Kings over the Water: The saga of the Stuart pretenders



Of all royal lost causes, none has a stronger fascination than that of the Stuart Pretenders to the British throne. For well over a century, four successive Stuart kings laid claim to the crown. The first was James II, deposed in 1688 by his daughter, Mary, and her husband, William of Orange; then came James III (the Old Pretender) and his son, Charles III (Bonnie Prince Charlie the Young Pretender); finally, there was Henry IX (the Cardinal King) who died in 1807, the last descendant in direct and legitimate line from James II. This book tells the story of these four men, and of their families. Although it gives a graphic account of the 45 and other Jacobite uprisings and explains the background to political events, it is, first and foremost, a biographical portrait of the exiled Stuarts. It is an account of their public and private lives, their personalities, their relationships with others, and the extraordinary hold which they never ceased to exercise over their adherents. It is a book about people; a book about the twilight of one of the worlds most romantic, colourful and ill-fated dynasties. The fascinating, often bizarre, story of the kings over the water is ideally suited to Theo Aronsons exceptional talents, and especially his ability to bring his subjects vividly to life and to make clear the labyrinthine relationships of European royalty. His reputation as an historian, based on such books as The Kaisers, A Family of Kings and Grandmama of Europe, is deservedly high. Of his most recent study, Victoria and Disraeli, C. P. Snow wrote: It is bright with intelligence and human wisdom.

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