders in Council, and in 1552 we find Sir John Baker on the commission for the collection of church stuff.

A new parliament was called on 1 March 1553, for which great care was taken to return members favourable to the Duke of Northumberland, and James Dyer, Esq., was elected Speaker. This parliament lasted for one month, and was dissolved on 31 March.

The King's health was now failing, and the Duke of Northumberland induced King Edward, being weak with sickness, to make a testament excluding his sisters Mary and Elizabeth from the throne, and bequeathing the crown to Lady Jane Grey, lately married to Northumberland's son. To this project Sir John Baker, with the other councillors, was an unwilling assentor. Sir Edward Montague, Chief Justice of the Common Pleas, gives a full account of the proceedings in a paper given in Fuller's *Church History*. He says he was commanded to be at the Court at Greenwich on 12 June by one o'clock at afternoon, and to bring with him Sir John Baker, Justice Bromley, the Attorney and Solicitor General. They were commanded to draw up a Book of Articles, which they at first refused to do. On 14 June they were again commanded to attend. After much hesitation the said Sir Edward said for his part he would obey the King's commandment, and so did Mr. Bromley say the same, and the King said to Sir John Baker "What say you? you never said a word to-day," who, as I take it, agreed to the same. Mr. Gosnold required a respite, for he was not yet persuaded to do the thing required.

Evidently therefore Sir John Baker did not distinctly refuse, and he signed the document that was drawn up with the other councillors.

Sir Richard Baker in his *Chronicle of England*, referring to this incident, says "Only the Archbishop Cranmer refused at first, Sir James Hales, a judge of the Common Pleas, to the last, and with them also Sir John Baker, Chancellor of the Exchequer."

What Sir Richard Baker meant is not quite clear. His words might only mean that, like the Archbishop, he hesitated and at last consented. At any rate Sir John Baker signs the proclamation of Lady Jane Grey as Queen, and, after the departure of Northumberland, joins with the other counsellors in proclaiming Queen Mary.

Queen Mary.

Under Queen Mary Sir John Baker continues in office as Chancellor of the Exchequer and Under Treasurer of England, and is made a member of the Privy Council.

In the parliament of 1553 the Right Worshipful Sir John Baker, Knt., sits as member for the borough of Bramber. In the parliaments of 1554, 1555 and 1557 he is at last one of the Knights of the Shire for the county of Kent.

After Wyatt's rebellion Sir John Baker receives a grant of the estates forfeited by Sir William Isley, who was implicated in the rebellion, but beyond this we do not notice any especial marks of the Queen's favour.

One part of his work during this reign is seen in two books in the British Museum, Harleian MSS. 606 and 608. A book formerly belonging to the Office of Augmentations, 3 and 4 Philip and Mary (1556), a commission from the Crown to Sir Robert Rochester, Knt., Comptroller of the Household, Sir William Petre, Knt., Sir Francis Englefield, Knt., Master of the Court of Wards and Liveries, Sir John Baker, Knt., Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Sir Edward Waldegrave, Knt., Master of the Great Wardrobe, to sell for ready money certain lands and hereditaments. The second volume is similar, and is dated 4 and 5 Philip and Mary (1557).

Sir John Baker is traditionally remembered in Cranbrook as "Bloody Baker," because of his part in the persecution of reformers during this reign. The local historian of Cranbrook, Mr. Tarbutt, says there is no evidence to justify this character. John Fox, in the *Acts and Monuments*,

relates one or two instances, in which he appears in his capacity as magistrate.

On 23 July 1554 at a petty sessions held at the George Inn, Cranbrook, Sir John Baker and Sir Thomas Moyle, justices for Kent, had to try a priest named John Bland, Vicar of Adisham, and finally handed him over to the High Sheriff to be sent to Canterbury. Bland was burnt on 12 July 1555 after efforts had been vainly made to induce him to recant. Another case reported is that of Edmund Allin, a miller of Frittenden, who was also committed for trial at Maidstone. Fox reports the examination of Allin by Sir John Baker and Collins, his chaplain, as follows:—

Baker.—I heard say you are against bishops and priests.

Allin.—I spake for them, for now have they so much living, and especially bishops, archdeacons and deans, that they neither can nor will teach God's word; if they had a hundred pounds apiece they would apply their study.

Baker.—Let us despatch him, he will mar all.

Collins.—If every man had a hundred pounds it would make more learned men.

Baker.—But our bishops would be angry if they knew it. What sayest thou to the sacrament?

Allin.—As I said before.

Baker.—Away with him.

Fox says that the reports of the doings in Kent were supplied to him by Mr. Richard Fletcher, who was Vicar of Cranbrook in Elizabeth's reign. No doubt this accounts for the prominence given to the cases in which Sir John Baker took a small part, but they are not such as to justify a charge of special cruelty.

Sir John Baker still attends meetings of the Privy Council during the reign of Mary. On 9 August 1558 a note is made: Sir William Petre and Sir John Baker, upon consideration for the mint and mine works in Ireland, to consider in what sort the mine works may be let, and see what bargain they can make. On 11 August 1558

occurs the last recorded attendance of Sir John Baker at the Council.

A few references in the interesting diary of Henry Machin refer to Sir John Baker. Henry Machin was a funeral furnisher of London, who kept his curious and lively journal during the two eventful reigns of Edward VI. and Queen Mary.

20 April 1557. Dr. Young did preach at St. Mary Spital. There was my Lord Mayor and 25 Aldermen, my Lord Broke, the Chief Justice, my Lord Justice Brown, my Sir John Baker, and Sir Roger Chumley, and many noble gentlemen with the whole city.

22 March 1558. The Lord Mayor and Aldermen went to Guildhall, and there the Queen's Council came thither, my Lord Chancellor, my Lord Treasurer, my Lord Privy Seal, the Bishop of Ely, and Sir John Baker, Secretary Peter and many more.

January 1559, was buried in Kent, Sir John Baker, Knight, and Master of . . . , with a standard and a coat armour, pennon of arms, IIII banners of saints and herse of wax, 7 dozen penselles, 10 dozen scutcheons, 12 torches; many mourners in black gowns, 2 great white branches, a herald of arms, a great dole and a great dinner. Poor men had gowns and their dinner.

On 8 Jan. died at Gravesend, Lancaster, the herald of arms, on coming home from the burying of Sir John Baker.

Strype says Sir John Baker was buried with much state, but his reference is to this entry of Machin's, which is only his usual way of describing important funerals.

Queen Mary died on 17 Nov. 1558. Among the State Papers of Elizabeth is a letter of 23 Dec. 1558, from the Marquis of Winchester (Lord Treasurer) to Sir William Cecil, in which he refers to the death of Sir John Baker, and recommends Sir Walter Mildmay to succeed him in his office of Chancellor of the Exchequer. As Sir John Baker died in London after a long illness about a month after Queen Mary's death, the story that he was posting into

Kent to persecute reformers at the time of the Queen's death is manifestly false.

The Will of Sir John Baker (P.C.C., 24, Welles.)

The will of Sir John Baker of Cessinghurst, made 27 January 1557, Under-Treasurer of England. To be buried at Cranbrook where my good wife Dame Elizabeth lieth buried; my funeral to be without pomp or pride, but such as becometh my station. If I have done to any person any injury or wrong I will that my executors make due satisfaction without delay. Masses to be said in Bedinden, Est Kingsnorth, Staplehurst, Frettinden, Hawkhurst, Teston, West Farleigh. Since the death of my good father Richard Baker I have kept an obit in said church of Cranbrook on St. Laurence Even, at which time he died. A priest to say mass for 7 years at St. Nicholas Altar. I bequeathe seven standing cups of silver to Edward Barrett, of Alvethley in Essex, my son-in-law, to my daughters Catherine White, Mary Tufton, Ciceley Sackville, Elizabeth Scott, to John Baker, son and heir-apparent of Richard Baker my son, and Thomas Baker, second son of said Richard. Anne daughter of Richard. My good sister Jone Reames, widow, and my nephew Stephen Reames. To Sir William Petre, knight, Sir Martin Bowes, knight, and Thomas Argall, gent., to each a ring of gold of the value of 40*s*. To my oldest son Richard Baker all my household stuff at Sissinghurst, and my blessing: "Above all things see thou serve God and thy soverayne, apply thy learning, be curtosse and gentill to any bodye, be ayding and loving to thy naturall brother, John Baker, and to thy sisters, avoid brybery, extortion, corruption and dissimulation, and eschew idleness." To his second son, John Baker, he gives £200 ready money and all household stuff in the city of London. Executors: Richard Baker, John Baker, my brother William Culpepper of Wigsell, Sussex, John Tufton, son-in-law, and Thomas Argall, gent. In a codicil he leaves to his sister-in-law, Lady Wilford, £10 for her pains taken about me in my sickness. Will proved 30 Jan. 1559.

Lady Wilford was Joyce, daughter of John Barrett, sister-in-law of his wife Elizabeth, who was widow of George Barrett. Sir James Wilford was knighted for his services in the war with Scotland. Their seat was at Hart-ridge, in Cranbrook. William Culpepper was married to Ciceley Barrett, and Sir Martin Bowes to Anne Barrett, two other sisters of the same family.

No authentic portrait of Sir John Baker is known. There is an album of portraits of Speakers of the House of Commons in the National Portrait Gallery. The portrait of Sir John Baker (reproduced in Dasent's *Speakers of the House of Commons*) is said to be copied from a picture in the possession of William Baker, Esq., of Norwich, about 1820. Nothing is known about the history of this picture. There is a fine portrait by Hans Holbein, painted about 1542, "of an elderly man of the age of 54," which is now in the Berlin Museum. This picture was formerly in the possession of Sir John Millais, and therefore came from England only in recent years. It would correspond to the age of Sir John Baker. The family in the male line died out in 1668, and the house at Sissinghurst became a ruin about one hundred years later. It is noted that on the back of this picture are the letters W.E.P.L.C., which also appear on the back of the well-known portrait of Robert Cheseman at the Hague, which was sent from England by William III. about the year 1700.

Sir John Baker was perhaps, as Lodge said, a statesman of no great note, but he played a useful and honourable part in a time of great distraction. He may not deserve the compliments of Lloyd in his *Worthies of England* for his courage in standing up for his principles, though he could say, like others, that he only temporised under compulsion. He was not treacherous like Rich, nor cruel like Wriothsley, nor was he ambitious like the great nobles under whom he served. Whether he succeeded in avoiding "all corruption, bribery and extortion" in an age of general venality might be questioned. As head of the two great financial courts of the Exchequer and First Fruits, he had a difficult task,

but at least he seems generally to have been trusted. As Speaker of the House of Commons he held office apparently for seven years in two separate parliaments, an unusual distinction, which surely speaks well for his character. It is evidently true that he was courteous and loyal, that he eschewed idleness, and lived a life of consistent piety. It is a fine touch in his will that speaks of the pious memorial of his father that he had observed on *St. Lawrence* even since his sixteenth year. Like *Paulet*, the Marquis of Winchester, the last Lord Treasurer under whom he served, he might have to allow that he "sprang from the willow rather than the oak," yet *Lloyd's* last word of praise is deserved: "His constant and firm resolution to stick to his duty and loyalty brought him to his grave in peace and honour."