

RECENT PUBLICATIONS.

1. *Sir James Lowther and Cumberland and Westmorland Elections, 1754-1775*. By Brian Bonsall, 28/- (Manchester University Press).

Mr Brian Bonsall makes in this book a contribution to the history of our two counties such as we have not had for many years. Basing his work almost entirely on research among unpublished papers, he has produced a work of great interest and importance.

Its value to the local historian is immense, but beyond that Mr Bonsall has made a contribution to national history. The great contest between Sir James Lowther and the Duke of Portland had a local setting, but the repercussions of their epic struggle were felt far beyond the confines of Cumberland and Westmorland. The contest was watched with as great an interest at Westminster as at Carlisle or Appleby.

In 1754, when the story begins, Sir James Lowther was a boy of 18, wealthy and ambitious. By 1756 fortune had smiled on him again, and added to his riches. His rival was another wealthy young man, Lord Thanet, and strong rivalry developed between the two, especially in the borough of Appleby. Here Lowther and Thanet vied with one another in the buying of burgages which gave them votes, Lowther or his mother buying 21 burgages (he already owned 67) at a cost of nearly £8,000, and Thanet, who had inherited nine, buying 65 more, at a cost of about £300 each. Afterwards Thanet confided to Lowther that they had both "been made a prey of, by a parcel of designing, avaricious scoundrels, who, whatever specious pretences they make to the contrary, have no other interest at heart than that of enriching themselves."

When the election was held Sir James' mother insisted that he must attend, but Thanet, who was two years older, was not present. A contemporary account describes the way in which Sir James took part in the campaign.

"After dinner, Sir James and Sir George Dalston attended by a great number of gentlemen, went round the town, to every house publick and private, friend and foe . . . Sir James has gone through the fatigue of the day, with most uncommon spirit, life, ease and politeness; his sense and conduct are

infinitely beyond his years . . . We are quite surrounded with bonfires, illuminations, firing of guns . . . and most hearty acclamations of the people."

Lowther's candidates were defeated, but he petitioned, and, after long delays, the election was declared void and at the succeeding election his candidates were returned. This was the beginning of a remarkable era in English political history. It was not long before the Lowther eyes turned to Cockermonth, and an all out attack on Lord Egremont's influence in that borough followed. Soon the Egremont interest was at an end, and the success story continued. Indeed, the very success of Lowther's machinations led to the massing of support against him.

In 1763 Henry Curwen of Workington asked the young Duke of Portland for his help against Lowther's continual striving for power, and so came about the famous struggle which for several years was such a prominent part of the political scene in Cumberland.

Using Lowther and Portland MSS., Mr Bonsall skilfully traces the beginning of the rivalry, its progress and its culmination.

Much of what he has to tell us is new, as the note on sources demonstrates, and Mr Bonsall very successfully clarifies a number of matters which have until now been somewhat obscure.

Future historians of the two counties will inevitably draw upon this book, and we hope that the author will one day tackle both earlier and later parliamentary history. His account of the twenty-one years from 1754 to 1775 shows how much work remains to be done.