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Glenn Richardson

Postcards from the Edge: Francis I and England's break with Rome

Richardson stressed the role of France in protecting the English Reformation. In 1528 Henry VIII's 'good brother, friend and perpetual ally' - and paymaster - Francis I became a Knight of the Garter. He was a decisive figure in Henry's decision to use the English parliament to marry Anne Boleyn. Educated at the French court, she had many allies there. Francis encouraged the Sorbonne to give a favourable answer to Henry VIII's questions about the validity of his divorce, and wrote to the Pope in its favour. Henry demanded French military and naval help in case of an invasion by Charles V. In October 1532 the French and English courts met at Boulogne and Calais. Thereafter Anne Boleyn decided to sleep with Henry VIII for the first time. Holbein's celebrated picture *The Ambassadors* is connected with this Anglo-French alliance. Henry VIII felt that, in breaking with Rome, he was acting on behalf of all European princes. Glenn Richardson concluded that England's history cannot easily be separated from that of France. Maria Perry pointed out that the King's sister Margaret, Queen of Scots, had been able to secure a divorce, so why could not the King? Both Queen Eleanor of France and Mary, Duchess of Suffolk refused to meet Anne Boleyn.