

SIR RICHARD FORSTER (?1585-1661)

by MICHAEL FOSTER

Richard Forster was a Catholic squire from Yorkshire who sought a career at the Court of Charles I, achieved a position of influence and wealth during the Civil War and Royalist exile as an arms-dealer and manager of royal finances, and, having founded a convent near Paris, died just after the Restoration. No biographical notice of him is known to exist. Yet he was one of the few Catholic recusants (as opposed to Church Papists) to hold a major post in the Royal Household after the Elizabethan Settlement; and as such he was a precursor of the Papists who played so important a role in the Government of Charles II.

Heralds' Visitations of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries record many branches of a gentry family referred to as Forster or Foster,¹ claiming a common origin in the Forsters of Adderston or Etherston in Northumberland. Their arms, Argent, a chevron vert between three bugle-horns sable, were variants of the original Forster arms borne at Poitiers, Agincourt, Otterburn and Flodden Field;² the green chevron and black bugles denoted the forester's role as Keeper of the King's vert and venison. The most eminent branch of the family was that of Bamburgh Castle, Northumberland, who were hereditary Marshals of Berwick and Wardens of the Middle March. Another (acknowledged as cousins by the Bamburgh branch) moved south and produced two High Court judges. One of these was Sir Robert Foster, Lord Chief Justice under Charles II, whose Jacobean mansion, Great Foster's, is to be seen at Egham and whose monument is in the parish church nearby. The senior line of Adderston (in which almost every eldest son between 1400 and 1700 was called Thomas) produced several High Sheriffs of Northumberland and one remarkably inefficient Jacobite general, Thomas Forster, who helped to ruin the 'Fifteen rebellion and only distinguished himself by escaping from Newgate prison when better men were executed. The last prioress of Synnyngthwaite Priory, near Ripon, was Katherine Foster,³ who may well have come from another branch established at Smawes, near Tadcaster.

Richard Forster came from a family which had been settled at Earswick, north of York, since the time of his grandfather, John, the third son of one of the Thomas Forsters of Adderston. He was born about 1585, the son of William Forster; the family had purchased the manor from Sir Thomas Wentworth of Wentworth.⁴ The Adderston family were reported in 1606 as including Popery among their other undesirable characteristics:

Mr Forster of Hetherston, chief of the Forsters, a Church Papist; his wife a recusant, daughter to Sir Ralph Gray. Mr Forster of Barnborough, a profane libertine. His eldest son, Claudius Forster, lately married the daughter of Sir William Fenwick by this his second wife, and therefore her religion suspected. The rest of the Forsters gross libertines.⁵

The offshoot at Earswick were pre-eminent in recusancy, even among the stubborn gentry of the North Riding. According to Father Cyprien de

Gamaches, a Capuchin attached to the household of Queen Henrietta Maria, Sir Richard was 'a virtuous gentleman and English knight', who 'sprang from a very noble and staunchly Catholic family, which the persecutions caused him to leave at an early age to embrace the Protestant religion. He had the good fortune to be the grandson of a martyr: his grandfather had suffered death in defence of the Faith'.⁶ In fact, Father Cyprien's account conflates two different figures. One grandfather, after whom Sir Richard was named, was Blessed Richard Langley of Millington, Durham, who was hanged at York on 1 December 1586 for harbouring priests: he went to the scaffold eagerly, 'like a bridegroom going to his nuptials'.⁷ The other grandfather, John Forster, who married Agnes Lascelles of Ganthorpe, was imprisoned for recusancy before 1580 at York Castle and died there, probably of gaol fever, about 1585-87, with his wife and daughter-in-law, Isabel.⁸ Richard's father, William, also appears among the recusants imprisoned at York in 1606.⁹ An uncle, Seth Foster (1557-1628), was among the first generation of students at Douai College, studied for the priesthood at the English College in Rome, lectured in philosophy at Douai and was for many years chaplain to the English Bridgettine convent at Lisbon. Another uncle, on his mother's side, Christopher Lascelles, was also a priest. William Forster evidently conformed to obtain his release from prison and married a third time. But he was reconciled to the Church by the Jesuit Richard Holtby, and children of this last marriage were sent abroad. Two sons were educated at the Jesuit College at St Omers and three at the English College in Rome (two of them, Thomas and Seth, for the priesthood). A daughter became a nun at Lisbon. After 'many tribulations for religion', William decided to leave his possessions to his eldest son and emigrate to the Netherlands, where he settled at Antwerp and died some time before 1618.¹⁰ Certainly, Richard was left motherless at a very early age; and the circumstances of the family may explain why he was (or felt) compelled, as he told Father Cyprien, 'to embrace the Protestant religion'.

In 1607 Richard married Joan, daughter of Charles and Alice Middleton of Leighton in Lancashire. His wife's family had substantial property in Southwark, and it seems likely that they met in London during his early days in government service.¹¹ The Middletons of Stockeld were notorious recusants in a part of Yorkshire where most of the gentry were Catholic; one of them was the martyr Robert Middleton, who had been executed for his priesthood in 1600. William Middleton had been imprisoned in York Castle at the turn of the century and was a past master in the recusant's art of surviving by encumbering his estates with debts and dues to a host of friends and relations. Not long after his marriage, Richard Forster and his household were reconciled to the Church by Father John Chrysostom Campbell, a Scottish Capuchin whom he had met on a visit to Paris and accompanied back to England.¹² The Visitation of 1612 records that a son, Henry, had been born to Richard and Joan. In 1616 they had a daughter, Anna Christina, who was baptised by Father Chrysostom during a further visit to England, and in 1623 another son, Richard. Two more boys followed, one of whom was named Charles. Like his uncles, Richard

(though not, apparently, Henry) was educated at St Omers; Anna Christina was sent to the Benedictine convent school at Ghent. There may have been other children who died young and whose names are not recorded.¹³

It seems likely that Forster was introduced into the royal service by George Calvert (c. 1580-1632). Calvert was himself of a Catholic family but had conformed and followed a successful political career. In 1616, when Forster was about thirty, he conveyed the manor of Danby Wiske in the North Riding to George Mynn, who was Calvert's father-in-law.¹⁴ In the same year, James I granted the same manor to Calvert himself and his heirs and assigns. Calvert became a Secretary of State shortly afterwards, and later took personal possession of the manor, rebuilt it as his country seat, and passed it on to his heirs, Cecil, Charles and Benedict. This seems likely to have been the conveyance of an estate seized by the Crown in default of recusancy fines owed by William Forster, who died about this time. There may well have been an arrangement that his son, plainly an able and promising man, would be taken into Calvert's service. However this may have been, the main influences on Richard Forster's career, certainly after Calvert resigned and was created Baron Baltimore, were Sir Richard Weston, Lord High Treasurer from 1628 to 1635, and Francis Cottington. Like Calvert, Cottington came of a Catholic family, and his brother, Edward Cottington, was a Jesuit. But Francis Cottington had conformed and pursued a career in politics: he had been Ambassador to Spain in 1616 and became Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1629. Forster could not have had a more subtle mentor in the courtly arts and the financial skills needed by a minister in the seventeenth century. Father Cyprien de Gamaches says that Cottington (and, he should have added, Weston) employed Forster 'secretly in the affairs of the kingdom, induced the King to grant him a pension and derived important services from him for the State, for the Catholics and for religion. The Queen, on being informed of it, determined to have him for her Treasurer, and it was in this office that I had the happiness of being acquainted with him.'¹⁵

As early as the spring and summer of 1625, the State Papers show that Forster was acting as a secret courier in the Royal service and submitting reports to Secretary Conway.¹⁶ But he also seems to have been conveying messages between the French Catholics of the Queen's Household and Paris. In February 1626 he was arrested in the company of the French Ambassador's secretary, Marande, though he was later released at the instance of the Queen.¹⁷ Later, he acted as envoy between Weston and Père Joseph and was instrumental in arranging a secret truce between England and France before the Treaty of Fontainebleau.¹⁸ Despatches of the Venetian Ambassador in April and May 1633 report that he had 'left unexpectedly and with all speed for France. . . . They whisper that he took secret commissions . . . with regard to Germany and the Palatinate.'¹⁹ On the last day of 1640, the Earl of Northumberland wrote to the Earl of Leicester: 'For some years past, Foster hath been conversant with 121 [Windebank]; he is held here to be a very busy fellow and one that hath a good interest in 161 [Richelieu]; but I think 121 [Windebank] favoured him for his religion more than for any other use he ever made of him'.²⁰

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In or about 1622-23, when he was in his late thirties, Forster had purchased the manor, estate and forest of Stokesley in the North Riding from William Lord Eure, whose family had held land there since the thirteenth century and had long-standing connexions with the Forsters of Adderston.²¹ Eure, whose main seat in Yorkshire was at Malton, had large estates in Cleveland which he progressively lost through recusancy fines; and Richard Forster's choice of Stokesley probably owed much to its location in a neighbourhood full of recusant families, including the Calverts at Danby Wiske. After his reconciliation to the Church, he appears to have remained firm in his religion. He, his wife or their servants were presented as recusants three times in the years 1623-24 at the North Riding Quarter Sessions held at Thirsk and Helmsley; and the absence of further entries was probably because his employment at Court and abroad meant living in London. An instruction from James I at the end of 1624, dealing with recusancy payments, mentions Richard Forster; and a return of the Recusant Commission of Yorkshire dated 26 November 1630 records 'Richard Forster of Stokesley Esq.' as compounding for a fine of £40. By then, if not before, a priest was being maintained at Stokesley: in 1632, Bishop Richard Smith listed it as a place where a regular (Father Chrysostom Campbell, who had received Forster and his family into the Church) had succeeded a secular priest.²² In an undated petition to Sir Edward Osborne, Vice-President of the Council of the North, Forster pleaded

that, whereas your petitioner being in the parts beyond the seas was employed in his Majesty's service, in the year 1632 was summoned amongst others to appear at York and to compound with his Majesty's Commissioners there for his recusancy: whose servant Robert Garbutt . . . did in your petitioner his name appear in his absence, and submitted for him to a composition of £40 per annum to be paid yearly rent for his recusancy. . . . Now forasmuch as your petitioner had then but a very mean estate, not able to support his charge of wife and five children, besides his eldest son (who did marry without your petitioner his consent and without portion, whereby your petitioner was deprived of the ordinary means to provide for his younger children), his wife and their children, and besides two younger brethren of your petitioner's who have no means of livelihood but what your petitioner can afford them: and that your petitioner was then greatly indebted, and a great part of his estate charged with rents for the interest thereof. . . . And forasmuch as your petitioner hath ever since that time duly paid unto his Majesty as well the said £40 per annum for his rent as the said £40 per annum for his arrearages, whereby and by reason of the increase of his great debts he hath been so overburthened as that he hath been compelled to sell this last year about £80 per annum of his inheritance . . . and yet doth remain indebted about £500 . . . his most humble suit is that . . . the remainder of the arrearages may be remitted . . . and that a rent of £13 6s. 8d. per annum may be hereafter accepted for a composition.²³

In 1635, a warrant from the King himself reduced the composition from £20 to £5. Whether Forster's poverty was as dire as he stated must be open to doubt. He was rich enough to educate at least three of his children abroad during this period and, apart from Stokesley, he possessed 'many

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other manors and fair tenements in the North', including Pulford Manor, Durham, and a colliery at Benwell, Northumberland;²⁴ he also had the expectation of the property in Southwark belonging to his wife's family, worth some £90 a year. In 1636-37, the manor of Stokesley, which had been seized by the Crown for arrears of fines, was leased to Richard and his eldest son and heir Henry for forty-one years from 1629 at an annual rent of £5.²⁵ By then, however, Henry and his wife, Martha, daughter of George Anne of Frickley (another recusant), seem to have taken over the management of the estates at Stokesley: their children were born there, and between 1634 and 1641 they were occasionally presented as recusants at Quarter Sessions. About the same time, Richard Forster felt sufficiently well established to petition the King (whether successfully is unclear) for a grant of the oversight of the export of oysters for thirty-one years in return for a rent to the Crown.²⁶

About the time of the warrant of 1635, he began to hold one of the minor posts in the Queen's Household, first as Sewer in the Chamber and then as Cupbearer. It was in 1642 that he succeeded to the post of her Treasurer-General.²⁷ But as an officer of the Household he had already been involved with George Conn and Wat Montague in collecting money from the Catholic gentry for the Scottish campaign of 1639. In his Journal for 28 January 1640-41, Sir Simonds D'Ewes recorded:

Sir Kenelm Digby was called in upon this. . . . He named Mr Montague, Mr Foster and others that were employed in this business. . . . Mr Walter Montague acknowledged that the whole transaction of the business was at Signor Conn's house.²⁸

As a result of the petition of both Houses in 1640 'for the removal of all Popish recusants from Court' there was a general purge of Catholics, and Forster shared the common fate. The Treasurer-General's Book of Establishment for 1641 listed 'Morgan, in place of Richard Fosseter' as Sewer in the Chamber. But when hostilities commenced the following year and Catholics returned to favour, Forster seems to have taken the place of Sir Richard Wynn, who retired as Treasurer on grounds of age. Certainly he was handling the Queen's finances by the end of 1642: evidently it was his enthusiasm and skill in organising the contributions of 1639 that had marked him out, in his middle fifties, for this new task.

The role of Treasurer and Receiver-General of the Revenues was a major, and very exacting, post in the Queen's Household, ranking perhaps sixth in order of importance.²⁹ It carried the responsibility for securing the Queen's revenues, including those from her various estates, and for funding the salaries, wages and day-to-day expenditure of the substantial group of officials, ladies-in-waiting and servants who served the Queen in her apartments or in the palaces and residences set aside for her use. But with the Civil War, the post assumed special significance. Forster was an obvious choice as emissary and negotiator for the Queen in raising money and arms in France and the Netherlands. When she pawned her jewels in Amsterdam, it was Forster, under the alias of 'Mr Johnson', who advised

her, handled the money and arms, and made arrangements for loans, payment and transport. In a letter to her husband written from Holland in January 1643, the Queen says: 'I am expecting Wat Montague every day. . . . I had written to you already by the post before last how I had, according to your orders, sent into France for arms, as you commanded me; therefore you must be careful to send the money to Foster, and the order as to where he shall have them transported, for it is he that has care of them.'³⁰ On 3 November 1644, the Queen signed a licence formally appointing Richard Forster as her Treasurer-General in France.³¹ 'Mr Johnson' travelled tirelessly and unobtrusively in her service, no doubt making good use of the hospitality of exiled friends and visiting his children at St Omers and Ghent, His second son and eventual heir Richard, born in 1623, seems to have attended the Jesuit preparatory school at Stanley Grange, near Derby, in 1635,³² and then to have been at St Omers until 1644, when he entered the English College in Rome. The daughter, Anna Christina, had meanwhile been professed at the Benedictine Convent at Ghent in 1641, at the age of twenty-four.³³

When the Battles of Marston Moor and Naseby sealed the fate of the Royalist cause, Forster went into exile with the Queen and her Court, and, like other Cavaliers, had his estates sequestrated. Increasingly, the Queen devoted herself to the consolations of religion, at times living with a small community of nuns which she had founded at Chaillot, near Paris. Gradually she became removed from the centre of power, which henceforth rested with her son and a small group of exiled courtiers led by the Chancellor, Edward Hyde, a man whom she detested. Although she retained her Lord Chamberlain, Jermyn, her Household was much reduced and the Treasurer's job came to an end. Her last favour to Forster, who was now in his mid-sixties, was to obtain him a baronetcy; on 18 September 1649 he was knighted by Charles II at St Germain.³⁴

In these circumstances, he decided to look for a post at the new King's Court; and since he had been handling the Queen's pension and had a wealth of diplomatic experience, he must have seemed the obvious choice to manage the new pension, secured from the French authorities in 1652, which gave Charles a measure of financial security and independence. Neither the King nor Hyde seem ever to have doubted a man whom the Queen had so deeply trusted. In June 1652, Forster, as the new Keeper of the King's Privy Purse, received a warrant from the King for a special payment of £335 to Lord Henry Percy.³⁵ This and other special payments suggest that Forster's role went far beyond the management of purely domestic expenditure and that he acted the part of Lord High Treasurer. He was informed on the most secret affairs of state and, as a Catholic, he seems to have had—or sought—a special role in relation to Catholics. In December 1652, a letter to the King from Thomas Holden,³⁶ captain of a ship at Brest destined for Ireland and Scotland on matters to do with the command of Middleton's expedition, urged the admission to the Council of someone whom the Catholics trusted and said that Sir Richard would convey any directions to be given. Another letter from Holden of 20 December 1652 to 'Mr Johnson' encloses a blank commission desired

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for use by Colonel Cusack. A letter to the King of May 1653 from Charles Howard, Lord Andover, enclosing a draft commission for treaty purposes, says that financial contributions from the Catholic ecclesiastical authorities in the Low Countries and Germany would only be given on condition that the penal laws forbidding the admission of Catholics to offices of state were lifted: none but Lord Gerard and Sir Richard Foster should be acquainted with this proposal.³⁷ Nevertheless, Forster's main task was that of keeping the Court going by appeasing landlords, tradesmen and servants with promises and fair words, eked out with payments as far as possible in arrears. It was a hand-to-mouth existence and the Purse was usually empty. The needs of the Royalists were many and were not helped by the King's extravagant tastes. It was impossible to obtain money from England on any reasonable scale, since the estates of most prominent Royalists had been sequestrated and were progressively sold by Acts of Parliament. By May 1653, Hyde was writing to Nicholas (the previous King's Secretary of State, at that time subsisting on promises of a post) that 'an order was given by the King in Council for the monthly payment of Hyde's charges for postage but on his sending to Sir Richard Foster he returned answer that he had not one penny'.³⁸

The difficulties are best illustrated by letters from Hyde in response to urgent appeals from Sir Richard Browne, the Minister in Paris, for payment of arrears of rent:

You know how little service I can do in that kind by any personal solicitation of my own, more than by calling upon Sir R. Foster, which I have often done, and in truth I think him to be as careful in all that concerns you and in this particular as a friend can be. But the truth is, he hath been ill since you went . . . and the settling the King's business . . . (which is yet far from being settled) hath so worn out the good old man that he hath not been yet able to settle yours, which he promises to despatch out of hand. . . .

This day [21 January 1653] Sir R. Foster goes with my Lord Inchquin to him [Sir Richard Browne's landlord] to see how far good words and promises will prevail with him. . . .

In the meantime I am confident Sir Richard Foster hath paid at least half a year's rent, but I think more. . . .

Sir Richard Foster hath paid £500 for your rent . . . but no information is to hand how much is still in arrears. . . .

Sir Richard Foster hath paid £500 for your rent . . . but no information is to I had order to send for your landlord and together with Sir R. Foster to renew to him His Majesty's gracious promises that he shall not be any loser. I intend this day [30 July 1653] to send to him to come hither. There are yet only £500 paid of the rent by Sir R. Foster: when money shall be gotten, more shall. . . .³⁹

The task was almost hopeless. By June 1653, the Keeper of the Privy Purse was protesting to the King that he had received allowances only to the end of April but had paid for all provisions to the end of June. Out of money due, debts to Sir Richard Browne, to the royal shoemaker and tailor and to Sir Richard himself had to be defrayed. In the summer of 1654, the Court left Paris for Cologne, no doubt relieved to be rid of the

Queen and the burden of unpaid bills, leaving Forster to receive the pension on the King's behalf and to face the landlords and tradesmen alone. On 29 January 1655, Ormonde wrote to Hyde, speaking of his 'fears of melancholy consultations with the King, whose business seemed broken', though he hoped that there was 'still enough spirit in their friends to perish rather than submit'. The sickness, if not death, of Sir Richard Foster, Ormonde continued, gave the King occasion to enquire from Jermyn how his pension from France stood. Shortly after, Charles wrote to the Queen's Chancellor, evidently in reply to a protest on her behalf, that as he had already signed a warrant to Sir Richard Foster to pay his pension to various creditors, he could not sign one to Jermyn; and that nothing must be done which might trouble or discountenance the 'good old man' to whom so much money was due.⁴⁰ A subsequent letter from Ormonde to Hyde, however, refers to receiving letters from 'the good old man', and it seems that he had made a recovery from his illness, to resume his thankless task.⁴¹ But early in 1655 references to him cease, and it seems that he gave way to a younger man, retiring to Paris and the Queen Mother's Court. The phrase 'the good old man' seems to have become a nickname.

As Sir Richard grew older, he determined to 'make his soul', perhaps under the influence of his friend in adversity, Wat Montague, who was now a priest and Abbot of St Martin's Benedictine Abbey, Pontoise, and had succeeded Robert Philip as the Queen's confessor in 1647. No doubt he was conscious of having conformed in his youth, and, as will appear, he had other burdens on his conscience. In 1652, a group of English Benedictine nuns was despatched from the convent at Ghent to start a community in Boulogne. Among them was his daughter, Anna Christina, now Dame Christina; and Sir Richard's part in the nuns' story is chronicled in records compiled by the Abbess, Lady Ann Neville of Abergavenny, in 1681:

In the settlement at Boulogne, finding the holy Bishop so adverse to their establishing there, which was an unexpected cross, though his refusing of them was neither from want of esteem or kindness for them, but for want of a foundation; and no human help then appearing by which they could hope for relief, they applied themselves the more earnestly to prayer. . . . Some months after [in Holy Week, 1653] . . . Sir Richard Forster . . . gave 3,000 pistoles, which was the first money they received towards a foundation. . . . It gave a great advance towards that foundation of 3,000 pistoles which Sir Richard Forster gave the Lent following . . . in the year 1655.⁴²

The two gifts seem to have coincided with his recovery from two periods of illness (both mentioned in letters from Hyde and Ormonde), the second of which was almost fatal. Montague, who had a large pension from the French, also helped with substantial gifts of money. 'For my Lord Abbot Montague and Sir Richard Forster', wrote Lady Abbess Neville, 'as they are esteemed founders, having given us the greatest part of the foundation we have, so they enjoy those privileges of anniversary prayers and regular Masses which the statute ordains for founders'.⁴³

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Sir Richard's daughter became Abbess herself in November 1656. In May 1658, as the war between France and Spain was troubling the Netherlands and adjacent territories, the community moved to Pontoise, near the Abbey of St Martin's. 'Sir Richard Forster', Lady Abbess Neville continues, 'at Boulogne and Pontoise gave this community (all which was received in ready money) the full sum of 41,000 livres, besides goods and other assignments of just and due debts to him which were to the value of £10,000 sterling; of which we shall never see a penny, but are not the less obliged to his kindness and good intentions in the gift.'

The Abbess records Sir Richard's death in 1661 as follows:

Sir Richard Forster still continued his bounty and kindness to his daughter; and, as long as his strength and health would permit, came often down to visit her and to assist her with his purse and advice. But now old age and a palsy humour detained him from giving or taking satisfaction of such a visit; and call upon him to prepare himself, as he did most piously, for his happy end; making his will giving and signing many great debts due to him to his daughter and her community. With all he was worth in all kinds, and though these never were or are likely to be recovered, yet we esteem ourselves not less obliged for having given us in our life-time to the value of 41,000 livres. We perform all for him as for a benefactor, saying his anniversary office and singing his Mass. . . . Sir Richard, having done all that became the duty of a good Christian, assisted by Reverend Father Wigmore, most piously rendered his soul into the hands of his Creator. His body was embalmed and in a leaden coffin brought to Pontoise, entered and deposited in the Abbey of St Martin's till we have a church fit to erect a tomb for him. Upon his gravestone at St Martin's these words are written:

Here lies Monsieur Richard Forster,
Knight Baronet, Baron of Stokesley,
Treasurer-General to the Queen of Great Brittany:
he died the 27th day of January 1661.⁴⁴

'The good old man' had had the good fortune to see the Restoration of the King and the return to London of the Queen Mother, both of whom he had served so tirelessly in their years of disaster and destitution. His daughter did not long survive him but 'grew now so much indisposed by her increase of new infirmities . . . she breathed forth her happy soul about twelve o'clock at noon on 16 December' of the same year.⁴⁵

One question remains. Comparing the dates of the correspondence previously quoted to show the poverty of the exiled King and his Court with the dates of the initial gifts to the new convent, we may ask how Sir Richard was able to find so much money, and how he could pay out such large additional sums over the next five years that the grand total in ready money amounted to 41,000 livres—on his own reckoning, at the rate of exchange prevailing in November 1653, about £24,000,⁴⁶ apart from the bequest of £10,000 in debts due to him. His father's property at Antwerp, used or acquired during his exile, could hardly explain so large a sum; nor is there any evidence that Sir Richard married again after the death of his first wife, Joan Middleton, and used her fortune for his benefactions. No pension from a grateful King could account for more

than a fraction of it, particularly as his death took place only eight months after the Restoration. Nor could his estates in Yorkshire, Durham and Northumberland have realised such a total in the conditions of the Civil War. Is it not likely that Sir Richard exacted commissions and covered with debts and dues the finances he managed for some twenty years while he was travelling in search of arms for the Queen and distributing her son's French pension? Certainly, every royal minister in the seventeenth century was expected to take his cut, but it is the circumstances of the exile and the extreme poverty of the Court that make Sir Richard's acquisitions look so curious. After his years of experience at Court, he must have known that, of the many Catholic nobility and gentry who were ruined in the Royalist cause, few would receive adequate compensation save those who found it for themselves. And did he finally, perhaps at the instance of his friend Wat Montague, decide (in composing his soul, like so many successful men of an earlier age) to make restitution to God of what he had withheld from his monarch?

Sir Richard's eldest son, Henry, died before him in 1657 and he was succeeded in the baronetcy and in his estates by his second son Richard, who, after leaving the English College in Rome in the summer of 1647, on account of ill health, seems to have lived with his parents in Paris for a while before returning to Stokesley to live quietly with his brother. About 1652 he married Clare Meynell of the recusant house of North Kilvington.⁴⁷ This match probably gave Sir Richard more satisfaction than that of Henry, who some twenty years previously, without his father's consent, had married Martha, daughter of George Anne of Frickley.⁴⁸ Another son, Charles, is recorded, who may be identifiable with the Jesuit of that name.⁴⁹ But nothing is known of the other brother, unless, like so many of his family, he was named Thomas and can be identified with the Thomas Forster who held Coverham Manor in the North Riding in 1692.⁵⁰ Sir Richard's grandson, also named Richard, was born to Clare Meynell in 1658 but died unmarried and the baronetcy became extinct in 1714. According to Dugdale's Visitation of Yorkshire, Henry (who already had children in 1634 and evidently had four more between 1635 and 1638),⁵¹ had no issue remaining in 1665. What happened to the posterity of Charles and (?Thomas) is not known. The third Sir Richard's sister and heiress Mary, born in 1659, married William Collingwood of Eslington in Northumberland (born in 1654), and the manor of Stokesley passed into that family. Their son George took part with his kinsman, Thomas Forster of Adderston, in the Derwentwater Rising of 1715 and was executed at Liverpool on 25 February 1716. His estates were forfeited and Stokesley passed into other hands, but his Northumbrian estates seem to have been acquired by relatives of the Collingwoods, whose descendants still own estates in the area. George had married Catherine Browne, daughter of the fifth Viscount Montague, and in 1737 their daughter Catherine married Sir Robert Throckmorton, in whose line the blood of the Forsters of Earswick and Stokesley still survives.

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NOTES

- ¹ Joseph Foster, *Visitations of Yorkshire*. The name, however, it was spelt, seems to have been pronounced 'Foster'. Thus, although Sir Richard normally spelt his name 'Forster', he was usually referred to in Court letters as 'Foster'. Other members of his family spelt the name differently.
- ² Joseph Foster, *A Pedigree of the Forsters and Fosters* (1871); Harleian Society 81.
- ³ Dugdale, *Monasticon* 5, p. 463.
- ⁴ The Visitations of 1584 and 1612 record the family as of Earswick, but they seem to have sold the manor to Leonard Weddell in 1613: V.C.H. North Riding 2, p. 148.
- ⁵ C.R.S. 53, p. 151.
- ⁶ Cyprien de Gamaches, 'Memoirs of the Mission in England of the Capuchin Friars', ed. T. Birch, in *The Court and Times of Charles I* (1848), 2, pp. 482-3.
- ⁷ Gillow, under *Richard Langley*. According to Dugdale's Visitation of Yorkshire (1665), the Langleys were also of Stainton and Sheriff Hutton, Yorks. A Thomas Langley was Cardinal and Lord Chancellor in the fifteenth century.
- ⁸ C.R.S. 53, p. 199; C.R.S. 5, p. 193. Isabel died on 3 December 1585.
- ⁹ C.R.S. 53, p. 277.
- ¹⁰ C.R.S. 55, pp. 220, 321; Anstruther, *Seminary Priests* 1, p. 123; Cyprien de Gamaches, *op. cit.*, pp. 482-6. William Forster may have left England by 1607, because in that year it was his son who leased land near Earswick to Richard Darby (North Riding Quarter Sessions Records, 20 September 1607). William Forster was married three times, to Elizabeth Thweng, Isabel Langley and Margaret Booth, who was a first cousin of Eustace White, martyred in 1591.
- ¹¹ State Papers, Committee for Advance of Money, pt 2, 875.
- ¹² Cyprien de Gamaches, *op. cit.*, pp. 482-6.
- ¹³ Cockayne, *Complete Baronetage* 3, p. 11; British Library Add. MS. 9354; C.R.S. 55, p. 482; C.R.S. 40, pp. 30-31; Foley 7, p. 273.
- ¹⁴ V.C.H. North Riding 1, p. 173.
- ¹⁵ Cyprien de Gamaches, *op. cit.*, pp. 486-7.
- ¹⁶ C.S.P.D. Charles I (1625-26), pp. 17, 61, 63.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 254.
- ¹⁸ Gordon Albion, *Charles I and the Court of Rome*, p. 105.
- ¹⁹ *Calendar of State Papers Venetian*.
- ²⁰ Arthur Collins, *Letters and Memorials of State* (1746), 2, p. 666.
- ²¹ John Graves, *History of Cleveland*, p. 225.
- ²² Aveling, *Northern Catholics* (1966), p. 238.
- ²³ C.R.S. 53, p. 423.
- ²⁴ *Calendar of the Clarendon State Papers* 1, no. 610; C.S.P.D. Charles I (1635-36), p. 52; C.R.S. 17, p. 269; C.R.S. 53, pp. 399, 423; *Calendar of the Committee for Compounding*, pp. 3193, 3215.
- ²⁵ V.C.H. North Riding 2, p. 303. This arrangement did not prevent Stokesley passing to his son and grandson.
- ²⁶ C.S.P.D. Charles I (1636-37), p. 296.
- ²⁷ Sir Richard Wynn is known to have retired in 1642; the date of Forster's appointment can only be presumed. The Queen's correspondence shows that he was handling her finances by the end of that year.
- ²⁸ Wallace Notestein ed., *The Journal of Sir Simonds D'Ewes* (1923), p. 295. The Treasurer-General's 'Book of the Establishment' (National Library of Wales, Wynnstay MS. 166) shows that in 1641 'Richard Fosseter' was replaced as Sewer by one Morgan. This man, later a Cornet in the Parliamentary army, denounced Forster as a Papist in 1648 and sought the sequestration of his houses in Southwark (valued at £90 a year in 1652). Strangely, the attempt failed for lack of evidence. State Papers, Committee for Advance of Money, pt 2, p. 875.
- ²⁹ *Angliae Notitia* (1669), p. 305.
- ³⁰ M. A. E. Green ed., *Letters of Queen Henrietta Maria* (1857), p. 155.
- ³¹ This document, a treasured family heirloom, still exists among the Collingwood Papers at Coughton Court, Warwickshire.
- ³² C.R.S. 55, no. 482. 'Mr Fossiter's son with Lord Abergavenny's grandchild is educated by Jesuits at Stanley Grange, Derbyshire, belonging to Mrs Anne Vaux': C.S.P.D. Charles I (1635), p. 420.
- ³³ C.R.S. 17, p. 269.
- ³⁴ Cockayne, *Complete Baronetage* 3, p. 11.
- ³⁵ *Calendar of the Clarendon State Papers* 2, nos. 737, 136.
- ³⁶ Possibly of the recusant family of Chaigley, Lancashire.
- ³⁷ *Calendar of the Clarendon State Papers* 2, nos. 807, 892, 1172.

SIR RICHARD FORSTER (?1585-1661)

³⁸ W. Bray ed., 'Private Correspondence between King Charles I . . . Sir Edward Nicholas . . . Sir Edward Hyde and Sir Richard Browne', in *Memoirs, illustrative of the Life and Times of John Evelyn* (1818), vol. 2, pt 2, p. 201.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Calendar of the Clarendon State Papers* 3, nos. 35, 63.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, no. 83.

⁴² C.R.S. 17, pp. 252-62. Lady Abbess Neville's description and chronology of events thirty years earlier is self-contradictory in some details.

⁴³ C.R.S. 17, pp. 252-62.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Calendar of the Clarendon State Papers* 2, no. 1527.

⁴⁷ Dugdale's *Visitation of Yorkshire*, 1665; Foley 6, p. 36.

⁴⁸ See above, n. 23.

⁴⁹ Foley 6, p. 136. He is said to have been born in 1632 and brought up in London.

⁵⁰ V.C.H. North Riding 1, p. 225.

⁵¹ Above, n. 23; *Yorkshire Parish Register Society* 7, pp. 6, 9, 72, 73.