

REVIEW

A Tudor Magnate and the Tudor State: Henry Fifth Earl of Northumberland by M. E. James; Borthwick Papers No. 30, 1966; St. Anthony's Press; York.

In this booklet the author has added to his valuable portrait gallery of Tudor nobility in the North. This is not a simple biographical sketch but a subtle study of the relations between early Tudor monarchy and the northern nobility. The assumptions behind political and social practices are revealed with a learned understanding of their changing nuances so that the reader gains an insight into the peculiar quality and meaning of Border politics.

In telling how the early Tudors attempted to establish authority over the Border and dispense with the aid of the Percies, the author shows not a monarchy establishing a rule of law but kings joining in the hurly-burly of Border lawlessness and trying to beat the Percies at their own game. Royal success was temporary and it was recognised that only a Percy could make the tangled web of kinship and loyalties into the reins of Border society.

Having explained the posthumous political success of the fifth Earl of Northumberland the author deflates the Earl's reputation as a patron of literature. But the tastes of the Earl are evident enough to make the humanist myth of an uneducated aristocracy less credible.

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