



Charles the Second: King of England, Scotland, and Ireland (Oxford lives)

Ronald Hutton

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In *Charles II*, Ronald Hutton, Britain's foremost historian of the English Restoration, offers a comprehensive biography of the king who returned to England in triumph after the death of Cromwell, re-establishing the monarchy that continues to reign to this day. Hutton reveals the excitement and tragedy of Charles's youth, as the realm erupted into savage civil war, leading to the execution of his father King Charles I at the hands of the rebellious Parliament. He offers a vivid account of Charles's long, desperate struggle to claim his crown, which included the catastrophic invasion of Cromwell's England that ended in a lonely flight, as he hid in orchards, ditches, and the famous Boscobel Oak. Yet Charles persevered, and was finally recalled from exile by an exhausted nation in 1660.

Charles emerges in this narrative as a "monarch in a masquerade," a charming, duplicitous, and astonishingly lucky king who spent less time governing than he did at play (when he wasn't hunting, racing, or sailing he was with one of a series of mistresses--he acknowledged seventeen bastards during his lifetime). His reign endured catastrophe and unrest, from the plague and the Great Fire of London, to defeat at the hands of the Dutch, to Protestant hysteria about a Catholic plot to seize the throne, to the disastrous results of his own secret diplomacy. But Charles in his good fortune survived it all, and this lively, eminently readable book presents an unmatched account of the private life and dramatic public career of a fascinating and enduring king, while capturing the politics and personalities of a momentous era.

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