

JAMES II

KING IN EXILE



‘Impressively researched and stylishly written ...’

THE SUNDAY TELEGRAPH

JOHN CALLOW

KING IN EXILE

JAMES II: WARRIOR, KING AND SAINT

JOHN CALLOW



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John Callow
ON THE EVENING OF THE
327TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BATTLE
OF DUNKELD, 21 AUGUST 2016

A NOTE ON DATING

Although many European nations had adopted the Gregorian Calendar over the course of the seventeenth century, the British and Irish remained stubbornly loyal to the Julian Calendar until 1752. The result was that their calendars lagged some ten days behind that which was generally used on the Continent: and by 1700 this difference had further increased to eleven days.

To add to this confusion, however, the days of the week on either side of the Channel were reckoned to be exactly the same. Understandably, this presents some particular difficulties for the historian, especially as it renders certain key dates in the calendar – Christmas, Easter and saints' days – of great significance for their celebration on one side of the Channel, but of absolutely no account on the other. In this manner it might be possible for a writer to describe Christmas Day 1688 as having actually been celebrated in the British Isles on 5 January 1689, if only the New Style – European – Calendar was employed throughout the text!

Consequently, the dating given relates to the setting of the events described with a single date given to denote action in the British Isles or Ireland, while both dates – or a simple abbreviation denoting the New Style dating – are provided for occurrences in Western Europe. As in modern usage, the new year is taken as beginning on 1 January and not 25 March.

ABBREVIATIONS

<i>Ailesbury</i>	T. Bruce, Earl of Ailesbury, <i>Memoirs of Thomas, Earl of Ailesbury</i> , 2 vols (Westminster, 1890)
<i>Berwick</i>	J. Fitzjames, Duke of Berwick, <i>Memoirs of the Marshal Duke of Berwick. Written by himself</i> , ed. C.L. Montesquieu, 2 vols (London, 1779)
<i>Burnet</i>	G. Burnet, <i>History of His Own Time</i> , ed. M.J. Routh, 2nd edition, 6 vols (Oxford, 1833)
<i>CSPD</i>	<i>Calendar of States Papers Domestic</i>
<i>Dangeau</i>	J. Davenport (ed. & trans.), <i>Memoirs of the Court of France ... From the Diary of the Marquis de Dangeau</i> , 2 vols (London, 1825)
<i>Devotions</i>	G. Davies (ed.), <i>Papers of Devotion of James II</i> (Oxford, 1925)
<i>DNB</i>	<i>Dictionary of National Biography</i>
<i>Evelyn's Diary</i>	W. Bray (ed.), <i>Diary and Correspondence of John Evelyn</i> , 4 vols (London, 1850–2)
<i>Hyde Correspondence</i>	S. Weller Singer (ed.), <i>The Correspondence of Henry Hyde, Earl of Clarendon and of his Brother Lawrence Hyde, Earl of Rochester</i> , 2 vols (London, 1828)
<i>JSAHR</i>	<i>Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research</i>
<i>Letters of Madame</i>	G.S. Stevenson (ed. & trans.), <i>The Letters of Madame. The Correspondence of Elizabeth-Charlotte of Bavaria, Princess Palatine, Duchess of Orléans</i> , 2 vols (London, 1924)
<i>Life</i>	J.S. Clarke (ed.), <i>The Life of James the Second, King of England, Memoirs Collected out of Writ of his Own Hand, together with the King's Advice to his Son, and His Majesty's Will</i> , 2 vols (London, 1816)
<i>Marchioness de Sévigné</i>	A.M.F. Duclaux (ed. & trans.), <i>Letters of the Marchioness de Sévigné</i> , 10 vols (London, 1927)

INTRODUCTION TO THE SECOND EDITION

THE KING OVERTHE WATER

In 1999, a great storm rolled across the Sperrin Mountains. Along the banks of the River Foyle, power lines were felled, slates blown down and an old Sycamore tree, which had stood in the gardens of Cavanacor House for more than 350 years, was uprooted and dashed to the ground. At its end, as in its beginnings, its life was both noteworthy and emblematic. As a sapling, planted by a servant of the Keyes family, it had been considered an exotic introduction to County Donegal, a symbol of wealth, good taste and of the permanence and increasing security of the new Protestant gentry who farmed the former *Gaeltacht* lands in Ulster. Cavanacor had once been built for defence, on a slight promontory, around a loop-holed courtyard. It was now a family home, as opposed to a simple economic unit or a stubborn political incursion into the traditional fiefdoms of the O' Donnell's and the O' Briens. When war threatened once again and a newly raised army tramped towards the walls of Derry, John Keyes – the owner of the estate in April 1689 – was anxious to display his political credentials and to demonstrate his allegiance to James II, God's anointed King of Great Britain and Ireland, who had so unexpectedly and dramatically arrived upon his doorstep.

The advance guard of the Jacobite army had already forged ahead to the market town of Strabane, where it would quarter that night, and we cannot now know whether Sir Neil O' Neill watered his dragoons' horses at Cavanacor's well, or if Michael Roth, a young captain in the Royal Guards, paused to give the house a second glance as he cleaned the spring mud from his boots. But, like Keyes', their stories characterised the nature of the war in Ireland and the remarkably heterogeneous nature of the Jacobite cause. O' Neill recalled with pride a heroic past when his family had provided its own kings for Ulster, and had been one of the new elite – promoted by James II at Whitehall – to rebalance power within his three kingdoms and to remould the English military establishment. Michael Roth, born in Kilkenny, had fled to France alongside his king but had returned home to Ireland as James's trusted messenger in January 1689, the herald of war. He brought with him a first-hand account of the Revolution in England and instructions delivered to Lord Tryconnel, at Dublin Castle, that the country should now be prepared to fight.¹

Yet, if O' Neill and Roth appear to have been focused only upon their military objectives, King James still considered that the religious and temporal authority exerted over all his subjects by his office as sovereign would be sufficient to deliver the citadel of Derry into his hands without the need for a shot to be fired. The night before, he had written to the garrison offering terms for its surrender which, as he approached Cavanacor, were being delivered by his emissary, Archdeacon Hamilton, to Governor Lundy. He, therefore, had time for leisure. The day was warm and fine, and so he chose to picnic under the shade of the Sycamore tree. The manor house, too small to accommodate the King's staff group, was cleared of its furniture, cutlery and

plates as Keyes and his servants moved the entire contents of the dining room out into the open air and served an impromptu luncheon to a grateful, and clearly impressed, James. The King was struck by the loyalty and generosity shown to him by this Protestant landowner, and charmed by both his surroundings and by John Keyes' conversation. When later, the tide of the war began to go against the Jacobites and reprisals were taken against local Protestants, James's word and favour held good. Other farms burned in the valley, but Cavanacor remained untouched by royal troops and Rapparees. As late as the 1820s, visitors to the house were still being shown, approvingly, the oak table at which the King had sat and the 'antiquated china' from which he had dined, while the Sycamore stood as a tangible, living link to the visit of James II and the events of the war of 'the Three Kings' in Ireland. Its fall, just short of the new millennium, saw its wood harvested for use in art installations that memorialised its historical connections, but which also, in some respects, echoed the Jacobite iconography circulating immediately after the king's death.² In this way, the fallen tree stump gave birth to new shoots of life.

A decade on from the publication of the original hardback edition of *The King in Exile*, it would appear timely to chart what fresh influences the book brought to bear upon the study of the development of the late seventeenth-century state, and what new work has been produced since, on the life and career of the last Stuart king. What is apparent from the outset, and not a little disappointing, is that the period defined by the Restoration, the Glorious Revolution and the reign of Queen Anne remains very much the 'Cinderella' of early modern studies. It cannot compete, in terms of either public and media interest, or the sheer volume and intensity of academic output, with the appeal of the Civil Wars and the English Republic. This stems, in part, from the profound cultural changes that have fundamentally transformed British and North American society since the 1960s and re-ordered the priorities of citizens, politicians and professional academics, alike. As a consequence, the specific literature on James II, his fall from power and final exile published since 2005 has reflected trends already apparent at the time of the publication of *The King in Exile*, and variations and developments upon a theme, rather than radical new developments or theorisations. In that time, two new biographies of the King have appeared. The first, *Jacques II d'Angleterre: Le Roi qui Voulut être Saint*, published in 2011 by Nathalie Genet-Rouffiac, is an elegant, single volume of the King's life and reign that synthesises an impressive sweep of primary and secondary, largely English, sources.³ As its subtitle suggests, the book was shaped, in fair measure, by an understanding of both the importance and evolution of James's personal imagery and his religious thought, which were central to both *The Making of James II* and *The King in Exile*. The second biography, David Womersley's *James II*, was printed in 2015 as part of Penguin Books' ambitious series chronicling the lives of England's monarchs.⁴ Though constrained by the need to conform to a standard format and length, in some respects it is a curiously pitched work that tells us very little about the King's final years and concentrates disproportionately upon demolishing the 'Straw Man' of the Whig, or liberal, historiography of the Revolution of 1688–89. This attack on the complacency of the Whig narrative avoids a wider consideration that Butterfield (perhaps the original revisionist) was, himself, engaged in advancing an ideologically loaded, politically, religiously and socially conservative – with both a big and small 'C' –

version of the past. Within this context, it may well be that the works of Fox, Macaulay, Trevelyan and Churchill actually possessed a surer feel for and used a greater breadth of sources, in a far more nuanced manner, than many of their later critics cared to admit or were capable of doing themselves.

The major addition to our knowledge of James's conception of kingship, governance and authority – in effect, the exception to a number of weighty tomes on the Revolution of 1688–89 that proves the rule – is the late Kevin Sharpe's monumental *Rebranding Rule: The Restoration and Revolution Monarchy, 1660–1714*, published posthumously in 2013.⁵ Compelling, highly readable, comprehensively researched and written in the rare spirit of academic generosity and thorough engagement with his sources, this is a volume that served as a fitting, though untimely, coda to an exceptionally important and creative career as an historian. The length of the work, which runs to over 800 pages, and its profuse deployment of carefully chosen images in order to reinforce its arguments enables the book to chart developments in the personal imagery and political thought of the last Stuart monarchs in far greater detail and coherence than ever before. Sharpe provides a superb exegesis of the polemical Jacobite literature produced at St Germain, surveys the deployment of artistic patronage by the exiled court in far more realistic and reasoned terms than hitherto, and provides a compelling vision of the old King's writings as marking not a renunciation of the world but a practical 'call to arms' for his followers.⁶

Besides these new additions to the field of study that have appeared over the last decade, it is only fair to acknowledge the oversights and omissions contained in *The King in Exile*, written at a time before the global dominance of the internet and the development of search engines for libraries and archives had made the card index and the profession of the bibliographer completely redundant. In this manner I missed Éamon Ó Ciardha's splendid recovery and evocation of *Ireland and the Jacobite Cause, 1685–1766. A Fatal Attachment*. In many respects this exceptional and highly original piece of research presents the missing piece of the jigsaw, providing evidence of popular Jacobitism within a specifically Gaelic Irish context to sit alongside the established studies of its English and Scottish expressions. In particular, Ó Ciardha demonstrates the durability of the Jacobite movement in Ireland, which fuelled the diaspora of 'the Wild Geese', creating a beautiful new strand of political poetry and swelling the armies of Europe's Catholic monarchies until finally subsumed by the nationalist impulse and radicalism of the United Irishmen in the 1790s.⁷ This is cultural history, and 'history from below', as it should be practised and presented – with secret Jacobite messages hidden away in paintings, and toasts to the 'King Over the Water' and to James II as the 'Merchant' decoded and contextualised.⁸ In a similar fashion, I had accepted Macaulay's conception of William III's invasion force, which has since been comprehensively overturned by Ossi Paarnila's article on 'The Legend of the Finnish Mercenaries at the Boyne, 1690'; and, with hindsight, in the light of Michael McNally's study of *The Battle of Aughrim, 1691*, I probably underestimated the potential for Jacobite military resistance and resurgence in Ireland after the flight of James II from Kinsale.⁹

On a more fundamental level, I was led by the existing literature on the culture of the exiled Jacobite court to overemphasise James's reliance upon the Jesuit Order and

to underestimate the strong Jansenist current within the King's religious thought. James knew, respected, and sought to assist Antoine Arnauld, the intellectual powerhouse of the movement whose unorthodox religious ideals and polemics aimed against William III as the 'new Absalom, new Herod, new Nero' and the 'new Cromwell' had managed to render him a fugitive from both the French and Dutch authorities. To the horror of Madame de Maintenon, King James read books by Port Royal authors that were otherwise banned by the Bishop of Paris, while his protection and patronage of disgraced Jansenists such as Brother Lancelot and Ernest Ruth d'Ans – a one-time confessor at Port Royal – stood in stark opposition to the policies of both the Gallican Church under Louis XIV and Mary of Modena's court at St Germain after 1701¹⁰. Whereas James had promoted the career of Dr John Betham, a noted Jansenist sympathiser among the émigré community, engaging him as the tutor to his young son, his widowed Queen moved quickly to strip him of his offices. In 1703, the titular James III (who has gone down in history as the 'Old Pretender') was made to write a letter denouncing his teacher for his heretical opinions, while Mary of Modena presented Betham with a *lettre de cachet* that forced him to flee from St Germain and seek sanctuary within the walls of a secluded sanctuary¹¹. Such insights and a closer reading of his religious ideas serve to make King James II a far more interesting and in some ways sympathetic figure than might otherwise have been the case.

Save for these caveats, I would not seek to overhaul *The King in Exile* or to substantially alter or qualify the arguments and visions I presented. Helped by uniformly generous and positive reviews in both academic journals and broadsheet newspapers, it proved influential among those working at the intersection of politics and cultural history and also among military historians. It would appear significant that the book was welcomed in Ireland, and sold well both north and south of the border. It certainly rescued James, during his final exile, from the condescension of history. This was far more than 'the useless fag-end of his life ... devoted to God', stripped of all hope and rationality, and even of the desire 'to try to reclaim his throne'.¹² Ironically, given that James seems not to have been original or even terribly effective in his deployment of artistic and intellectual patronage – St Germain failed to produce another John Michael Wright, still less a Godfrey Kneller, or to mount an effective counter-attack to the works of John Locke, Thomas Wharton and the other framers of the Bill of Rights – the most powerful and original expression of Jacobite exile was to come from the nib of the King's own pen. This may seem surprising, given that James's apparent stupidity has become a standard characterisation among his modern biographers. Yet, the fact remains that he was capable of fashioning the most dramatic, elegant and gripping of all seventeenth-century military memoirs, which, even if dictated to a secretary, seems not to have been 'improved' or reshaped by the editorship of either John Caryll or the Cardinal de Bouillon.¹³ Viewed from this angle, the final exile actually provided James with an unprecedented freedom for an early modern head of state to think and to reflect upon the trajectory and the wider meaning of his political career. It was not by chance that, in a court dominated by middle-aged and elderly adherents, the supreme form of expression chosen by the King should be the memoir. In this manner James refashioned himself as a new King David, to be remembered 'in all his afflictions', while his image-makers displayed him, after the collapse of his military hopes at La Hogue, as a disinterested and

wronged man of letters. Lost in his thoughts, one engraver pictured him poring over his books, oblivious to the pet dog jumping up at his arm chair desperate to gain his attention, the crown of England set aside on the table beside him and a new crown of thorns fastened by his ungrateful subjects to his careworn brow.

This is not an unthinking, or heavy-handed choice of imagery, and the King's memoirs and works of religious devotion are not the products of an untutored, dull or unimaginative mind. Not every man is possessed with charm or marked by political acumen, and James's inability to dissemble to any great extent might even be thought laudable in another walk of life. In an age of trimmers, who prized personal advancement above all else and who would turn deception and greed into refined, almost gentlemanly arts, there may even be something strangely noble in James's headlong – and sometimes brutally stark – adherence to what he saw as principle and to a religious conviction that within the context of English politics at the Restoration could not possibly lead him to any other destination but his own particular Golgotha. His tragedy was, therefore, rooted not so much in the loss of his power, hereditary rights and influence, but in the enormous human cost that resulted from his immense, misdirected self-belief. Among his own supporters there were few winners and a vast number of losers. Jacobite exiles from all three of his kingdoms would be forced into penury – lonely old men and women scratching livings on street corners, inhabiting attic rooms in far-flung tenements that stretched from Lisbon to Rome and from Vienna to Warsaw, rehearsing tired arguments and standing upon former honours and titles that were meaningless to their neighbours and new masters. Such glory as there was came at an extremely high price and was measured in ruined lives and maimed bodies, churned-up by the grapeshot at Landen and Cremona, and levelled by the less remarked – but equally deadly – camp fevers that inevitably accompanied the passage of the Wild Geese battalions to the theatres of successive European wars.

Against the odds, a handful would, however, somehow survive and even prosper. Though his kinsman, William, would die in the defence of Arras in 1710, and his estate at Kilkenny would be sequestered after he elected to follow his regiment to France, in 1691, Michael Roth thrived through a combination of luck, intelligence and military ability. He fought with distinction, in King James's Foot Guards, at the battle of Landen, in 1693, and after the disbanding of James's independent army, following the Peace of Ryswick, he passed into the service of Louis XIV. At Malplaquet, he came close to stemming the tide of the battle, leading a desperate cavalry charge that tore into the heart of Marlborough's allied army. After holding a frontier fortress against the odds, he was decorated with the Order of St. Louis and in 1718 became colonel of his old regiment before serving under the Duke of Berwick in Spain. Retiring from active service with the rank of lieutenant general and a further honour as a Knight of the Royal Order of Calatrava, he spent his latter years in the well-earned comfort of his estate at Hautefontaine in Picardy¹⁴. There, amid the sloping woodlands, the game-pens and the high towers of his chateau, he never found the time nor had the inclination to set down his own memoirs. It is a shame, as he had such tales to tell. History, after all – as King James's life so amply and eloquently demonstrates – is not necessarily written by the winners, nor the losers, but simply by those that are literate, know the value of the art and have a care.

CHAPTER ONE

REVOLUTION

They came by night. The rain did little to muffle the sound of massed drums as the Dutch Guards bore down upon Whitehall. They hardly broke step as they crossed Hyde Park, colours unfurled, their progress now revealed to anxious civilians only by the hundreds of bright burning sparks thrown upwards from the tips of slow-matches lit in readiness for battle. From his window, the Imperial Ambassador Philip Hoffman watched their coming and made note of it for his master, while at St James's Palace the alarm was sounded and English soldiers were called out to bar the way. The elderly Earl of Craven, veteran of a hundred different fights from the Low Countries to Germany and England's own civil wars, barked out words of stern command and hurriedly dressed the ranks of his Coldstreamers, reinforcing the guard posts and strongpoints that linked together the royal palaces, even as the Dutch troops cleared the tree-line and advanced to within fifteen paces of his own men. Yet, as anxious soldiers took aim and prepared for the shock of action, the Dutch suddenly stopped short and the voice of their commander, Hendrik, Count Solms rang out demanding immediate admittance to Whitehall Palace and an audience with the King who sheltered within.¹

During the past weeks, there could have been few emotions that James Stuart, King 'by Grace of God' of England, Scotland and Ireland, had not come to experience. Confronted by an invading army led by his own son-in-law, William, Prince of Orange; deserted by a great swathe of his general officers and by many of those councillors whom he felt had owed him the most; he had chosen, on 10 December 1688, to surrender his army and flee into exile rather than to attempt to shore up his tottering regime. As risings flared up against his rule in the north and in the Midlands, he had burned the writs for a general election before escaping across the Thames and casting the Great Seal into the waves. If these moves had been calculated to utterly disable the executive, to prevent the calling of a fresh parliament in his absence and to reduce the administration of the three kingdoms to a state of utter ruin in his wake, then they failed, through a combination of misjudgement and sheer bad luck, in all but the creation of chaos upon the streets and a palpable sense of fear which pervaded every corner of his lands. James had not counted on either the willingness of his opponents to ignore the extent of the royal prerogative, as he himself had conceived of it, or on the persistence and potency of their calls for the convening of a new and 'free parliament'. Moreover, he had reckoned without the vigilance of a gang of Kentish fishermen who mistook him for a fleeing priest and seized him near the coast at Faversham, abruptly ending his plans for a quick and easy flight from the impending collapse of governance that he had helped to precipitate. Writing later, Bishop Burnet would emphasise the importance of this particular incident for James's subsequent career and would lament sadly that: 'if he had got clear away, by all that could be

judged, he would not have had a party left: all would have agreed, that here was a desertion ... But what followed upon this gave them [i.e. his supporters] a colour to say, that he was forced away, driven out ... [and] from this incident a party grew up, that has been long very active for his interests'.² Herein would lie the genesis of Jacobitism, but for the moment, however, the King had the indignity of being roundly cursed by his captors, of having his pockets rifled, his money stolen and his treasured piece of the 'true cross' prised out of his ornate crucifix and thrown away.³ While rumours reached the French court that James had disappeared, been seized by the Prince of Orange, or been drowned out at sea, he was sent back to London to experience at first hand the breakdown of law, order and authority for which he himself in large measure had been responsible.

In the absence of the King, the capital had been convulsed by two nights of rioting and looting. Roman Catholic chapels and the houses of known 'papists' and foreign ambassadors had been targeted by the mob, and the King's printing press had been smashed and burnt. Lord Chancellor Jeffreys, abandoned by his sovereign lord and unable to secure a passage to Hamburg aboard a collier's brig, had been taken in the upstairs room of a tavern at Wapping, and though his face had been blackened with soot and his distinctive eyebrows shaved in an attempt at disguise, he had still been recognised. It was only with some difficulty that he was saved by soldiers from a lynching, before being safely conveyed to the Tower, with the crowds crying out behind him that as he had shown no mercy to those who had come before him at the Western Assizes, so now he should expect none for himself.⁴ More serious still, the order to disband the royal army at Uxbridge had left some 4,000 confused and leaderless, but heavily armed, men to seek whatever sustenance they could from scouring the surrounding countryside. While some units retained their coherence and marched off to swell the ranks of William's advancing army, many of the soldiers suddenly found themselves bound together only by the bonds of religion and nation, now that their oath of loyalty to their King had effectively been absolved. Militant Protestants headed for London and joined with the apprentice boys in the search for Jesuits and in the firing of 'popish' chapels, while hundreds of Irish Catholic soldiers – who just the day before had been numbered among their comrades, if not perhaps their friends – were left stranded far from home, the objects of almost universal suspicion and hatred. Reports on the movements of this latter group (who were desperate to secure a safe passage home), combined with fears of a general rising in Ireland, led to rumours that multiplied like wildfire of King James's unleashing of a vengeful Irish army upon his English subjects, and of outrages committed by them as far apart as Wigan, Birmingham, and Halifax. The Common Council in London hastily called out the militia and sanctioned the deployment of artillery at key points throughout the city and Westminster, while throughout the long 'Irish night' of 12 December, frightened citizens barred their doors and stockpiled arms in full expectation that a new St Bartholomew's Day Massacre was about to be visited upon them. Though the dawn came without any serious incident, and the majority of the Irish soldiers had by now split up into small groups hurrying as best they could along back roads towards the relative safety of north-western ports, the council still thought fit, on 14 December, to promise to pay them in full the wages owing them 'till they are employed or provided for', on the condition that they would promise to behave 'peaceably' and safely deliver

up all of their weapons to the Tower of London. If not, they were warned in no uncertain terms that they were liable to be apprehended and dealt with by the local authorities, under common law and the vagrancy acts, as though they were no more than roving bands of cutpurses, paupers and vagabonds.⁵

Thus, although it was with some trepidation that King James began his journey back to his capital on 15 December, there was considerable relief in the minds of many of the populace at the thought of his coming. After days of fear, arbitrary violence and barely contained mob rule, the return of the King seemed to hold out the promise of a swift accommodation with the lords and with the Prince of Orange, and of a resumption of public order and political legitimacy without recourse to a bloody and protracted civil war. Consequently, even though James had slipped away from his capital barely four nights before like a thief in the night, his return now took on something of the aspect of a triumphal progress. Country gentlemen began to attach themselves to his escort on the road from Kent, and at Dartford, on the morning of Sunday 16 December, as his original detachment of Life Guards was replaced by fresh troopers, he was acclaimed and cheered on by the men with wild expressions of joy. At Blackheath, it seemed for a moment as though the city itself was emptying in order to welcome him home. Londoners thronged the road and jostled for position behind his official retinue. Bonfires were lit and bells sounded as the crowds pressed so tight that the cavalcade could scarcely pass, and two prominent merchants made so bold as to thrust their heads into the royal coach in order to counsel a sudden change of plan. Barges already waited for the King at Lambeth, to carry him straight back to Whitehall, but it was now argued that it would be more fitting if he were to drive back through the city and show himself to his expectant subjects, who – in their eagerness to catch the least glimpse of their sovereign – hung from every available window and balcony, and lined the route from Southwark through Fleet Street and the Strand up to the very gates of his palace. Yet if James expressed himself ‘hugely surprised with the unexpected testimonials of the peoples affection to him’, he chose only to remember that up until that moment the capital, once the bastion of the Exclusionists who had attempted to block his path to the throne, had never shown him any lasting or particular affection.⁶ He did not now seek to recreate the scenes that had greeted the return of his brother in May 1660, or to play upon the potent and extremely popular mythologies that had grown up around the Restoration in the intervening years. Lacking the common touch, he made little attempt to capitalise on the spontaneous outpourings of loyalist sentiment that greeted him, did not think to abandon his coach in favour of horseback and chose neither to address his subjects nor to grasp at the hands that waved with such persistence at his window as he passed them by. Indeed, it was fear and the need to ensure his personal security, rather than the desire to seize control of the situation and re-establish his connection with the groundswell of Tory England, that now came to dominate his thoughts. News had already reached him that the companies of the First Foot Guards stationed at Whitehall had declared their allegiance to the Prince of Orange, and it was this knowledge that finally prompted him to give his grudging consent to the change in his proposed route. James flatly refused to be separated from his loyal escort, and realised that the cover afforded by the city crowds would render it difficult, if not impossible, to divorce him from his protective phalanx of Life Guards and Horse Grenadiers without the risk of serious

disorder and bloodshed. Moreover, the Earl of Craven, who had devoted both his life and his considerable fortune to the support of the Stuart cause, was still quartered at the Royal Mews with several companies of his own Coldstream Guards. It mattered little now that in the first flush of his kingship, James had tried to wrest the Earl's commission away from him in order to bestow it upon one of his favourites. There had never been any doubt as to where Craven's loyalties lay, and as the King drew near to Whitehall, the pickets stationed there melted away and were replaced by the Coldstreamers who cleared a path for the easy passage of his coach through the still-swirling crowds, who cheered James back into his palace and on 'even to his Bed Chamber door'.⁷

Word that the King had returned to his capital amid scenes of genuine popular acclaim was brought to the Prince of Orange at Windsor Castle that evening, and could not have been more unwelcome. Since the mass defections which had swept the royal army on Salisbury Plain in late November, turning his opportunistic raid into a serious bid for lasting control of English foreign policy, he had enjoyed an unbroken run of successes. He had continually consolidated his position, conducting a stately progress through the West Country before thrusting out with a cavalry screen down the length of the Thames Valley in preparation for a final victorious drive on the capital. This was now threatened, as the self-appointed band of peers who had sat at the Guildhall since James's flight – and who had been negotiating terms with William for the summoning of a 'free parliament' and the quartering of his troops in London – were now found to be responsible for dispatching the Earl of Ailesbury to treat with the King, and for countenancing the despatch of Feversham and the Life Guards to secure his person and bring him back from the coast. It was imperative, therefore, that James did not regain his capital and, if he was not to be permitted to escape immediately into exile, then at least he should be safely contained in the south, within convenient reach of the shores of France.

However, in the meantime, Feversham had roused himself from the lethargy that had so often served to cloud his military career in the past, rendezvoused with his beleaguered sovereign and set off on the return journey, riding hard for Windsor with neither 'Trumpet or passeport' and carrying a letter that had the power to frustrate all of the Prince of Orange's carefully laid plans.⁸ This unexpected and wholly unwelcome communication, received by William on 16 December, now came to represent the most formidable obstacle to a smooth and almost seamless transition of power. James had written that he wished to meet face-to-face with his son-in-law at Whitehall, permitted him to bring as many troops as he felt fit for a bodyguard with him to the capital, and offered to put St James's Palace at his complete disposal for the duration of the talks. Faced with the prospect of James simply re-assuming his mantle of kingship, the confident talk among the Prince's Whig partisans of an already-effected 'abdication', and William's own hopes of securing the throne with the clear blessing of a majority of the English people, were suddenly put in jeopardy and appeared to be premature in the extreme. However, though a negotiated settlement might well have been acceptable to the Prince a month before, and certainly would have done much to dispel the fears of many Anglicans about the future of their Church, by the middle of December the stakes had been raised significantly. Having risked everything and come so close to a spectacular success, William was in no mood

to compromise and return home, however favourable the terms might be, if his father-in-law were to retain the faintest hint of autonomy. Similarly, there was little appetite among any of the lords who sat as a shadow government at the Guildhall, or among the radicalised tradesmen who had taken control of Newcastle, Nottingham, York and Bristol, and the common soldiery who had grounded their weapons after the debacle on Salisbury Plain and readily taken up the boisterous refrain of ‘Lilliburlero’, to have to face the rejuvenated power of their monarch or possible charges of high treason. These very different and shifting constituencies now looked to the Prince of Orange for a lead. A lesser politician might well have hesitated, but William’s statecraft – his consummate ability to sense exactly when to shift from tact and diplomacy to a sudden devastating show of force – now asserted itself. Having heard Feversham out, and read the King’s letter, he gave no reply but ensured that the luckless peer was forced to surrender his sword and placed under arrest the very moment that he left his presence. Without waiting for further word from the Guildhall, William prepared his forces for a push on to London and dispatched one of his most trusted emissaries, Willem Zuylestein, to seek out James in order to advise him to come no closer to the capital than Rochester.⁹ For once, however, it was James’s luck that held good and Zuylestein, advised only of the King’s original schedule, spent a wasted afternoon at Lambeth waiting patiently for the arrival of the royal party beside the empty barges, completely unaware of the intervention of the two London merchants and the resulting change of itinerary.

Thus, while William’s message went undelivered, James’s servants began to sweep out the grates in his palace and light the fires in order to take the edge off winter’s chill. After experiencing such turmoil, profound personal danger and so many bitter reverses, it is unsurprising that the King should have been weary that night, or that he slept soundly with the dust of the city still on his clothes. What is remarkable is that, after he had so unexpectedly regained control of the capital, he should have spent the afternoon and evening following his return in an attempt to resume his office as though nothing at all out of the ordinary had occurred since his hurried departure the previous Monday night. Protocol had to be observed, as evidenced by his interruption of his journey at Somerset House to pay his respects to Catherine of Braganza, the dowager Queen, or when, with some understandable embarrassment, Lord Chamberlain Mulgrave resumed his duties at the head of the royal household despite having broken his wand of office, to signify the end of the reign, not six nights before. There was simply no discernible sense of pressing haste in either the King’s movements or his judgements once he had finally managed to alight from his coach at the Banqueting House. What did appear to matter to James, however, was maintaining the practice and dignity of his God-given office as King. Craven’s men, having secured the palace, were set to work vetting a representative sample of the city’s poor and sick before they were ushered in to be touched by James for the ‘King’s Evil’.

In the meantime, a handful of courtiers had returned to their master’s side, enabling James to reconvene the sitting of the Privy Council. Though the French Ambassador thought that the King still longed to be gone, there was certainly an attempt by all present to maintain the fiction that all was well and to underscore both the permanence of the body’s existence and the seriousness of its deliberations. The meeting was formally minuted, as James had a proclamation drafted forbidding rioting

and looting, and appealed to the local authorities to restore order. He also consciously reached out to those of his servants who had never failed him, and directed Samuel Pepys to do all he could to open up the traffic through the seaports and to reinvigorate the flow of foreign trade, which had dried to all but a trickle amid the fears of invasion and war. Yet if Pepys remained at his desk in the Navy Office and loyalists such as Craven still held their lord lieutenancies in the counties, they were increasingly isolated figures, who held the form of title without possessing the power or wherewithal to effectively carry out their duties. At the beginning of the month it had still been possible for Pepys to authorise the dispatch of one of the royal yachts to spirit away the Queen and the Prince of Wales to France. Now, with the navy almost entirely defected to the Prince of Orange, many of his staff absenting themselves from work, and the great ports in the hands of the insurgents, the command to restore the entire trade of the nation carried authority scarcely further than the threshold of his office door. Similarly, though Craven still theoretically commanded the militia in Middlesex, his three thin companies of the Coldstream Guards, spread out across the two royal palaces and the length of the Mall, could just be said to be in control of Westminster, but not of the city, and still less the outlying royal dockyards. The Tower of London, where an ailing Jeffreys still anxiously awaited his fate, was in rebel hands, while the docks and Tilbury Fort were firmly under the control of William's men. Consequently, when Zuytlestein finally arrived at Whitehall and presented his redundant order to James, not to venture back to a capital that he had already occupied, the Dutchman found himself in a stronger and more useful position than might otherwise have been the case. It was his own master who was making all the demands, urging the King of England to be gone and to no longer risk fresh disturbances of the peace, while James had slipped all too easily into the role of the supplicant, pleading for an audience with William, almost at the latter's own convenience. Moreover, Zuytlestein had had the wit, and sense of theatre, to turn a mission apparently rendered pointless by unexpected events to good, and possibly even devastating, account. He said nothing in his interview with the King about the arrest of Lord Feversham, but allowed that shocking intelligence to be delivered to James a few minutes after his withdrawal. The seizure of his messenger might well have called for a retaliatory action against William's own man, but James thought fit to permit Zuytlestein to return unmolested through his lines, bearing only a reiteration of the King's earlier offer for peace talks at St James's. That William's treatment of his servant, or his profound silence on the subject of a negotiated settlement, already appeared to be answer enough, did not seem to have occurred to James as he arranged for Zuytlestein's safe conduct back to Windsor. Relieved of the threat to his person, the courier made use of the time remaining to him at Whitehall, in the manner of any good officer of dragoons, by taking careful note of the strength and dispositions of the royal guards, and left James to absorb, in private, the full force of the threat signalled by Feversham's seemingly arbitrary imprisonment.¹⁰

Despite the Irish scare, it was the city's small but influential Roman Catholic minority that had suffered the worst from the King's absence. On the approach of invasion, many members of the religious orders had begun to change out of their habits and to slip from public sight, while James's former confessor and member of the Privy Council, Father Petre, wasted little time in finding a pretext to attach himself

to the embassy sent out to Paris at the close of November. However, for those lay members of the faith who had not the opportunity, the means or the inclination to flee from their homeland, the nights of 10–11 December must have been nothing short of terrifying, as bands of their fellow citizens – often every bit as frightened and jumpy as they – swept through the streets on the look-out for ‘papists’ and Jesuit priests, manhandling suspects, forcing their way into homes and administering their own brand of random, and inevitably rough, justice. While the spines of books culled from the Spanish Ambassador’s sumptuous library crackled and spat in fires by the roadside, families of distraught English Catholics were observed bundling up their possessions and wheeling them from house to house, calling to friends for succour, and praying that the Prince of Orange might come to save their property and restore some semblance of order to their shattered lives. The reappearance of James in the capital on the evening of 16 December unsurprisingly aroused exactly the same sort of hopes and expectations, and many ordinary Catholics, together with those priests, monks and nuns who had spent many of the last weeks in hiding, understandably gravitated towards Whitehall in search of much-needed aid and protection. Unfortunately, such scenes merely served to confirm the worst nightmares of their Protestant neighbours, of a priest-ridden court and of a King who was merely the servant of the Pope, utterly enthralled and corrupted by the agents of foreign powers. Sadly, James’s own conduct did little to help matters. With some difficulty, his Privy Council – now numbering a mere eight members, all of whom were Protestants – prevailed upon him not to provoke matters any further with his rebellious subjects by ordering the jails to be opened and all those Catholics arrested since Monday to be released. At dinner, it was noted that he was accompanied to the table by Dominican monks, while a Jesuit said grace, and at midnight he celebrated a private Mass, with only his Household priests in attendance. News of his particular devotions spread rapidly, as did many other scurrilous stories about the conduct of the Jesuits and Irishmen who had flocked to his side. Lord Mulgrave was supposedly shocked by the confidence, and utter extravagance, of one priest who asked him to buy in a completely new set of furniture for his rooms, as he intended to continue in them for a long while to come.¹¹ As a consequence, James’s hurried promises to the four Anglican bishops who had rejected overtures from the peers lodged at the Guildhall in order to visit him, that he would undertake never again to employ Catholic advisors, rang more than a little hollow. Of more immediate concern to the King, however, was his inability to pay his followers. Although the Treasury Office would begin its business afresh on the following morning, there was little or no ready money to hand at Whitehall on his return. Consequently, James spent much of Sunday afternoon and evening attempting to extract loans from those courtiers who had ventured back to him. Despite the applause of the crowds outside, the lords and ladies present generally concluded that the King was a bad investment, and were not prepared to risk their fortunes in so foolhardy a service. Tellingly, this was also true of those like the aged Lord Belasyse, who had survived the worst of Oates’s slanders during the Popish Plot and who had latterly served as a faithful councillor to, and moderating influence upon, his impetuous and headstrong sovereign. A request for £3,000 now appeared too much to ask even from this wealthy stalwart. Moreover, the King’s demands for money may well have deterred many other nobles from attending court the next day, when the