

the Story
of the
World
HISTORY FOR THE CLASSICAL CHILD



Volume 3: Early Modern Times

From Elizabeth the First to the Forty-Niners

Susan Wise Bauer

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Chapter Three James, King of Two Countries



James and His Enemies

Mary's son, James VI, didn't even remember his mother. As long as he could remember, he had lived in Scotland, looked after by his tutor. James's tutor, a stern Scottish schoolmaster named George Buchanan, taught James Greek, Latin, philosophy, and Protestant theology. He also taught the young king that a ruler's right to sit on a throne was given to him by his people—and that the king had a duty to listen to the opinions of his subjects.

But as soon as James grew old enough to rule by himself, he rejected Buchanan's ideas. A king, James insisted, rules by *divine right*: His power doesn't come from the people he rules. It comes directly from God, so the will of the king is the same thing as God's will! James wrote a little booklet, called *The True Law of Free Monarchies*, about his divine right to rule. In it he announced, "The King is overlord of the whole land...He [is] master over every person that inhabiteth the same, having power over the life and death of every one of them."

For twenty years, James exercised his "divine" power in Scotland. Meanwhile, down in England, Queen Elizabeth was growing older. She had no children of her own; her closest relative was James, because Mary, his mother, had been Elizabeth's cousin. So when Elizabeth died in 1603, James became King of England. He was given a new name: James I of England. Now he was the king of two different countries! From this time on, he was known as James VI of Scotland and James I of England.

James traveled south into England for his English coronation. He was welcomed to London by five hundred leading citizens, all wearing velvet and golden chains. A parade was planned in his honor—a parade that included the famous

playwright William Shakespeare! James was amazed by the wealth and luxury of this country to the south. In comparison, the Scottish court seemed poor and shabby.

But even while James was planning his spectacular coronation ceremony, a terrible sickness called the Black Death was spreading throughout the city. Over a thousand people were dying each week. Londoners were too terrified to gather into big crowds, where disease might spread even faster. So James had to cancel his coronation ceremony and his huge celebrations. Instead, he and his wife Anne walked quietly to Westminster Abbey and were crowned King and Queen of England.

The disappointing coronation was just a foretaste of troubles to come! During his reign, James would make enemies of Catholics, Protestants—and Parliament itself. (Parliament was the group of Englishmen who helped rule England.)

James's disagreements with Catholics and Protestants came first. When James was crowned king, there were three groups of Christians in England. Catholics hoped that James would give them special privileges, since his mother Mary had been Catholic. English Protestants, called Anglicans, hoped that James would stick to the Protestant beliefs he had learned in Scotland. And a third group of Protestant Christians hoped that James would make the Anglican church even *more* Protestant. They believed that the Anglicans had borrowed too many church traditions from Catholicism. These reformers were called Puritans, because they wanted to "purify" the Anglican church of all Catholic influences.

As soon as James arrived in England, the Puritans brought him a petition, signed by a thousand English Puritans, begging him to make the English church more Protestant. James agreed to meet with the Puritans to discuss their demands. But at this meeting, he rejected all of the Puritan ideas. When the Puritans continued to insist that God wanted James to change the English church, James grew furious. He told the Puritans that he would "harry them out of the Kingdom"—and he made Puritan worship services illegal.

Next, James made the English Catholics angry. Under James's laws, Catholics who refused to go to Anglican church services on Sundays had to pay a fine. And the year after his coronation, James ordered all Catholic priests to leave the country.

At this, two Catholics, Robert Catesby and Guy Fawkes, came up with a plan to get rid of James and the Protestant leaders of Parliament, all in one day. They bought a house next to the huge stone building where Parliament met. Along with eleven friends, they started to dig a tunnel from the basement of their house, through the nine-foot stone wall that surrounded the foundation of Parliament House. They planned to pack this tunnel full of gunpowder. As soon as James and the Parliamentary leaders were gathered together for the new session of Parliament, Catesby and his companions would blow the whole building up!

They dug for months—but as they got closer to Parliament House, the tunnel began to fill with water. So instead they smuggled barrels full of gunpowder into Parliament House itself. Soon, thirty-six barrels of gunpowder were hidden beneath firewood in the cellar. But just hours before the explosion was to take place, Guy Fawkes was discovered in the cellar, holding a match. He was arrested and tortured until he confessed—and was put to death. Today, English children still celebrate the day that Guy Fawkes was arrested by setting off fireworks.

After this Gunpowder Plot was discovered, James passed even more laws forbidding Catholic worship in England. Now Catholics and Puritans were both angry with James.

And soon Parliament was angry with James as well. James insisted that, because he ruled by the will of God, he could do exactly as he pleased. "The King is above the law," he announced. When Parliament refused to do exactly what James ordered, James told them, "Monarchy is the greatest thing on earth. Kings are rightly called gods since just like God they have power of life and death over all their subjects in all things. They are accountable to God only... so it is a crime for anyone to argue about what a king can do." And then James sent all of the

members of Parliament home—and ruled England without their help!

James had made Catholics, Puritans, and Parliament all angry. But today, he is most famous for something he did *right*. During his reign, James I agreed to make a brand new English translation of the Bible, so that everyone in his country—Catholic, Protestant, and Anglican—could use the same Bible. He appointed 54 scholars to make this new translation. It was finished in 1611, eight years after James became king. Today, this Bible, called the King James Version, is still used by many people around the world!



King James's Town

While Spain hauled boatloads of gold out of South America and brought it to King Philip II, James looked on in envy. He wanted his share of the gold too!

So he gave a group of wealthy Englishmen royal permission to look for gold in *North* America. These wealthy men joined together to buy three ships: the *Susan Constant*, the *Godspeed*, and the *Discovery*. They filled the ships with food and tools and offered free land in the New World to men who would sail the ships to North America and search for gold. The new settlement, or *colony*, would belong to King James, and each wealthy man would get a share of the gold. "Instead of milk and honey," one wrote to a friend, "we will find pearls and riches!"

The three ships set out from England one cold December day, filled with bricklayers, blacksmiths, sail makers—and goldsmiths. But as soon as the ships turned west, a strong wind blew them back. The ships struggled for six weeks against the wind before they got out of sight of shore! The hopeful colonists, crammed into tiny cabins beneath the decks, began to get seasick and argue with each other.



The Susan Constant

At last the wind changed, and the ships began the long journey across the ocean. For five miserable months, the colonists lived on biscuits baked as hard as iron and meat pickled in salt. Their fresh water, stored in barrels on board, was green with algae. They had barely enough to drink—and no one took a bath for the entire voyage!

Finally, the North American coast came into view. On May 13th, 1607,

the three ships landed. The colonists staggered to shore and found shady green woods, streams of water, and tall thick grass. The spring weather was warm and sunny. The forests were filled with wild geese, deer, and rabbits; the river nearby teemed with fish, crab, and oysters. The "Indians" (Native Americans) who lived nearby seemed friendly. The colonists, sure that they had found the perfect place for their new home, built a few huts and named their colony Jamestown, in honor of King James.

The settlers didn't spend very much time building, though. They spent their days searching for gold! One of Jamestown's leaders, John Smith, soon grew exasperated. "There is no talk, no hope, no work, but dig gold, wash gold, refine gold, load gold!" John Smith complained. He knew that the colony's grain supplies, brought from England, would soon run out. He was afraid that the Indians might grow hostile. He wanted the colonists to grow their own crops and to build walls to protect themselves.

Meanwhile, the Indians near Jamestown were watching the English explore further and further into their country. They were worried! How much land did these newcomers want? One day, Indian warriors attacked a little group of colonists who

were out searching for gold. The colonists, frightened by the attack, finally listened to John Smith's advice. They built a fort with thick log walls to protect them. And they began to clear fields for crops.

But it was too late.

The English had arrived in Jamestown during a terrible drought. There was no rain. The fields were dry, and the crops didn't grow. Water grew scarce—and dirty. The grain from England was almost gone. The colonists began to grow ill from disease and starvation. One colonist, George Percy, wrote, "There were never Englishmen in such misery as we. Five men had to divide a small can of barley soaked in water. Our water was filled with slime and filth. Sometimes three or four men died in a single night!"

By fall, half the colonists were dead. And then winter came. The men who were still alive huddled in their icy wooden huts. Their feet froze; their joints were swollen from cold and hunger.

But John Smith was determined to make Jamestown a success. Just before Christmas, he rounded up a few healthy men to go looking for food—and perhaps for a better place to settle. Smith and his companions paddled their way slowly up the river that ran deep into the woods. The water grew shallower—and narrower. Overgrown banks rose up on either side. Briars reached down into the canoe. Finally, they came to a fallen tree, collapsed across the water, and could go no further.

John Smith pushed the canoe to shore and got out. "Go up on the bank and cook our food," he told his companions. "I'll see if I can figure out where we are."

He walked away along the muddy edge of the water. The river turned and twisted. Soon, he lost sight of his men. He paused, looking around. Suddenly he heard a faint rustle ahead of him. An arrow struck him in the thigh and bounced off his heavy leather breeches! John Smith drew his gun, shouting a warning. He could see two Indians, half hidden by the undergrowth, notching arrows to their strings. He backed away from them—and stumbled into the shallow river. More Indians appeared from the brush around him. Smith, floundering in the

river mud, shot all the bullets out of his gun. By the time he ran out of ammunition, he was stuck to his waist in muck.

Smith laid down his empty weapon and held up his hands in surrender. The Indians pulled him out of the mud and marched him through the thick woods. Finally, they arrived at the edge of a large clearing filled with Indian houses. Children played nearby; women were cooking and carrying water. A large hut stood at the village's center. It was the palace of Powhatan, the great Indian chief.

Inside, Powhatan was lying on thick mats, wearing strings of pearls and a rich garment of raccoon skins, surrounded by his chief warriors. He stared at the muddy, disheveled Englishman for a long time.

Of course, the two men did not speak the same language. But John Smith had learned a few words of the Indian language, and some of the Indians knew a little bit of English. With the help of these translators, Powhatan and John Smith managed to talk to each other. Put into English, their conversation might have sounded something like this:

"Why have your people come to our land?" Powhatan asked.

"We had a fight with the Spanish," John Smith lied, "and they drove our ship onto your coast. Now the ship has sprung a leak. We have to stay here."

"Why have you and your companions wandered so far into my territory?" Powhatan demanded.

John Smith had to think fast. "Great Chief," he said, "we intended only to attack your enemies, who live up the river and who fight against you."

"If that is true," Powhatan said, "we can live in peace together."

So John Smith promised that the colonists would not attack Powhatan's people—and Powhatan let him return to Jamestown unharmed. Eventually another Jamestown leader, John Rolfe, married Powhatan's daughter, Pocahontas. Now there was truly peace between Jamestown and Powhatan's tribe! The Jamestown colony grew stronger and stronger. The English were in North America to stay.