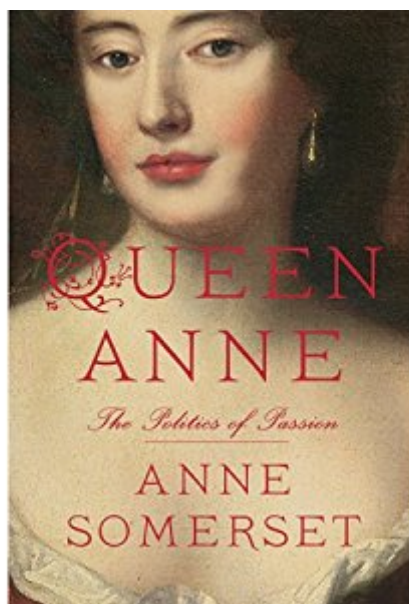


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Queen Anne: The Politics Of Passion



Synopsis

She ascended the thrones of England, Scotland, and Ireland in 1702 at age 37, Britain's last Stuart monarch. Five years later she united two of her realms, England and Scotland, as a sovereign state, creating the Kingdom of Great Britain. She had a history of personal misfortune, overcoming ill health (she suffered from crippling arthritis; by the time she became queen she was a virtual invalid) and living through 17 miscarriages, stillbirths, and premature births in 17 years. By the end of her comparatively short 12-year reign, Britain had emerged as a great power; the succession of outstanding victories won by her general, John Churchill, the Duke of Marlborough, had humbled France and laid the foundations for Britain's future naval and colonial supremacy. While the queen's military was performing dazzling exploits on the continent, her own attention - indeed her realm - rested on a more intimate conflict: the female friendship on which her happiness had for decades depended and which became, for her, a source of utter torment. At the core of Anne Somerset's riveting new biography, published to great acclaim in England, is a portrait of this deeply emotional, complex bond between two very different women: Queen Anne - reserved, stolid, shrewd; and Sarah Churchill, Duchess of Marlborough, wife of the queen's great general - beautiful, willful, outspoken, and whose acerbic wit was equally matched by her fearsome temper. Against a fraught background, the much-admired historian, author of *Elizabeth I*, tells the extraordinary story of how Sarah goaded and provoked the queen beyond endurance.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Queen Anne is the long biography of Great Britain's last Stuart Monarch. Anne reigned over Albion from 1702-14. It was a tumultuous time in British history. Consider the following: 1. England was waged in a lengthy war against France in the War of the Spanish Succession. Such countries as Holland, Spain and Germanic lands were also involved as Allies of Great Britain. 2. Furious political strife was manifested in Parliamentary battles between the emerging parties of the Whigs and Tories. The Whigs were strong believers in a Protestant Succession in the British monarchy. Whigs welcomed religious nonconformists to their ranks. The Tories were strong defenders of the Church of England opposing themselves to nonconformity. Like the Whigs they too were anti-Roman Catholic. 3. England faced a huge national debt due to her constant warfare on the Continent. 4. During Anne's reign the political union between Scotland and England became reality. The nation became known as Great Britain. 5. Anne's half brother James Francis Edward was a Roman-Catholic who wanted to reign as King of England. Anne was the younger daughter of James II (1685-88) the Roman Catholic King of England. James II was forced to flee to France due to the victory of William of Orange in 1688. William's wife was Mary the older sister of Anne. She and Anne did not get along well. Anne was born in 1665 in London. She was a quiet person who was quite shy. She became Queen of England in 1702 following the death of William who was her brother-in-law. Anne had a happy marriage to George of Denmark. Queen Anne suffered seventeen pregnancies with only one child living following birth. The young Prince of Wales tragically died in early childhood leaving Anne bereft of progeny.

The most I knew about Queen Anne, the last of the Stuart monarchs, was to have given her name to a style of architecture and furniture developed in her reign. This long and detailed biography from Somerset paints a rich portrait of a passionate if less than intellectual Queen; one who succeeded in uniting England and Scotland under one Parliament, one who was firmly Church of England, one who was frequently in pain and imbibed too often probably because of it, in love with her husband Prince George of Denmark, and despite some 17 pregnancies did not produce a living heir to succeed her. Anne had a short reign, and her seeming unremarkability compared with such glorious predecessors as Elizabeth I relegates her to a status of that of merely serving as the bridge between the Stuarts and the Hanoverians. As the niece of Charles II, daughter of James II, the throne was not expected to become hers, but when it did she accepted it with a deep sense of responsibility. She proved herself a hard worker who attended more Cabinet meetings than any other ruler, and despite being retiring and shy, became an accomplished public speaker. The relationship between Anne and her best friend and First Lady of the Bedchamber, Sarah, Duchess

of Marlborough, is portrayed here as fraught and contentious, to say the least. Sarah, witty, outspoken, and temperamental, seems hell-bent on controlling the less fiery Anne and peeved and churlish when she cannot. Much of the negative things Sarah wrote about Anne seem to stem from a sense of frustration, perhaps even jealousy, that Sarah cannot be the wizard behind the curtain, as it were. I read an advance copy of this book with no illustrations, but there is a handy House of Stuart family tree in the front.

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