

enamoured of the young wife of the Earl of Essex, and the Countess, who returned his passion, tried to get a divorce from her husband under the most shameful circumstances. Rochester was at the time very much under the influence of an able but unscrupulous man named Sir Thomas Overbury. It appears that Overbury raised objections to the marriage on the ground of "the baseness of the woman," and Rochester was determined to get him out of the way. Instigated by the Countess, he persuaded the King to send Overbury on an embassy to Russia, but Overbury refused to accept the appointment, and so he was committed to the Tower. While there he was poisoned by a paid emissary of the Countess, and immediately after a divorce was obtained through the influence of the King, and the guilty parties married with great state, Rochester having been raised to the peerage as Earl of Somerset in honour of the occasion. But the horrible crime soon came to light, and the minor accomplices were tried, convicted and executed; Somerset and his wife were both found guilty and sentenced to death, but their lives were spared, and they were imprisoned. Seven years after, they were released, and spent the remainder of their lives in obscurity.

James's new favourite was George Villiers, the son of a Leicestershire squire. Villiers was a vain, arrogant and ambitious man, but handsome and attractive, and soon acquired a complete control over his royal master. James showered wealth, titles and honours on his minion, and in 1617 created him Earl of Buckingham and Lord High Admiral. The whole nation bowed down before him. Statesmen, lawyers and churchmen all paid court to the favourite in the hope of promotion. But his influence over the nation was not for good, and his foreign policy was weak and vacillating.

3. **The Story of Raleigh.** Meanwhile Sir Walter Raleigh, the last of the great Elizabethan heroes, was still languishing in prison for supposed complicity in the Bye Plot. In 1617, however, through the influence of Buckingham, he was released in order that he might go in search of a rich gold mine, which was said to exist in Guiana on the banks of the Orinoco. But before sailing, he gave James a promise that he would not molest the Spaniards. After a long and difficult voyage Raleigh dropped anchor in the mouth of the Orinoco, and sent his faithful lieutenant, **Thomas Keymis**, with five ships up the river in search of the mine. The band of adventurers attacked and burnt the Spanish town of St. Thomas, and in the conflict Raleigh's son was killed. Despairing of making any further progress, Keymis returned with the sad news of the death of Raleigh's son and the failure of the expedition. Stung by the reproaches of