
PART ONE
The Drama's World

The Politics of Renaissance England

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The English Renaissance took place against a political backdrop dominated by international conflict, dynastic questions, religious tension and economic confusion. These leitmotifs were modulated by the political styles and personal quirks of Elizabeth I and James I, and their favorites. Elizabeth refused to talk about the succession to the throne, squashed attempts to go beyond the religious settlement of 1559, and, very reluctantly, led England into a world war with Spain, putatively in defense of Protestantism. James, through adroit politics, peacefully settled the succession and took the throne of England, uniting it with Scotland through his person. He made peace with Spain, to the horror of his Protestant subjects, and tried to avoid the pitfalls of ideological warfare, despite Catholic attempts to kill him. He, too, however, was drawn into Continental conflicts in defense of Protestantism. The decisions of both monarchs stressed the economy, but probably encouraged its evolution in ways that launched British capitalism and imperialism.

By 1584 it was clear Elizabeth I would never marry. The political classes, faced with this certainty, began a new political dance around their newly designated Virgin Queen, playing the charade of eternal desirability in the face of advancing age. The queen was presiding over a court that was increasingly filled with a younger generation whose understanding of politics, and relation to the queen, differed from their parents'. Many of the leading political figures of Elizabeth's early reign died in the 1580s. Most importantly, Robert Dudley, the earl of Leicester and perhaps the one love of Elizabeth's life, died in 1588. Increasingly, William Cecil, Lord Burghley, presided over a Privy Council full of younger faces. He was grooming his son Robert to take his place as the leader of Elizabeth's government, but competition was emerging as Elizabeth was attracted to younger men like Sir Christopher Hatton and Robert Devereux, earl of Essex.

The generational dynamic in the court was magnified by religion. By the 1580s the established Church of England was under attack by Catholics, who believed it to be illegitimate, and by people, generally lumped together as Puritans, who wished to

see its worship and governing structure reformed. Many of the Puritans thought the church was too like Catholicism in practice and dress, and some were prompted by their Calvinist theology to urge that England's bishops be replaced by a presbyterian system.

Catholicism represented an international threat to the queen's sovereignty. Since Elizabeth's excommunication in 1570, Catholics had been forbidden to recognize her authority over religion. Consequently, being a Roman Catholic made one a traitor *de facto*. Elizabeth never executed a Catholic for heresy, but several hundred people died for asserting that the pope was the head of the church.

The reality of this treason was brought home by the organized Catholic mission that began operating in England in the 1570s. Seminary priests were reviving English Catholicism. This was a political act, and the crown reacted accordingly. Parliament enacted new laws against those who refused to participate in the state church, and those who withdrew themselves, branded as "recusants," were fined.

The international Catholic conspiracy against Elizabeth reinforced English Protestant identity and encouraged England to do battle in defense of the faith. The more Puritanical were especially concerned to help beleaguered co-religionists in the Spanish Netherlands, where Calvinist rebels were fighting Spanish Catholic troops. As England entered the 1580s it was teetering on the brink of war with Spain. This attracted some people because it might be very profitable. On September 26, 1580, Sir Francis Drake's three-year voyage around the world ended in Plymouth harbor, his ship, the *Golden Hind*, laden with fabulous riches looted from Spanish America, triggering a national enthusiasm for voyages of trade and plunder. That same year, Richard Hakluyt advised the Muscovy Company to load their ships with English woolens and seek a northeast passage to Cathay. Meanwhile, Richard Hitchcock was urging that a fleet of 400 fishing ships should be sent to the Newfoundland Banks to harvest the "newland fish." The English nation was beginning its rapid expansion abroad, while its domestic economy acquired a new sophistication (Tawney and Power, 1963, III, 232–57).

Issues of war, peace, religion, and economics were all bound up with the problem of the succession to the throne. As Elizabeth aged, England's political classes became increasingly concerned about who would be the next sovereign. As the earl of Essex told King James of Scotland in the late 1580s, "her Majesty could not live above a year or two" (Hammer, 1999, 92).

From her accession, Elizabeth I had been reluctant to make her intentions on the succession clear for precisely the reason Essex was courting King James. To declare a successor was to give that person political power. She governed by dividing and confusing, keeping her enemies off balance. Nonetheless, it was widely believed Elizabeth's cousin, Mary, queen of Scots, a Catholic, would succeed her.

Since 1568 Mary had been a prisoner in England. She had come into the country as a refugee, escaping the revolt that put her infant son, James VI, on the throne of Scotland and established Protestantism as Scotland's faith. Once Mary arrived, she

became a constant worry for Elizabeth's counselors, who were well aware that she was heir to the throne of England. From the very beginning of her stay, Mary attracted plotters. In 1572 the duke of Norfolk was executed for his second attempt to marry her, and many of England's leaders clamored for her death. Elizabeth remained unpersuaded, honoring her cousin's royal status.

In the early 1580s, as international tensions heightened, Mary became the center of more plots. Anxious for Spanish help and protection, she offered to place herself, her son, and her kingdom in the hands of Philip II if he could free her. The Spanish ambassador was drawn into a plot which called for the duke of Guise to bring a force, paid for by Spain, into England. There it would be joined by English Catholics to free Mary. Known as the Throckmorton Plot, it was uncovered in 1584, and English public opinion became hysterically anti-Spanish. After that Elizabeth began to think seriously about war with Spain.

Finally, in the summer of 1585, Elizabeth despatched 4,000 men to aid the Dutch against the Spanish, telling the Dutch ambassadors, "You see, gentlemen, that I have opened the door, that I am embarking once for all with you in a war against the King of Spain." She sent her favorite, the earl of Leicester, to lead the English army and to dominate the Dutch government. It was an important departure from Elizabeth's previous policy, leading the Tudor state into a war that lasted, in one form or another, until 1603.

In the meantime the long-running saga of Mary queen of Scots was coming to an end. In December of 1585 a Catholic exile named Gilbert Gifford was arrested at Dover. Gifford was carrying letters of introduction to Mary, for he was part of a network raising support for her. Sent to London for examination, Gifford changed sides. Thenceforth Mary's letters, smuggled out in beer barrels, were being read in London. They proved that she was urging a group of conspirators, associated with Anthony Babington, to invade England and murder Elizabeth. With this proof in hand, Elizabeth reluctantly agreed to act against Mary.

Tried before royal commissioners, Mary was found guilty of treason. Elizabeth, unwilling to execute an anointed queen put off signing the death warrant. Instead, she attempted to convince Mary's jailers to murder her. To their credit, they refused. Finally, Elizabeth signed the warrant and it was carried out in haste, before she changed her mind again. Mary was executed on February 8, 1587. There was no longer a Catholic heir to the throne of England; the legacy passed to Mary's son James VI, raised a Protestant in Scotland.

However, Philip II procured a declaration from the pope naming him the heir of Mary, rather than her son James VI, and began planning an invasion of England as a preliminary to defeating the rebels in the Low Countries. To stop Philip's Armada, Sir Francis Drake led a raid on the Spanish port of Cadiz in 1587, burning some 30 ships in the harbor.

The Armada finally put to sea on the last day of May, 1588. Half punitive expedition and half crusade, it was supposed to ferry the duke of Parma's invasion army

across the English Channel. Meanwhile, Cardinal Allen, representing English Catholics from Rome, was calling on them to take up arms against Elizabeth, with God's blessing.

When the Spanish fleet was finally sighted by Admiral Howard's scouts, a running battle began. The smaller, faster, better-armed English ships harried the Spanish, preventing them from linking with Parma's army and forcing them to run for the North Sea. Somewhere near the Firth of Forth English pursuit stopped and divine wrath took over. Battered by storms, the Armada retreated toward Spain around Ireland, losing ship after weakened ship.

Meanwhile, Elizabeth was faced with a truly frightening situation. If the Spanish landed their army, it seemed doubtful that England would survive. The Spanish veterans were a much better army than those assembled hastily in England from local militias and lacking the infrastructure for keeping the field very long. They were never tested in battle, but their assembling gave Elizabeth a great opportunity for propaganda. On August 9, as the Spanish were retreating, she visited the army encamped at Tilbury. Appearing in armor and carrying a marshal's baton, she made a famous speech, declaring "I know I have the body of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a king, and of a king of England too."

It was one of England's proudest moments. God had displayed his favor by sending His winds to save His favorite nation, but the war had just begun. By fall an English fleet was sent to destroy the remnants of the Armada in the Spanish ports, to free Portugal from Spanish rule, and to attack the Azores. The fleet besieged Lisbon, but failed to take it, and in the end the expedition was a failure. However, a naval war with Spain continued through the 1590s, with English privateers attacking Spanish ships all over the world in hopes of a capture like that of the *Madre de Dios*, which returned £80,000 on Elizabeth's investment of £3,000.

England was also at war in the Low Countries, sending more and more troops to aid the Dutch Protestants against Spain. In France, where a religious civil war was being helped along by English subsidies for the Huguenots, Elizabeth was being drawn into another conflict. When Henry III was assassinated, Henry of Navarre became Henry IV of France, appealing immediately for English aid against the Catholic League. By the fall of 1588 an English expeditionary force was serving with Henry IV as he besieged Paris.

The troops came home after the siege, but Elizabeth continued to give Henry IV money for his campaigns, since a French Protestant army counterbalanced the Spanish Catholic army in the Netherlands. This strategy worked for a while, but it drew Spain into direct intervention in France. Spanish troops occupied Blavet in Brittany, giving them a base for attacks on England, so in May 1591 English troops were landed in Brittany. Poor cooperation by the French royal forces, and Elizabeth's usual reluctance to resupply and reinforce, made the operation a failure. Another English force was sent in to Normandy to aid in the siege of Rouen. That, too, failed, but Elizabeth did not withdraw all of her forces from France until 1594, a year after Henry IV had converted to Catholicism. Elizabeth had entered France because it kept pressure on Spain

in the Low Countries. Spain, for its part, stirred trouble in Ireland in order to keep pressure on England. War in Ireland was nothing new. English attempts to control the island had sparked rebellion after rebellion. From 1569 until 1573, and then again from 1579 until 1583, Munster was in rebellion, led by James Fitzmaurice Fitzgerald, the earl of Desmond, aided by Spanish and Italian troops. The Desmond revolts were crushed, and in 1583, Desmond's estates began to be opened for the "plantation" of colonists. With Munster under control, the English turned their attention to mountainous Ulster, dominated by Hugh O'Neill, earl of Tyrone.

As English pressure on Ulster increased, O'Neill reacted. By 1594 he was leading a full-scale revolt known as the Nine Years' War. Seeking support from Gaels and Old English, O'Neill tried to turn the war into a Catholic crusade. This attracted the Spanish, who sent troops. The critical years of the war were 1597–9, when several Irish victories made it appear that they might win. After the disastrous defeat at the Yellow Ford in 1599, Elizabeth sent the chivalrous earl of Essex to Ireland to take command. Bragging he would quickly defeat O'Neill, he dallied. Then, when directly ordered by the queen to attack, he made a truce instead. It left the Irish in control of all that they had taken and enraged Elizabeth. Although she commanded him not to leave his post, Essex decided that he had to return to court to defend himself from his enemies there. In July 1598, abandoning the army, he arrived unexpectedly at court, bursting into Elizabeth's bedroom while she was at her toilette.

Elizabeth was enraged at his behavior, and at his failure in Ireland. She relieved him of his command and sent Charles Blount, Lord Mountjoy, to replace him. Then she stripped Essex of his patent on sweet wines, depriving him of most of his income, and appointed a commission to investigate his actions. Disgraced, Essex believed that Robert Cecil and other counselors were poisoning the queen's mind against him. If he could only get her away from them, she would understand his brilliance. He began scheming to seize the queen. To stiffen the resolve of his followers he arranged to have Shakespeare's *Richard II*, a tale of a king removed by his nobles, performed at the Globe theater. His plot was betrayed by one of his confederates, and Essex desperately led 200 men through London, calling the populace to arms in defense of Elizabeth. No one joined him. The earl and four others were executed after a treason trial that was a set piece of legal theatrics.

With Essex gone the Irish situation began to improve. In November 1601 O'Neill and a Spanish army made a joint attack on Mountjoy's forces. Mountjoy, however, surprised O'Neill as he was deploying his troops at Kinsale, ending Irish resistance and placing all of Ireland under English rule for the first time. O'Neill surrendered, on favorable terms, in March 1603, six days after Elizabeth died.

Elizabeth's government desperately needed more money than it had. In normal times the monarch paid for government out of the customs revenues, rents on crown lands, and other sources of income. By 1584 the Treasury had accumulated some £300,000 in surpluses, thanks to Elizabeth's very parsimonious management. But war ate that surplus. Consequently, Parliament was convinced, in 1589, to grant an unusual double subsidy, but the subsidy Act insisted that this was no precedent; such

taxes were not to be expected as a matter of course. By 1593 Elizabeth's Council sought a third subsidy, only to be rebuffed in the House of Commons, even though the queen had spent £1,030,000 on the war and the subsidy of 1589 had yielded only £280,000. Eventually, after an arduous debate and the intervention of the House of Lords, the Commons agreed to pay, but with bad grace. The shortfalls were made up by money raised through Privy Seal loans, which Elizabeth always repaid promptly. When she died, her government was in debt by £340,000. If James I had shared her managerial philosophy, this debt would have been settled within a year, but he did not pay off the loans.

The real costs of the war were far greater than the money spent from the Treasury. Troops were levied and transported at the expense of the localities. Each recruit was armed and paid "coat and conduct" money by the town, guild, or other entity that raised him. Worse, soldiers mustered out were often discharged at the nearest port and expected to find their own way home. Many became beggars or bandits.

All this fueled resentment against the crown, and against what many localities saw as dangerously increasing central power in Westminster. The clumsiness of the system made things even worse, as did corruption and the parsimony of the crown. The entire governmental system, depending as it did on the willingness of local leaders voluntarily to govern their neighborhoods, was strained by the wars.

That the economic crisis triggered by the wars and bad harvests of the 1590s was not more profound is surprising. Although it triggered some troubles, such as the mini-rebellion in Oxfordshire in 1596, they were mitigated by changes in the economy. Agricultural production was becoming more efficient, releasing people to participate in the growing economic specialization appearing in urban areas. Iron, tin, and glass production rose, too, increasing demand for coal to such an extent that towns like Newcastle-on-Tyne boomed. On the consumer front, entrepreneurs, supported by an emerging national credit market, were displacing imported manufactured goods with native ones. These new enterprises stimulated the revival of the towns, after their long slump in the mid-sixteenth century, drawing the surplus population to them. That provided a very cheap workforce, since real wages were at an all-time low. All of this was especially evident in London, whose population exploded along with its prosperity. Taken all together, the standard of living in 1600 was remarkably higher than that of fifty years earlier.

Consumers fueled some of the boom; exports fed the rest. Companies were chartered to regulate and exploit the trade to various parts of the world. The Virginia Company, the Levant Company, the Muscovy Company, the Eastland (Baltic) Company, the East India Company, and others joined the Merchant Adventurers in dividing up foreign trade. Most of them specialized in exporting English cloth. The so-called "new draperies," light-weight woolens, were in high demand in warmer climates, and could be traded for valuable goods like spices. These brought high prices on the English market and fed the prosperity of the merchants lucky enough to own shares in these joint stock companies. Others, complaining bitterly that they were locked out of lucrative markets, were frequently attacked in Parliament.

Although there was no market for the new draperies in North America, entrepreneurs turned their eyes across the Atlantic. In 1580 perhaps 40 vessels a year fished the Grand Banks for the “newland fish.” By 1604 this number had quadrupled, and by the 1620s 200 or 300 ships a year made the voyage, bringing cheap cod to the tables of England and Europe. By the early seventeenth century people were following the fishermen to North America, and by the mid-1620s tobacco was flowing into England from America, creating a return flow of manufactured goods and people. This hiccupping economic expansion was helped by the arrival of James I on the throne. He stayed out of foreign wars for a long time, allowing the domestic economy the benefits of peace.

Elizabeth went into a sudden, sharp decline in February 1603. Refusing to eat or sleep or even take to her bed, she sank into a deep depression. On March 23 she lost her voice, and early on the morning of March 24 she died. James VI of Scotland was proclaimed as James I of England that same morning.

Four issues dominated the politics of James’ reign. First, religious and ideological disagreement threatened the peace and forced the king to seek new ways of resolving the tensions. Second, there was never enough money in the treasury to support a king who spent as if it was bottomless. Third, James’s belief in his royal authority clashed with English political values, provoking opposition in Parliament. Lastly, there was the problem of integrating Scotland and England into a single state. James picked at these knotty problems, often making them worse.

His accession buoyed the hopes of Puritans and Catholics alike, since his policies in Scotland made him appear tolerant of Catholics and inclined toward Calvinist church discipline. As he made his triumphal way south he was presented in Northamptonshire with the Millenary Petition, signed by a thousand ministers. They asked him to reform the liturgy, clergy, and doctrine of the Elizabethan church. Coming from those who wished to see the church “purified,” the petition was disliked by the bishops of the church of which James was now the supreme governor. Representatives of both sides met at Hampton Court on January 14, 1604.

James entered into the debates with relish, displaying his own theological sophistication. In the end, he ordered his bishops to reform certain things, but he also made it clear that he had little patience with attacks on the Church of England. A moderate in religion himself, he had stormy relations with the imperious Presbyterian kirk of Scotland. He preferred a church he could control, and was completely unsympathetic to any attacks on episcopacy. “No bishop, no king!” he exclaimed. Importantly, though, he did agree with them on one point – the need for a new translation of the Bible into English. Consequently, a team of academics and clerics was appointed to produce what became known as the King James Bible when it was printed in 1611.

While the Protestants argued over the form and discipline of the national church, England’s Catholics had, despite the official paranoia, quietly coexisted with the regime for so long that they had evolved their own religious organization. An arch-priest was, in theory, in charge of the English Catholics, although the Jesuits

disagreed. Even before Elizabeth died they had been negotiating for toleration in exchange for the expulsion of missionary priests. Now they thought James, married to a Catholic and committed to religious reconciliation, might allow it.

The Catholics who tried to get tolerance in exchange for their allegiance were hated by some of their co-religionists, who wanted blood. A radical faction, led by Robert Catesby, plotted to blow up the king and Parliament. When the king came to open Parliament on November 6, 1605, they would explode 36 barrels of gunpowder beneath Westminster Hall. Wiping out the Protestant leadership would, they thought, trigger a Catholic rising that would bring the nation back to the Roman faith.

The man left to set fire to the powder in the palace cellar was Guy Fawkes. Disguised as a servant, he was waiting there when the Lord Chamberlain's men, tipped off by a Catholic who knew of the plot, captured him. The king was saved, and the nation engaged in an orgy of pious thanksgiving, cursing Catholics and praising God for His providence. Ironically, James, seeking religious peace, refused to hunt Catholics, despite the attempted assassination.

At the local level, however, religious tensions continued to stew. Scots clung to their kirk as something that made them different from their traditional enemies, the English. The English interpreted their prayer book in ways that suited each community, practicing pragmatic toleration most of the time. In those places where there was no agreed-upon local practice, tensions flared.

English local government allowed for much variation in the enforcement of religious uniformity. By the turn of the century local magistrates, increasingly convinced that their vocations demanded that they keep their communities pure, moved to outlaw swearing, drinking, and other crimes against the honor of God. For example, in 1606 Mayor Coldwell of Northampton proposed to the aldermen that the ale houses should be off-limits to the inhabitants, on pain of prison. Moreover, no swearer, drunkard, or idle person was to be eligible for public relief. The aldermen approved his proposal, so "all profaneness, dicing and carding, drinking fled clean out of the freedom of the town." This zeal for the town's good paid off, reported Richard Rawlidge, because "whereas the plague had continued in the said town above two years together, upon this reformation of the Magistrates the Lord stayed the judgment of the pestilence" (1628, sig. F1. [STC 20766]).

Similar policies were emerging elsewhere, with bans on profane actors and other irritants. Soon, Parliament began passing national legislation with the same intent. Ironically, this set the stage for a clash with the supreme governor of the church, James. In 1615, returning from Scotland via Lancashire, James discovered that zealous Puritan magistrates had banned sports on Sunday, believing they defiled the Sabbath. Horrified, James issued a national order, known as the "Declaration of Sports," protecting the right to dance, practice archery, and follow other harmless recreations on Sunday afternoons. Lumping Catholics and Puritans together as enemies was an ill political omen, upsetting precarious religious balances through central intervention.

The accession of James I to the throne of England joined the rule of Scotland and England together in the same person, but it hardly united the two countries. Neither adopted the institutions or laws of the other; nor did they invent a third way. Sharing a king, they shared little else, to the frustration of James I/VI, who dreamed of the kingdom of Great Britain.

As far as James was concerned, when he became king of England, England and Scotland became one nation. Somehow he forgot that their institutions, customs, and self-interests could not easily blend. In 1604 England's Parliament quickly made it clear to him that his actions were to be constrained by England's established legal tradition. The House of Commons produced a document known as the Apology of the Commons, designed to teach their king to respect Parliament's privileges. It was never delivered, but they refused to grant him the title of king of Great Britain. Instead, a commission on unification was created to negotiate the status of the citizens of the two nations in the unified kingdom. The English arrogantly proposed simply to annex Scotland as they had done Wales; the Scots refused, and little was done beyond erasing the laws controlling their joint borders and establishing that those Scots born after James' accession to the English throne were citizens of England in law.

One of the reasons for these actions was that the English commissioners shared the fear that James would bring a horde of Scots south to feast on England's wealth. Their fears were not unfounded. Although Elizabeth's wars, the unreformed rate book, inflation, and sheer inefficiency had drained the Treasury, James thought the English wealthier than the Scots, and made lavish gifts to his friends, spent wildly on good living, and refused to listen to the warning cries of his officials.

Robert Cecil, earl of Salisbury, had been carried over from Elizabeth's reign as the principal secretary. In 1608 he became, as his father had been, lord treasurer. But the Treasury was empty. He undertook reforms that improved the efficiency of collections and sought new ways to wring out pennies to throw into the maw of the deficit. In 1610, hoping for tax reform and new revenue, he went to Parliament. He proposed that they pay off the king's debts and increase his annual revenues by £200,000. The Commons bitterly demanded that he stop purveyance and the selling of wardships. There was intense resistance to the Great Contract, and it sank amid fears that a king with regular taxation would become an absolute monarch, able to govern without the advice and consent of Parliament.

When the attempt to get tax reform failed, Salisbury turned to drastic measures. The crown began selling titles. This "inflation of honors" allowed people to purchase titles of gentility and nobility for fixed prices. For £10,000 one could become an earl. Selling crown property, or raising the rents on it, he also began borrowing from those with crown contracts. In 1611 Salisbury ordered a "benevolence" to be collected. A forced loan, it was not expected to be repaid.

Arbitrary increases in the customs rates, forced loans and other tools were not good for trade. Neither was the habit of selling monopolies on commercial activities. The worst abuses of this system became apparent in 1614 when the Cockayne Project was launched. It was intended to enrich a small group of investors, led by Alderman

Cockayne, by giving them control of the export of colored cloth and prohibiting the export of undyed cloth. The patentees were unable to make it work, and it was an unmitigated disaster. The price of cloth collapsed in 1616.

The earl of Salisbury died in 1612, and was succeeded by the royal favorite, Robert Carr, a Scot who became earl of Somerset. Allying with the powerful Howard family through a love affair, Somerset built a position of great influence by 1613. Salisbury had been unable to pay the king's bills and Somerset was no better. Desperate for money because of his daughter's marriage and the funeral of his son, Prince Henry, James called Parliament into session in 1614. Unfortunately for the king, this Parliament was not in a mood to grant supply; it was concerned that its authority was being eroded by the crown. Ever since 1604 tension had been building between the king and Parliament over the right to tax. In 1606 in Bate's Case, the judges held the king had the right to impose custom taxes as a matter of his prerogative, without Parliament's blessing. Salisbury used this decision to augment royal revenues. In 1614 the House of Commons attacked this taxation without representation. The session was completely fruitless, passing no legislation at all. As Rev. Thomas Lorkin famously named it, it was an "addle Parliament."

Somerset failed to deliver the cash the king needed, but he, and his Catholic Howard in-laws, helped incline the king toward marrying his son Charles to the Spanish infanta, Maria. As negotiations went forward, the nation became more and more agitated about the "Spanish Match." Protestant England was horrified by the idea that Prince Charles might marry a Spanish Catholic, threatening the religion they held dear and introducing their old enemy into the kingdom.

Somerset was displaced by George Villiers, reputed to be the handsomest man in England. Son of a gentry family, his looks overcame his lack of breeding, and his backers carefully trained him to seduce the king's affections. Starting as cup-bearer at the royal table, he quickly succeeded. James knighted him in 1615 and made him a gentleman of his chamber and master of the horse. In 1616 he was made a viscount, and six months later duke of Buckingham. Buckingham applied himself with great energy to the king's affairs, gathering offices to himself and demonstrating shrewd political skill. Growing richer and richer, he married into the nobility. By 1618 he was clearly the King's favorite.

In that year the Thirty Years War began on the Continent. James I's daughter Elizabeth was married to Prince Frederick of Bohemia and, when his forces were crushed at the battle of White Mountain, it appeared that the Protestant cause was in extreme danger. James was anxious to help his son-in-law, but equally anxious not to break the peace he had striven so hard to maintain. He engaged in feverish diplomacy and, in 1621, he summoned Parliament to ask for its support in his efforts. It was happy to pass two subsidies, apparently in the belief that the nation was preparing for war in defense of Protestantism. The *quid pro quo* was to allow Parliament its head over the hated monopolies and abuses. One result of this attack on governmental corruption was that the lord chancellor, Francis Bacon, was impeached for taking bribes in court cases.

The second session of the Parliament of 1621 ended in disaster for the king. Brimming with war fever, the Commons petitioned that if the Spanish did not withdraw their troops from Bohemia, war would be declared against Spain. For good measure, they proposed that Prince Charles marry a Protestant, ending the negotiations over the Spanish Match. These demands cut too far into the royal prerogative for James to accept them and he scolded the House. It responded with cries that its traditional liberties were being violated. In frustration the king dissolved Parliament, leaving most of its work undone.

In the popular mind, the failure of the Parliament of 1621 was the result of Spanish machinations, a Jesuit plot. This stoked the anti-Catholic paranoia of the country, but James was proceeding with negotiations for the marriage of Charles and Maria, oblivious to the fear it provoked. In 1623 Charles and Buckingham went off on a boyish secret journey to Spain; Charles wished to see his bride. The nation was horrified. Philip IV of Spain found his bluff called. He was not very interested in alliance with Great Britain and now, with Charles in his court, he raised the stakes, demanding religious toleration for Catholics. After six months Charles, though an ardent lover, admitted defeat and withdrew.

Britain went mad with joy when Charles returned without a bride. He and Buckingham now followed an anti-Spanish policy, and James gave them their head. In 1624 Parliament was called in an attempt to get money for what they hoped would be a war on Spain. Once again Parliament proved truculent. Although it did grant three subsidies, it tied the money to specific conditions that usurped the royal prerogative.

Now, still desperate for money, James and Charles turned to France, negotiating a marriage with Henrietta-Maria, Louis XIII's sister. They wanted aid against Spain and a large dowry. The dowry came, but, when James I died and Charles went to war, the French failed to help. The reign of James I ended in March 1625. It left the nation in the hands of Charles I and Buckingham. They began the new reign with deep debts and political divisions. Buckingham was popularly blamed for all the trouble, and he was assassinated in 1628.

James had inherited problems from Elizabeth. The precarious finances of the crown, the religious divisions, and the succession continued to haunt him, but in different ways. He made the fiscal problems worse, irritating the parliamentary classes with his expansive lifestyle and free spending. Believing that religious peace was possible in Europe, he fed anti-Catholic paranoia at home with his attempts to marry his son to Spain. At the same time he deepened divisions among the Protestants by meddling with the locally crafted versions of the Anglican settlement. Pursuing peace was good for the economy as long as it lasted, but the final years of the reign were spoiled by his confusing attempts to deal with the Thirty Years War. At the heart of the problem was James himself. A foreigner who never seems to have understood the English constitution, he was never able to use it to best advantage.

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