



The King's Touch

Jude Morgan

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This beautifully crafted novel brings to life an era famous for its dramatic events—the Plague, the Great fire of London, the Dutch Wars—and notorious for its sexual license and scandal. It was an era in which the King of England became a byword for sensual indulgence—enjoying ardent affairs and nurturing an addiction to witty company, horse racing, and high living, all the while maintaining an iron hold on his throne amid intrigue and violence. *The King's Touch* tells the story of Charles II from a uniquely enlightening perspective—that of the first-born son he loved above all others, but who would never become his heir.

The King's Touch Details

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From Reader Review The King's Touch for online ebook

Victoria says

This was a beautifully written, memoir type novel of James Scott, Duke of Monmouth, eldest illegitimate child of Charles II of England and his mistress Lucy Walter.

The book was quite slow to start. I actually gave it a few months break as it just wasn't captivating me.

However, I picked it back up again this week and found it to be wonderful. Strange.

The story is narrated by James himself. He writes of his childhood of poverty, his mother, the discovery of who he actually was, meeting his father, living with his grandmother Queen Henrietta Maria in France, his love of his Aunt Minette, growing up around his father, at his father's court, his rise to fame, the honours heaped upon him, his dislike and enmity between himself and his uncle, James Duke of York. He speaks candidly of everything that happened. The rebellions, the wars, the plots. The characters are ALL so well developed and really fleshed out. I found many of them to be extremely likeable, especially James(Jemmy) himself. Queen Catherine is also a likeable character as is Nell Gwyn. No surprises that James of York and also his Duchess Mary of Modena are both unlikeable. Jemmy has a good relationship with both of his cousins, the Prince and Princess of Orange, William and Mary. It's refreshing to see this pair portrayed as a fairly normal couple instead of William been shown as a bore or mean or emotionless. Mary is shown to be a good wife but not the usual show of silly and pathetic devotion that is often portrayed. They are a young couple, married for state reasons but are shown to fall in love. Their marriage becomes one of love.

The narrative comes to an end not long after the death of Jemmy's father, King Charles. Here, his mistress, Henrietta Wentworth takes over. Jemmy heads over to England to rise up against his uncle, the new king. His rebellion is destined to fail and he is eventually captured. Brought to London he is lodged in the Tower and swiftly executed.

I would thoroughly recommend reading this book to anybody with either an interest in history or an interest in a good book. This book, although slow to start, had me gripped in the latter half, I loved it.

Misfit says

Beautiful prose and characterizations, but the slower pace will not appeal to all readers. The King's Touch is the story of Charles II's illegitimate son Jemmy, James Duke of Monmouth. Written in the first person POV, Jemmy recounts his life story from being removed by Charles from his mother's care, through his relationship with his father and his aunt Minnette, Charles' restoration to the English Crown and finally ending at the start of the Monmouth Rebellion at Charles' death. The life and reign of Charles II and the main characters (and Charles' many mistresses) are fairly well known, and not worth rehashing further.

Those looking for an action packed, bawdy romp through the Courts of Charles II should look elsewhere, this is not the book for you - I'd recommend Forever Amber. Yes, we see his mistresses and the intrigues and scandals of the Restoration period, but in lesser degree - even the plague and the great fire of London are almost afterthoughts in the story. As other reviewers have noted, what this book is about is Jemmy and his relationship with his very enigmatic father as Jemmy struggles to come to grips with his illegitimacy as others intrigue to have him declared legitimate and the true heir to the crown.

As stated previously, this is not a fast paced book and one that should be read in small doses so you can sit back and savor them slowly like you would a very decadent truffle or a fine glass of red wine (or both!!). Unfortunately for me, I had this as an interlibrary loan and not renewable and found myself under the gun at the last minute to blow through 500 + pages and I feel it impacted my enjoyment of this a bit. 4/5 stars.

Rio (Lynne) says

So boring! This was my second attempt at a book on Lucy and James. Total snoozefest. Not sure how that could be possible with their stories, but it was.

Marita says

The King's Touch is a literary novel about the Restoration in England in the 17th century, as told by James, Duke of Monmouth, the son of Charles II and Lucy Walter.

James, Duke of Monmouth by Willem Wissing (Wikipedia)

James, or Jemmy, was born in Holland when Charles was still in exile. At age seven he was taken from his mother and given the name James Crofts after Lord Crofts, his newly appointed guardian. **“Lord Crofts had only recently been ennobled by my father – the handing out of empty titles was one of the few kingly things he could do in his exile – and whether I came as part of the bargain I never knew”.**

Jemmy came to know his grandmother, the dowager queen Henrietta Maria, and he became very attached to his aunt Henriette-Anne affectionately known as Minette. Minette was also dearly loved by her brother Charles. In his teens Jemmy married Anne Scott, a titled heiress chosen for him by Charles, and became James Scott, Duke of Monmouth. This was not a happy marriage, both parties being indifferent to each other: **“And periodically, rather like a wife reminding her man to wind up the clock, she reminds me of my nuptial duties, and so we get them over with.”** (view spoiler)

Jemmy allows us to follow Charles through his triumphant entry into London (1660), his coronation, his marriage to the Portuguese princess Catherine of Braganza, his many affairs, the plague (1665), his heroic efforts during the great fire of London (1666), the Dutch wars, succession issues and his relationship with son Jemmy, sister Minette and brother James and eventually his death and its aftermath.

Charles II by John Michael Wright (Wikipedia)

There are some great descriptions of the great fire of London. Here is an excerpt:

“And as evening came on – not with any real darkening in the sky, but rather a relinquishing of light, as if the fire had vanquished nature itself – the flames began to dance on the roof of St Paul’s. The great cathedral went to its death most horribly. It shed a lurid and brilliant light on the faces of the watchers, who broke out in strange dire groans, for this seemed indeed the very heart of London in its stricken throes; and like a living creature the building appeared to sweat and melt with ghastly peelings and sloughings, as if the stone were skin.”

Charles was determined to have a beautiful new London: **“By making new times,’ my father said. For he had a vision already before his mind: London as a phoenix rising new-made from its own ashes.”** To this end he employed Christopher Wren.

There is some excellent characterisation. There is Charles who appears to be genial and magnificent but who on occasion reminds Jemmy of “bars and shutters”. A man who had lost everything and then regained a kingdom, a man who behind his mask of geniality is wary. Jemmy spends his life craving love and recognition from his father. Minette, loved by all (except her husband Philippe, brother to Louis XIV of France): **“Minette was so dutiful –had it not always been impressed on her that she must be good, a lone light in a dark world? – that people forgot she was human.”** The many mistresses of Charles are also wonderfully portrayed, with Nell Gwynn as the most memorable. Not a noblewoman, but simply an actress who had been an orange seller, she is astute and has an apt nickname for everyone.

It is not necessary to have a knowledge of this history in order to read the novel, but it helps. I had only the most basic knowledge and after a couple of chapters I paused and started reading a non-fiction book of the period, King Charles II by Antonia Fraser, so that I would have a better understanding of that history. Having read the books in tandem (I haven't quite finished the non-fiction book) I am happy to report that the novel sticks to the facts and is historically accurate. It is not a book to read in a single sitting. It is slow-paced, but it fleshes out the people and tells the story well and it is ultimately a rewarding read.

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Some favourite quotes:

“He would be absolute, and he paid an absolute price.” (referring to Charles I who was beheaded)

“She spent a lot of time in front of her mirror, but she never did really see herself.” (of Lucy Walter)

“We are all alone for ever, each and every one of us. We do best not to pretend otherwise.”

“He who lives on hope dies fasting.”

“He is so prodigiously tedious that it becomes almost fascinating in itself. You wait in delirious suspense, thinking he must surely say something interesting if only by accident.” (referring to James, Charles's brother)

“Lie with a dozen women, manage it discreetly, and 'tis very well. Love and be loved by one woman who isn't your wife, and you are a disgrace.” (Jemmy of his relationship with Henrietta known as Harriet)

“Well, I would not be surprised to see those clock hands turning backwards one of these days, for I move so much in the past.”

“Again, I look in that mirror, and there is another mirror within it.”

“A man who hides in a cave all his life is safe – but has he lived?”

““The crown is settled on his head. That is sure. We have yet to see how it fits.””

Mela says

It is very rare that I can completely agree with a main summary on GR. It is exactly what this book is about: **A beautifully crafted novel which brings to life an famous era.** No flaws, no weak points.

I will stress it out: I avoid long novels, I am always afraid they will bore me. This one never did. What is

even more important, although the book described much known period of UK history (even to me) and moreover (I admit) the pace of plot wasn't like in an action movie, **it was so well written, so interesting that I was reading it totally fascinated.**

One of the best things in this book was the way of character's describing. It is hard to know and understand someone you see and speak to every day. So much more difficult is to understand people who lived so many years ago. **Jude Morgan gave us very real people but he didn't tell us what we should think of them.** Charles II, Henrietta Maria, James II, Minette, Louise XIV, Philippe, Gaston, Jemmy (Duke of Monmouth), lord Hyde, Lucy, Barbara Castlemaine, Nell Gwyn, general Monck, William of Orange.... I could go on with the names for some time.

Really, I think it was the best thing. Even now, I don't know what to think about most of them.

Thanks to Jude Morgan, they were just humans. Nothing more and nothing less. I can easily tell you that I didn't like some of them, and I adored and loved others. But, nonetheless, all of them were revived (they lived) on the pages.

I am asking myself what were the pillars of this novel. My answers:

1) a charming and beautiful language/prose

2) magnificent and gripping attempts to understand all those people (so important for, not only British, history)

3) so moving, complicated and (again) important relationship between Charles II and his son, Jemmy

4) the truth that being a man (human) it is one thing and being a part of the history of the country (the civilization), being responsible for the course of history is a different thing.

What you will not find in this book?

1) As I wrote, a fast action and big events. I mean, there were of course Restoration, the Plague, the Great fire of London, the Dutch Wars and so on but they were rather short described.

2) A romance. There were love stories/romances but it wasn't like e.g. in Forever Amber or Katherine or so many other historical fictions. One can tell, here we had the love between father (the king) and his (illegitimate) son, instead of the love between woman and man.

So, summarizing, I think **this novel isn't for those who want only to learn the historical facts nor for those who want a fast pace of action. It is for those who want to try to better understand those times and people.** I can't tell that I know and understand them now completely, but I feel that I am nearer to them, that I can almost understand them... And I do not expect anything more... You can't achieve more.

Mary says

Morgan closely follows the known history of James "Jemmy" Scott, Duke of Monmouth, the illegitimate son of King Charles II, and writes of Charles' exile on the Continent during the Cromwell years and Restoration to the throne of England from young Jemmy's point of view. Morgan envisions Jemmy as desperate for his father's love and acceptance especially after his mother's unfortunate death.

Morgan also casts the famous struggles between the Duke of York and the Duke of Monmouth (Jemmy) over the succession as Jemmy's fight for his father's unconditional love. King Charles II's reign also saw the Plague and the Great Fire of London and Morgan does not stint on the historical detail. In fact, it's a bit of a slog, to be honest. Some of the foreshadowing I loathe crept in and without clear dramatic high points sometimes I was confused if the dire event foreshadowed had happened yet or not.

A surfeit of research make this an enlightening but rather heavy read.

Randy says

I've had something of a crush on the Duke of Monmouth ever since I watched *The First Churchills*, decades ago on Masterpiece Theater, and this book did not disappoint. I have a biography of poor Jemmy in my TBR pile, and I'll be very surprised if he turns out to be very different from Morgan's picture of him. The years in Europe with his mother, the occasional visit of his father, and then Jemmy's "kidnapping" by Charles's men were touching; his years in Restoration England, where Charles treats him as, in almost everything, a son, and then the years apart were handled beautifully. Was Monmouth a bad guy? No worse than others in his age, and I choose to believe he was loyal to his father in most things. This is the man Bonnie Prince Charlie should have been, a true warrior and a believable lover. If only Jemmy had won out against his evil uncle, we might still have a Stuart on the throne of Britain. I look forward to read more of Morgan.

Karen Brooks says

The King's Touch by Jude Morgan is a beautifully written book. Ostensibly the story of James, the eldest illegitimate child of Charles II, who later becomes the Duke of Monmouth, it's also about an indulgent and indulged king who was more politically canny than he is often given credit. It's also about personal and public sacrifice and its hefty cost.

Through young James, or Jemmy's, eyes, the reader is invited to live through the fraught years of Charles Stuart's exile on the continent. We're also drawn into Jemmy's early peripatetic years, as his mother, the fallen woman, Lucy Walter, drags her son from city to city in a desperate effort to reclaim the one man she says she loves but who appears to have discarded her – the throneless, Charles. Lucy's descent into poverty as well as the poor decisions she makes regarding men and actions, naturally affects her son and daughter and it's only when Charles "rescues" his child, young Jemmy, depositing him with his exiled mother and younger sister, that Jemmy's life begins to transform.

When Charles is invited to return to England in 1660 and is crowned monarch, it's not long before his family, including Jemmy, follow. From poor urchin to indulged bastard son of the "merry monarch" we follow Jemmy's life and travails as he learns just what it means to be a part of this newly formed court. Yearning for his father's affection, and attention, he is slow to grasp an understanding of his place in this new, decadent world. Morgan is at pains to portray this as an almost deliberate naivety, a stubborn refusal to abandon the dreams of childhood and a belief in good. She also juxtaposes Jemmy's faith in others, in the world, against Charles' more cynical one – a view born of his experiences.

As much a pawn as a beloved child who becomes a needy but loving man, Jemmy's relationship with his father is wonderfully explored, as are the complexities of the emotional baggage both men carry.

Against the backdrop of political and religious strife and intrigue, endless wars and the scheming of ambitious women and men, never mind the sensual hedonism of the Restoration court with all its bawdy affectations and superficial promises, this is a marvellous story of familial love, passion, loathing, forgiveness, repentance and revenge.

The dialogue is rich and laden with meaning; the language so beautifully and readably crafted – I could not only imagine those involved (most often, Charles and his son) but relished the turns of phrase (some plucked straight from history) and the feelings they evoked. The settings are gorgeously and accurately drawn – as is the history – and the psychological and political games carefully constructed. It's easy to see how those involved with the Stuart dynasty rose or fell according to their ability to aid, counter or manipulate the plots and cunning of others.

But at the heart of this novel is one needy man and the father who, though he alternately embraces his son and in doing so hints at a destiny not his to bestow, also rejects him and what he represents. It's a tale of how

family and even love must be sacrificed at the altar of politics and a greater good while also questioning why this must be so.

A magnificent read for anyone fascinated with the Stuart dynasty and the major players throughout the turbulent years of the Restoration or for those interested in a portrait of fathers, sons and families who aren't free to love where and when they please.

Margaret says

I've had this hanging around for a while and decided after reading Jenny Uglow's book on Charles II that now was the right time to read it. This is the story of Charles II's restoration to the throne, told by his eldest illegitimate child, James, eventually duke of Monmouth. As I expected from Morgan, the historical detail is very well done, as is the portrait of Charles II (and of his younger sister Minette).

I was never quite convinced, though, by the portrayal of Monmouth. He comes off as so much more intelligent than I think the historical Monmouth must have been that I couldn't really believe that he would so often act in such stupid, unthinking ways. Still, I enjoyed it quite a bit and would recommend it to those who like historical fiction.

Jennifer (JC-S) says

'It is a common enough error to suppose ourselves at the centre of the world.'

This novel presents as a first person biography, written by Jemmy, also known as James Crofts, who became James Scott, Duke of Monmouth. James is the illegitimate son of Charles II, and he writes of his complicated relationship with his father.

James was born in 1649 to Lucy Walter in Rotterdam, the same year as Charles I was executed. His early life with his mother and half sister Mary was marked by poverty and by a succession of men through Lucy's life as she looked for security. Prince Charles removed Jemmy from his mother, and sent him to live with Lord Crofts in Paris. Here, he also spent time with his grandmother, Charles I's widow, Henrietta Maria and with his aunt, Henrietta Anne ('Minette').

In 1660, when Jemmy was 11, Charles II was restored to the English throne. As a consequence, Jemmy's life changed immeasurably. In 1662 Jemmy is brought to England to become part of the court, but he is never able to move past his early hardship and insecurity. Jemmy wants very much to believe his mother's claim that his parents entered into a secret marriage, and eventually to see himself as his father's heir.

In 1663, aged 14, Jemmy was married to Anna Scott, aged 12, the Duchess of Buccleuch. In a very short period of time, Jemmy Crofts becomes James Scott, Duke of Buccleuch and Duke of Monmouth. Having risen so far, Jemmy expects even more and his insecurity makes him vulnerable – especially to those who would seek to exclude Charles II's brother, the Catholic James, Duke of York from the succession.

I enjoyed Jude Morgan's portrayal of Charles II, of his mistresses Nell Gwyn and Barbara Castlemaine, of his queen Catherine of Braganza, and his mother Henrietta Maria. I wished that Monmouth was less impulsive and headstrong, more secure and sensible. Jude Morgan brings the period of the Restoration court to life: with its tragedies (the Plague, the Great Fire of London, the Dutch Wars), excesses (including the

many mistresses of Charles II, and secret deals with France. Despite the detailed view given by Jemmy, Charles II remains elusive. Our view of him through Jemmy's eyes is never complete and while Charles is willing to pardon Jemmy, he is never going to appoint him as his heir.

Alas, Jemmy will never be satisfied with anything less.

'It has been said that ill luck is a ship belonging to the Stuart family: always it comes back to them.'

Jennifer Cameron-Smith

Anita says

Written in the first person through the eyes of Jemmy, aka James Crofts who became James Scott, Duke of Monmouth, this is a story of his father, King Charles II and his influence on young Jemmy's life.

Born in Rotterdam in 1649, the same year as the execution of his grandfather, Charles I, James was the child of Prince Charles' exile, although he and the boy's mother, Lucy Walter, parted long before he regained his throne.

James's early life was blighted with poverty as well as his illegitimacy and with little money for Lucy Walter and James' half sister, Mary, his mother began relationships with a series of men in the hope she would be cared for.

Prince Charles took over Jemmy's upbringing and sent him to Colombes outside Paris, to live with his grandmother, the dower Queen Henrietta Maria, the bitter papist French queen who mourned her martyred husband all her life.

Jemmy forms a firm and lasting attachment to his aunt Henrietta Anne, 'Minette' and creates a jealousy in his father whose devotion to his sister was particularly close. Minette accepts a marriage to the odious Monsieur, Phillippe duc d'Orleans and despite the truth of the situation, the author tells us Minette lived her destiny and wouldn't have changed anything.

Jude Morgan puts himself into this lost child's head with great style, explaining his insecurity, his loyalty to his much-maligned mother and his belief that his parents entered a clandestine marriage.

When Jemmy was eleven, Charles II was restored to his throne and his life altered beyond recognition. In 1662, Jemmy is brought to England to be part of the court at Whitehall and he becomes the crown prince in all but name with servants, clothes, riches and honours. Jemmy never forgot his humble and impoverished origins, which colour his life from then on.

King Charles II marries him to a considerable heiress, Anna Scott, the Duchess of Buccleigh whose name he adopts, when he is only fifteen. The marriage is not a success, but this spoiled pair are the darlings of the court.

In Jemmy's own words, he freely admits to taking everything Charles II gives him and expects even more, excusing himself at the same time that all he really sought was his father's love.

Jemmy clings to the belief he isn't a bastard, despite his father's frequent insistence that he and Lucy Walter were never married. When the Exclusionist, Lord Shaftesbury, who hates the king's brother and heir, the Catholic James, Duke of York, Jemmy finds himself embroiled in schemes to have his uncle excluded from the succession and Jemmy himself legitimised and declared heir to the throne.

Despite the author's mitigation that Jemmy was unsure of his place in the world, and Jemmy himself protesting that he was a romantic soul not sharp enough to detect ambition in others and was led astray, again and again Charles pardons him and buys off his conspirators.

Does this handsome, rich and impetuous boy learn?

Like the true Stuart he was, of course not. By the end of the book he is a thirty six year old man with a mountain of regrets, banished from England and living in exile with his mistress, Lady Henrietta Wentworth.

Before he can obtain that final pardon he always believed would be his and go home, Charles II dies and the new king closes the ports to stop his troubled nephew from returning.

The footnote is written by Lady Henrietta Wentworth, who outlived him by only a year to die at twenty-six. She gives a brief account of the ill-fated Monmouth Rebellion where Jemmy attempts to raise an army and rid the country of his uncle. Jemmy seriously underestimates James II and when he is caught and captured, his previous actions tell me that he fully expected to be pardoned, but his uncle is crueller than his father ever was and has him executed.

More like an autobiography than a colourful romp through Restoration times, Queen Henrietta Maria comes across every bit as awful as history has painted her. The story is very sad in places as Jemmy explains his sense of isolation from a family he yearns to be part of but is kept on the sidelines by his illegitimacy.

This is a sad and beautiful story of a man for whom the world truly wasn't enough. Of a king who understood his son completely and loved him so much, he continued giving and forgiving, knowing he sealed his tragic fate at the same time.

Jude Morgan doesn't shirk from Jemmy's bursts of ill behavior at times, his acquisitive greed and the fact that he slept with his father's mistress, Barbara Castlemaine. Jemmy makes no excuses for himself, in fact he doesn't try to explain it away and leaves the reasoning to the reader.

His portrayal of the court of King Charles II is mastery and his pastiches of Queen Catherine of Braganza, Barbara Castlemaine, Louise de Keroualle and Minette, the oh-o-good-but-proud princess-in-exile are lovely.

MAP says

2.5 stars

This book follows the life -- the entire life, practically in real time -- of Charles II's oldest and most beloved illegitimate son, James Scott, the Duke of Monmouth.

The 2 stars is not for the writing, which is very good, or the characterizations, which are excellent, or the historical content, which is, as far as I can tell, impeccable. Rather, the problem lies with the person of Lord

Monmouth himself.

James, for most of his life, is an observer of great things, rather than a doer. Even when he does do things, it's often times as the unwitting pawn of somebody else, making him an almost entirely passive character. And as I learned from seeking out and then being disappointed by historical fiction of Elizabeth of York, choosing to have such a person as a first person narrator often traps the author into describing the events, rather than showing them.

Also, one of the things I enjoy about historical fiction is getting inside people's heads, and yet one of the main character traits of James is that he is thoroughly unable to do so. Not only with his enigmatic father, but also with his uncle, his father's mistresses, his own wife, etc, because he never learned to understand or engage in the deceptiveness and slyness of his father's court.

By the end of this book, I was damn ready for it to be over. This has not, however, discouraged me from seeking out more by Jude Morgan. I think this was just a very difficult historical figure to base a book around.

Orsolya says

Those familiar with “Jemmy”, Charles II’s first bastard son, generally have one image of him: that of a spoiled boy who eventually attempts to gainsay the throne. Jude Morgan reveals this much talked about but little known figure in “The King’s Touch”.

“The King’s Touch” is told from perspective of James, the son of Charles II and is featured in hindsight with James looking back on his life. This creates a memoir-like feel with an adult perspective. Morgan successfully implores this tactic as “The King’s Touch” strongly recreates events and allows the reader to live them versus Jemmy simply recalling them. On the negative side, however, it isn’t mentioned what stage of life Jemmy is telling his life story from which creates some awkwardness and unanswered questions.

Although “The King’s Touch” begins somewhat slowly and is quite heavy as it covers Jemmy’s entire life; it picks up speed and is easy to read. Furthermore, the novel perfectly blends history with fiction with a ratio which eliminates fluff but also isn’t boring. The known facts concerning Jemmy are accurate while the historical liberties are not over dramatized and feel realistic.

Also strengthening the novel is Morgan’s ease of introducing characters with strong personalities but without the distress of “keeping track” of them. The reader is not overwhelmed although a genealogical table would be helpful for those readers unfamiliar with the Stuarts. Morgan also portrays each figure (Jemmy, Charles II, Minette, Queen Catherine, etc) with depth, dimensions, and brings them to life. The reader truly feels the veils dropped and the inner thoughts of each are revealed.

Some readers will not be satisfied by the ebb and flow of the pace within “The King’s Touch” due to its biographical feel of Jemmy’s life. This means that many times “nothing” of note is happening, per se, and instead the novel follows the history of the times versus dramatic plots which some readers of HF seek. “The King’s Touch” is detailed and quite stretched out. Admittedly, this raises the question of a “point” or conclusion (the point *is* Jemmy’s life). “The King’s Touch” brings Jemmy to the forefront and is a character study following his growth and relationships (versus the court intrigues of Charles II).

As expected, the pace of the novel continues to quicken as the novel begins to grow and introduces the mistresses of Charles, the Plague, the Great Fire, etc; which grip the reader’s attention. Also growing is

Jemmy's character which strengthens, evolves, and is quite compelling. Again, one has to be reminded that the novel is fictional and not a first-hand account due to its believability.

Although Morgan's language style is rich and eloquent, there are some annoyances such as the constant use of the descriptor of "booby" (akin to "fool"). Also odd are Jemmy's constant story breaks where he says his "lover just read over my last lines and thought..." Instead of adding to the memoir feel, this interrupts thought streams and causes confusion as the reader doesn't even know who this lover is until the end of the novel.

Even though Charles's mistresses are not main characters, the portrayals are accurate and Nell Gwynne fans will rejoice in her ability to jump off the pages even with a few short lines (as one would expect with Nelly!).

The conclusion to "The Kings Touch" is somewhat weaker than expected with a build up to a climax which seeming doesn't occur. Furthermore, the after word courtesy of Jemmy's mistress takes away from the novel versus adding to it especially with the annoyances of calling Jemmy "my love" every two seconds even when describing battles ("My love's men", "My love's sword"). The novel could have done without this section.

Overall, "The King's Touch" is a very strong novel with depth, strong characters, historical accuracy, and a great 'angle'. Although it is a bit long and tedious at times; it is much recommended for lovers of Restoration England.

Note: I have read "Indiscretion" by Jude Morgan and found "The King's Touch" to be much more enjoyable.

Gary says

I thoroughly enjoyed this very accurate and well researched historical docu novel . Jude Law does his research in way that puts him on a par with the late genius, Jean Plaidy.

Traces through the first person narrative, the life of James, Duke of Monmouth, out of wedlock son of Charles II. James (known to his family and friends as Jemmy) traces his life from when he was seven living with his impoverished mother Lucy Walter, formerly mistress to the exiled Charles II, in Rotterdam in the Netherlands.

It then traces James life at the court of King Charles II after the Restoration , his turbulent relationships with his father the king, this closeness to his adored aunt Henriette of England (Minette) , the king's sister, who died suspected poisoned by her French husband, Prince Phillippe, second son of Louis XIV. Phillippe was not just a homosexual but a hater of women who shows his contempt in his speech with vile remarks about his wife's female anatomy. Flaunting his male lover in front of Minette and as well as physically mistreating her. As well as describing his loveless marriage to Anne Scott, 4th Countess of Buccleuch.

His relationship with his doctrinaire, hard-nosed and redoubtable grandmother the Queen Dowager Henriette Marie of France , his liaison with Barbara Castlemaine, one of the king's most passionate mistresses and his friendship with the amiable and lovely London cockney actress and one of the king's favourite mistresses Nell Gwynn . His closeness to his cousin Mary and friendship William of Orange (later to reign as William and Mary of England) and his enmity with Charles brother James of York (later James II)

Little battle action but does focus a chapter each on the major events of the day, the Plague, the 1666 Great Fire of London and the Wars with the Dutch.

But I like my historical novels to focus on relationships and feeling while educating us about the events.

End Jemmy's first person narration with his exile in the Netherlands-and his making plans to return to

England to overthrow his tyrant uncle James II

His subsequent failed Monmouth rebellion and execution are narrated by his great love Henrietta, Baroness Wentworth in the epilogue.

James of Monmouth was a man loved by the people who showed sign he would have made a great king.

Certainly better than James II and his descendants would like be a great improvement over the Hanoverian Georges

Very pleasurable and informative reading , brings something to life of the Restoration period.

Asma says

Jude Morgan is one writer to always look forward to whenever he releases historical fiction. His regency books are simply fantastic, and brings up the spirit of Georgette Heyer and Jane Austen. His other books bring historical characters to life, truly delving deep into their times and lives. So I was excited to read The King's Touch, as I was looking forward to a beautiful narrative. And it truly was beautiful.

It's clear that Morgan balanced the line between historical accounts and the fictional, and he did it very well. The book chronicles events of the exiled royalty Charles II and his family, up to his restoration, and eventual death. While it's interesting that the narrator was his illegitimate first born, it felt for most of the book that James, the son, was passive. And his passivity brought up the same conflicts over and over again, making it painfully repetitive throughout the book. It was also a little sad and frustrating that James' own story was secondary to his father's for most of the story up until just before the book ended.

Another thing was, while it was so beautifully written, it could have been condensed if the repetitive parts were removed. The book picked up for me towards the end as the story worked its way to concluding events, but before that, things just took too long.

It's definitely an interesting, and beautifully written account of the Merry Monarch, but I don't think it's the best of Morgan's books.

For more book reviews, check out my blog [A Reading Kabocha](#).
