

IV.—THE FINANCIAL AFFAIRS OF A JACOBEOAN GENTLEMAN.

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The subject of this paper is William Percy, third son of the eighth earl of Northumberland. His career was deeply influenced by an event which took place before he was born, that is, the execution of his uncle Thomas Percy seventh earl of Northumberland at York on 22nd August 1572 for his share in the rebellion called the Rising of the North, to depose Elizabeth Tudor and make Mary Stuart queen of England. The male heir of earl Thomas was his brother Sir Henry Percy, governor of Tynemouth Castle, who professed himself a Protestant and a supporter of Elizabeth's government. After a good deal of negotiation and wirepulling Sir Henry Percy was granted the title and estates and became eighth earl of Northumberland, but he was regarded with suspicion, and was soon ordered to leave the north and live at Petworth, his castle and estate in Sussex. He had two sons and two daughters before he removed to the south, and in 1573, soon after his removal, he mentioned in a letter that his wife was expecting another child.¹ This child was in all probability their third son, William. Apparently the countess was allowed to visit the north, although the earl was forbidden to do so; she probably went about her husband's affairs, and her son William was born in the bishopric of Durham.² The countess may

¹ De Fonblanque, *Annals of the House of Percy*, II, p. 154.

² Foster, *Alum. Oxon.*

have been at Wressell Castle which is in Howdenshire, then an outlying part of the bishopric of Durham.

In 1581 the earl obtained permission to send his eldest son Henry lord Percy to France, but he got into trouble with the government two years later when he sent two more of his sons, presumably William and Charles, his third and fourth, who were then aged ten and nine, to join their eldest brother at Paris. In response to the government protests the two little boys were sent home in 1584, but lord Percy remained in Paris.³

At this time the earl was strongly under suspicion of being involved in one of the many plots for the liberation of Mary Stuart. He may have been irritated by the queen's continued distrust, and consequently have given up his professions of Protestantism and support of the new regime, reverting to his brother's faith in religion and politics, but it is very doubtful whether there was any foundation for the charges against him, as the only evidence produced was very unreliable hearsay, and he was never brought to trial. After six months in the Tower he was found one night shot through the heart. Whether he had killed himself or had been murdered can never be known; some of the circumstances seemed to point to murder, but officially he was adjudged to have committed suicide.⁴ This had an important effect on his large family, as it rendered his will invalid, and consequently all his younger children were left without provision. He had eight sons and two daughters surviving, of whom the eldest son, Henry, now ninth earl of Northumberland, was just twenty-one.

William, a boy of twelve, was sent to France to bear the news of their father's death to the new earl, who did not return to England for some months, and government agents sent word that the earl and his brother William believed that their father had been murdered and were plotting

³ Hillebrand, *William Percy, an Elizabethan Amateur*, *Huntington Library Quarterly*, I, no. 4, July 1938.

⁴ De Fonblanque, *op. cit.* II, pp. 168-75.

against the state;⁵ but apparently this schoolboy sedition was not regarded seriously, and the two brothers obtained permission to return and came back to England in the spring of 1586.⁶

When the Spanish Armada was approaching England in the summer of 1588, the earl of Northumberland was one of several volunteers who hired and armed merchant ships and sailed to join the fleet; in all probability the fifteen year old William sailed too, as he later wrote a description of the Armada in blank verse.⁷ He went to Oxford, matriculating in 1589 from Gloucester Hall;⁸ this was the usual name of the hall which was strictly speaking the Hall of St. John the Baptist, connected with St. John's College. Here there were a large number of recusants, and William's tutor, Dr. Case, was a Roman Catholic.⁹ Many of William's connexions were with recusants, but there is no evidence that he ever joined the Church of Rome himself. In some of his epigrams he ridicules monks, nuns and mass priests, and expresses admiration for John Hus, but in one of his plays he seems to show a certain preference for Rome, while earnestly advocating religious toleration.

So far in his career William must have been entirely dependent on his brother the earl, but in 1593, when William was twenty, the earl joined with him in borrowing £2,400 from Arthur Medleycote, merchant tailor of London, a debt which was finally paid off on 9th July 1600.¹⁰ This loan was not a sign that William himself was in debt, but that the earl had decided to settle an income upon him, and was obliged to raise money for it in this way through his own extravagance, for many years afterwards he con-

⁵ *Ibid.* II, p. 183.

⁶ *Advice to His Son*, by Henry Percy ninth earl of Northumberland, ed. G. B. Harrison, pp. 78-9.

⁷ *The Cuckolds and Cuckqueans Errants*, act v.

⁸ Foster, *Alum. Oxon.*

⁹ William addressed an epigram to "Dr. Case my quodam tutor." For Case see Wood, *Athen. Oxon.* I, p. 299, and Mallet, *Hist. of the Univ. of Oxford*, II, pp. 123, 144n., 152, 188-9, 194.

¹⁰ Hillebrand, *loc. cit.*

fessed, in his *Advice to His Son*, that he was a spendthrift in his youth, and his accounts show that he was perpetually borrowing money. William had a particular claim to independence, as Thomas, the second brother, was dead, and William was the earl's heir presumptive. It seems that an estate was bought with the £2,400 borrowed. As to where this estate lay—we know that William in 1602 and 1603 lived on a manor in Sussex which he called *Mons Luporum*, i.e. Wolves Hill. There is no place of that name in Sussex now, but in the parish of Ashington (a north-country name) in the rape of Bramber there are two farms called East and West Wolves. East Wolves is on the top of a down called Ashington Common; the present farm buildings are modern, but the name seems to be old. West Wolves is about a mile and a half away, at the foot of the down, and here is an old house, parts of it perhaps Tudor. West Wolves in Elizabeth's reign and long afterwards was held by a family named Wolf, one member of which was John Wolf the Elizabethan printer. There was another John Wolf of West Wolves living in the early seventeenth century.¹¹ Now we know that William Percy had left Wolves Hill and gone to live at Oxford before 1611, and we also know that not later than 1610 he had a tenant whose initials were I.W. If Wolves Hill were East Wolves, William, when he left there, may have leased it to John Wolf of West Wolves, the I.W. whom he mentions as his tenant. I.W. seems to have held the greater part of the manor and paid a rent of £45 p.a., but William had another tenant Sir Richard Fermor of Somerton, Oxfordshire, who had a lease for £20 a year, and of whom more will be said hereafter. The total rent from the manor was £65 p.a., giving a return of a little under 3 per cent on the expenditure of £2,400.

In addition to this the earl made over rents from his Northumbrian estates to the value of £80 p.a. to William and his fifth brother Richard, in the proportion of £50 p.a.

¹¹ Cartwright, *The Rape of Bramber*, pp. 260-1.

to William and £30 p.a. to Richard. This is always referred to as the rent from the Marches. This rent was paid, wholly or in part, by a Mr. Byrd. We know that Hugh Bird was the ninth earl's steward at Tynemouth in 1597.¹² William complained in 1647 that Bird's lease was renewed in 1608-9 or 1624-5 and the fine of £20 was not paid over to him.

The earl during his lifetime paid William an annuity of £30 p.a.¹³ This was less than the annuities which he paid to his five other brothers, but that may have been because he had given William an independent estate.

In addition to these sources of income William seems at one time to have had some property which he held jointly with Mr. Richard Stapleton. The Stapletons of Carlton were an old Yorkshire family who followed the Percys and wore their livery in the wars of the roses;¹⁴ this was a bond not soon forgotten in the north, and William's friend may be identified with his contemporary Richard Stapleton of Carlton. The property that they held jointly was probably in the East Riding, but all we know about it is a confused and angry note by William, from which it can be deduced only that he became involved in a lawsuit over it, and that he lost both the suit and the property.¹⁵

Thus William Percy started life with a manor worth £65 p.a., rents from the Marches £50 p.a., allowance from

¹² *Cal. of Border Papers*, II, p. 359.

¹³ *Accounts of the Earls of Northumberland at Alnwick Castle Estate Office*. Extracts are printed in *Hist. MSS. Com.*, append. to Sixth Report.

¹⁴ Chetwynd-Stapleton, *The Stapletons of Yorkshire*, 163, 181, 189.

¹⁵ Epigram on "Their cruell Tenure called by them Cuius Contrarius.

When soever, Jumply, I do but hitt it,
Their Tenure straitte sayes, I shall never git it.

Vice versa such is their very lawe, If I speed I do not speede, if I do not speede, I do speed. A course good enough for a chaunce at Medley. Never one wise Man or honest could be admitted to stand for the same to my great greife of Reputation Before my cause was scand, But ever they would set knaves and Fooles to it, contrary to Mark or meaning. And not my self the sole and trewe possessor thereof, one onely Partner of myne excepted, who is Joint Possessor with mee thereof Mr. Richard Stapleton by name.

the earl £30 p.a. and some other property of uncertain value, giving an income of something over £145 p.a. It is extremely difficult to equate money of one period with that of another. In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century clothes were very much more expensive than at the present day, but on the other hand food and domestic service were much cheaper. William's income was probably equivalent to something between £800 and £1,000 p.a. at the present time. This, though a great deal better than nothing, was not much for a young nobleman. William had literary tastes, and published a little volume of sonnets in 1594.¹⁶ That in itself would not cost much, but he had a host of literary friends who were not so well off as himself. Chief among them was Barnabe Barnes, son of Richard Barnes bishop of Durham. Barnabe was a much better poet than William, but on the testimony of his contemporaries he was a most inveterate borrower;¹⁷ William was his friend through life, and he could not enjoy this pleasure without paying for it pretty heavily. Another friend was Charles Fitzjeffrey, who addressed a Latin epigram to William hailing him as the Maro and Maecenas of the age.¹⁸ There is something sinister in calling a man Maecenas, for it will be remembered that he was celebrated for his generosity to authors.

Like all Elizabethan gentlemen William had his quarrels. In February 1595/6 he was involved in a duel with Henry Denny, "a gentleman of worship and reputation." Denny was slightly wounded, and William seems to have been more severely injured as Denny "was more doubtfull of Mr. Percie his helth then his own daunger." Denny's wound healed perfectly, but about ten days after the duel he was seized with a fever and died on 19th March. William was accused of causing his death. It must have been suggested that like Laertes he put venom on his blade,

¹⁶ *Sonnets to the Fairest Coelia*.

¹⁷ Mark Eccles, Barnabe Barnes, in *Thomas Lodge and Other Elizabethans*, ed. C. J. Sisson, pp. 184-5, 224.

¹⁸ Hillebrand, *loc. cit.*

and he was arrested, and probably imprisoned in the Tower for a short time. However, I am glad to say that his character was completely cleared, for the medical evidence at the inquest showed that the unfortunate Denny was suffering from a tumour on the brain, which was the cause of his death.¹⁹ Thus William made his first, but unfortunately not his last, acquaintance with the inside of a prison. We find him borrowing £50 in 1599, which suggests that his debts were accumulating, and about this time he took up the expensive hobby of writing and producing plays. Professional dramatists might make money by this, but William did not write for the commercial stage, which in any case would not have looked at his feeble dramas. His plays were acted either at Gloucester Hall or privately, perhaps occasionally by one of the companies of boy actors who were the fashionable fad of the period. As an amateur author and producer William would supply the costumes and properties for his plays and pay all expenses.²⁰ He wrote five plays in the years 1601-1603, and the production of the last was the great occasion of his life, as it was performed before the king. It happened this way.

The earl of Northumberland was one of the noblemen who entered into correspondence with James of Scotland before Elizabeth's death, and whose support made his accession certain. When James arrived triumphantly in England in the early summer of 1603 he was very gracious to the earl; the latter held a lease of the dissolved Brigittine convent of Syon at Isleworth,²¹ and the king made him a gift of the house and condescended to visit him there on the 8th of June 1603. Syon had been a double monastery of monks and nuns, and on its dissolution the duke of Somerset obtained a grant of it and built himself a mansion

¹⁹ *Ibid.* *Alnwick Castle MSS.*, vol. v, fol. 104-8. De Fonblanque, *op. cit.* II, p. 365.

²⁰ E. C. Bentley, *Jacobean and Caroline Stage*, I, pp. 38-9 and n., 52, 57-8.

²¹ De Fonblanque, *op. cit.* II, p. 206n., 249n. The letters patent granting the manor to the earl were not passed until the following year, 1604.

out of the conventual buildings, which was standing at the time we are speaking of, but what it was like is unknown, as the whole place was completely remodelled by Robert Adam in the eighteenth century. The only trace of the old convent which remains is a small paved courtyard in the centre of the mansion, open to the sky, with a door in each of the sides and steps leading down from each door to the pavement. This is believed to be the site of the nuns' cloister. The earl of Northumberland's accounts show the expenses for the king's visit; immense quantities of food and wine were bought, together with bottles, glasses, flasks, a service of plate, pewter vessels, hangings, trestles, and curtains, and there was a great deal of carpenters' work;²² but though it is practically certain that one of William Percy's plays was performed on this occasion, there is no definite statement that a stage was erected. It is very likely that there was no stage, and that the play took place in the old cloister, just as in 1614 a pastoral was presented before the king and queen in "a little square paved court" at Somerset House, then the residence of James I's wife Queen Anne.²³

As the courtyard had been the cloister, the old chapel must have been on one side of it, and there was probably a door in each side, as at present. The king, attended by the earl and countess and his principal courtiers, would be conducted to his seat through the door in the wall opposite to the chapel. The other three doors would be reserved for the actors, and James, who hated a crowd, would be pleased by the privacy of the arrangement, but all the windows in the ranges of buildings surrounding the place must have been filled by heads peeping, eyes gazing, and figures scuffling for the best positions, while behind the scenes William Percy gave the last agitated instructions to his company.

²² *Accounts of the Earls of Northumberland at Alnwick Castle Estate Office.*

²³ Chambers, *Eliz. Stage*, III, p. 277.

The stage (or courtyard) represented the forest of Elvida, and the different parts of the forest were indicated by properties, a hollow oak tree, with a door so that an actor could go inside it, and branches into which a man could climb, a well, represented by a low wall, with bucket, rope and pulleys over it, a seat built of turf, a green bank, a gamekeeper's hut, and a brick kiln. Over the door into the chapel was a canopy and above it the inscription "Faery Chapell." Several allusions in the play show that one of its objects was to thank the king for the gift of Syon House, and that the scene of the play was Syon House "in the days of the faeries." The opening was a prologue "for the court," in which the king was complimented, and his indulgence craved for the play and its performers. The name of the play was *The Faery Pastorall or The Forest of Elvès*. It was rather in the nature of a modern revue, carefully designed to appeal to what was known of James I's tastes. It contains a respectful suggestion that a country should be governed by a man and not by a woman, a scene in praise of married happiness, appropriate to the first king for nearly a century to come to the English throne normally equipped with a wife and children, long descriptions of hunting, and references to witchcraft, two subjects upon which James was an expert. At "The Catastrophe of the Comedy" as the author called it, that is, the end of the play, all the characters entered, followed by—

"Six Huntsmen Men and Women bearing on either syde a Banquet of divers and sundry sorts of Junkets in goodly gold and sylver bolles, Sylvius and Sylvia on either syde of them with two Venice mazers or standing bolles of glasse, the one with a fragrant Malmsey, the other with Spanish sack. [The prince and princess] in their wedding garments."

The canopy over the chapel door opened, revealing steps leading up to two chairs, and the prince, taking the princess's hand, and saying:

"Come, mount wee this campestrall old Chapell,"

led her up the steps to the seats. The epilogue was spoken.

Sylvius and Sylvia mounted the steps and stood one on each side of the royal couple :

" Then holding the Imperiall Ghirland that hong over the Front of the Chappell, over both their Heds, And then setting him alone on the heade of [the Prince]. The Whole Chorus of Huntsmen Men and Women, Saluted his Majesty with one Accord."

But the whole chorus would salute not the player prince but his Majesty King James, seated opposite.²⁴

This seems the appropriate moment for the author to be brought forward and presented to the king. James was anxious to stand well with the English nobility, and he was not yet satiated with plays and pageants. No doubt he graciously applauded, and William's head was filled with dreams of being invited to produce a play at court. This was the supreme point of royal favour for both the earl and his brother, though to them it must have appeared just a first step to further glories. As William pictured himself a court dramatist, so the earl saw himself a leading statesman. But neither of the brothers was qualified for the parts they coveted. William was a very poor dramatist. The earl was far too proud, hot-tempered and eccentric to make a statesman. Two years later the Gunpowder plot gave the earl's enemies their opportunity. One of the plotters was Thomas Percy, his cousin and steward; that was sufficient excuse for shutting him up in the Tower, and his fall involved the ruin of his brother William, whose creditors, having no further hope of payment, put him into a debtor's prison. Both the brothers were eventually released, but by that time their dreams and ambitions had faded. Life for them never again showed the glittering colours of that day in the old cloister at Syon House.

De Fonblanque²⁵ says that William was imprisoned in the Fleet for debt; he gives no authority for this, but he is usually accurate. Not later than 1610 William lost the

²⁴ *The Faery Pastorall or The Forest of Elves.*

²⁵ De Fonblanque, *op. cit.* II, p. 365.

property which he held jointly with Richard Stapleton, and leased his manor to a tenant with the initials I.W.; as already explained, this was probably a lease of East Wolves to John Wolf. From this time until the end of his life William's home was the house of Mr. Nicholls in St. Ebb's parish, Oxford. This house was in Pennyfarthing Street, now Pembroke Street, which extends from St. Aldgate's church to St. Ebb's, and is half in one parish and half in the other.²⁶

In 1611-12 the earl paid £11 19s. to Mr. Bagwell the keeper of Oxford Castle for the charges of Mr. William Percy's diet there.²⁷ Oxford Castle was the town prison, and the most probable explanation of this entry is that William was imprisoned there for debt. If he had become a Roman Catholic he might have been imprisoned for religion, but of this there is no evidence. Probably the first of the three letters by William which survive was written at this time, but unfortunately it has no date. It was addressed to the family lawyer, and is as follows:

MR. CARTWRIGHT

concerning Sir Richard Fermor such is his uncertainty of paying his rent as also that once he hath already forfeited his lease that I am almost determined to discharge him thereof, in consyderation of which I am to request you, since you have the managing of our side in Lawe, you would put in a Retraxit in my name this tearme if so my Tenaunts cannot come to better composition. For in plain troth I am weary of the Tenauncy of Sir Richard Fermour who not only will not give mee any satisfaction by his letters but also when wee do confer together about it answers me much as though he cared not for it or sometyme in fustian tearmes as though he had putt a Nihil dicit unto the plea. For would you thinck it possible that he having such and so good a lease and without let of lawe granted him he should not have the witt to take the possession thereof. Moreover and above the other Rent which he receives of my other Teneant unto my use he payes mee it ever by dribblets and upon what dayes he pleaseth himself so as now the last half yeaere he is in Arrerages unto mee £14 de claro. My suite therefore unto you is, since possible you may see myne

²⁶ Wood, *Antiquities of the City of Oxford* (ed. 1899), II, p. 550.

²⁷ *Accounts of the Earls of Northumberland*.

other tennant this tearme having your self the mannaging of the business, you would will him to bring me in all the rent which he hath in his hand, that of his owne as also that of Sir Richard Fermor els the old Rent of it for this half yeare since he himself is nowe the possessor thereof: For some of all which viz. twentie two pounds and fiftene shillings I will have my Mercers Atorneye to attend him the 8th day of November at the Temple for the rest he may bring it over himself upon the sayd Retraxit if so he may not agree with Sir Richard Fermor the better: As for the Arrerages of Sir Richard Fermour himself I must gett it of him as I may.

From my lodging at Mr. Nichols in St. Ebbes October 23

I desire you lykwise, which you forgot in your answere unto my last letter whither you have in your hands my boxe of writings which Sir Richard Fermour delivered unto you or whether you have restored them back and whither you have found a letter that is written unto mee from a cosin of myne Mrs. Petronilla Stanley, For either there you shall find it or els it hath cleanly beene conveyed forth my Trunke and which does concerne mee:

October 23 your counsell I desire you of the whole.

Your very loving freind

WILLIAM PERCY

To Mr. Thomas Cartwright at the signe of the Frying-panne in Fleet street nere unto White Fryars lane London.

Apparently William at first leased a part of his manor to I.W. at a rent of £45 p.a., and retained the rest in his own hands; later he leased the whole manor to Sir Richard Fermor, with an arrangement that I.W. paid his rent to Sir Richard, who remitted both his own and the tenant's rent to William. William's instructions were that this rent should be paid to his mercer's attorney on the 8th of November at the Temple Fountain. Does this mean that he was so heavily in debt to his mercer that he was obliged to make over the rent of the manor to him? Mercery included:

"all manner of small wares, as silk, gold wire or silver wire, coverchiefs, and other such petites merceries, and also all other great wares, such as cloth of gold and silver, silk, sendal, napery, linen cloth, canvas and other such gross merceries."²⁸

²⁸ *Newcastle Merchant Adventurers* (Surtees Soc., vol. 93), 1, p. xxxvii.

Things like these are much needed in amateur theatricals. The arrangement with the two tenants was unsatisfactory, and in his letter William is trying to end Sir Richard Fermor's lease, as Sir Richard is continually in arrears.

William lived quietly at Oxford until the death of his brother the earl in 1632, when he emerged to write one more play in honour of the accession of his nephew as tenth earl of Northumberland. It was an anxious time for him, as his allowance of £30 p.a. must have ended with the ninth earl's death.

The new earl and his only brother were both dangerously ill, probably with typhoid fever, in 1636, and as neither of them had a son, there was a possibility that old William Percy would after all succeed to the title; he was then living solitary at Oxford and drinking nothing but small ale.²⁹ However, the earl recovered, and William continued his retired life at Oxford throughout the civil war. The town was occupied by the king and his army from 1644 to 1647, and though it was not closely besieged, the parliamentary armies cut off communications as far as possible. William's last two letters were written after the town had capitulated to the parliament, and show him trying to recover the rents which were due to him for the last three years. His man of business was now Mr. Henry Champion, who lived at St. James's in London. William's brother Sir Richard Percy was living abroad, and his representative in England was Mr. Gregory Gawsell. From these letters it appears that Sir Richard Fermor died still holding a lease of land from William, but the terms were different from those to which William had previously objected so strongly. The rent paid by Fermor was £20 a year, but £18 were paid to Sir Richard Percy, and only £2 to William. Fermor died in January 1642/3; William says that he died three years ago, but that there was £8 of rent owing to him, i.e. rent for four years. Actually Fermor died five years before, and William in another place says

²⁹ Hillebrand, *loc. cit.*

correctly that there were £10 of rent owing. He was trying to induce Sir Richard's son and heir Henry Fermor, and the executors of the will, to give up the lease.

Poor William's affairs were in a state of great confusion; things would have been different, he laments, if he could have demanded his rents regularly for the last three years, but Mr. Barnes, evidently his agent, tells him that it was impossible to send money into Oxford. William was still receiving, or at least claiming, £50 p.a. from rents on the Marches, and £30 from the same source for his brother Sir Richard. A £20 fine for a renewal of a lease on the Marches had been paid, evidently some years before, to Sir Richard Fermor, who claimed to have William's authority for receiving it, but William denies having given him any such authority. From the unnamed manor William still received £45 p.a., and there was the troublesome Fermor lease, from which William himself was only entitled to £2 p.a., and had received only £1 in the last five years, so that £9 was owing to him.

William died in the following year, 1648, and was buried in the cathedral at Oxford. He was seventy-five years old, a great age at that time, when life was short. Probably his tangled affairs were not straightened out before his death, and that was the reason for preserving the following letters:

MR. CHAMPION,

I wrote a Letter to Mr. Henry Fermor the 15th of this present Maye 1647 intimating unto him that if he or the executors of Sir Richard Fermor would but give up that the lease of 20 pounds [?] unto his Father, I would assoyle them of the forty shillings overplus, which that he or the Executors be bound by lease to pay mee per Annum which now cometh to £8 for three yeares past and gone, The reste of the £20 (Eighteene pounds to weete per Annum) being in hands of Mr. Gawsell as also the lands [?bands] for the same, which is to be reserved to the use of my brother Sir Richard Percy, to which Letter Mr. Henry Fermor sent mee answere that he would doe his uttermost endeavour therein. Now for as much as Mr. Gregory Gawsell writeth to mee in his sent to mee dated the Tenth of this present June that the sayd Rent was not demaunded of him by mee (which he was most willing to paye if so I would have received it

at his hands) Indee I demaunded it at the Temple Fount (Forty shillings to weete) with a Reservation of £18 for the use of Sir Richard Percy, unto which and for my Acquittance to Sir Richard Fermor for the whole summe of £20 which he [Sir Richard] [interlined] should have tendered there I could never yet get the rente [?] from him, but my Acquittance ever brought back againe to mee to Oxford. Indeed Mr. Henry Fermor after decease of his Father payd mee twenty shillings at my chamber in Oxford and no more upon my Acquittance of Ten pounds made unto him for the same, so as the Arrears dewe unto my Brother which Mr. Gawsell calls £30 for three years every half yeare, together with £15 dewe unto him out of the Marches of £40 evry half yeare, whereof evry half yeare I have £24 10s. the Rest £15 or thereabouts to be reserved to the use of my Brother is all yet in Mr. Gawsells owne hands et caet. Now as concerning that he, Mr. Gawsell himself I meane writeth unto me of £20 fine for the Marches after Expiration of Mr. Birde his lease (which whither it were ended in the sixth of King James or in one and twenty after I know not) And that it was demaunded of him by Sir Richard Fermor, and payd him by my Authority it is a most absolute Calumny. For I never made Sir Richard Fermor yet any such Authoritye, yet notwithstanding Mr. Gawsell averreth that he hath Sir Richard Fermor's receipt of that the twenty pound Fine under Sir Richard Fermors owne hand and seale, which I would very faine see and gladly see. Finally and lastly I would desire you would better looke unto your Accompts, For albeit I wrote unto you of £24 10s. every half yeare for myself yet notwithstanding I ever gave him an Acquittance of £40 so as £15 10s. more and above comes short of your Reckoning for one half yeare which is my Brother's dewe, For the Marches being four score per Annum, the Mannour £45 per Annum and Sir Richard Fermor's lease twenty pounds per Annum the whole Rent of the Maine cometh to £145 per annum. I think if I had demaunded the moneys for these three yeares past and gone every half yeare I had not bene thus trunkled [? or tricked] Albeit Mr. Barnes writeth to mee that he might not have payed any money for any that lives in Oxford. I desire you that you would shewe this my letter to Mr. Gregory Gawsell. June the 12th from Mr. Nichols howse in St. Ebbes in Oxford 1647.

Your Freind WILLIAM PERCY.

To Mr. Henry Champion at St. James these London.

MR. CHAMPION,

whereas you write unto mee that Mr. Gawell [or Gowsell] his Resolution is, that he will not pay mee the rest of this half

yeares Rent unless I do allowe him the Nine pounds thereof which be conteyned in the lease I made to Sir Richard Fermor late deceased, I would you should let him know that he Mr. Gomsell [or Gowsell] hath the sayd nine pounds in his own hands and the which I have allowed him conditionally he pay mee that my accustomed allowance of £24 10s. the Residewe of £40 dewe for this half yeare for the Marches. The Rest of the forty together with the Nine pounds in Sir Richard Fermor his lease of £18 per Annum being all in his own custody and keeping And as he has done ever : For the whole lease of the Marches to Mr. Gawsell himself is wholly £80 per Annum and £18 per Annum the whole summe of Richard Fermor his lease. All which I have ever allowed him Mr. Gawsell as to himself for his own distresse of £49 per Annum deducted out of thee whole summe of £80 and the other £18 per Annum et caet. For a warrant of a Recovery on the Land of Sir Richard Fermor his lease and the which hath never [?] beene forfeited, you have written to mee that one Mr. Gifford hath sent for it into the country, And that in the name of the executors (of whom I am not certaine whither Mr. Henry Fermor be one of them) mindeth to deliver up into your hands for mee and Mr. Gawsell his use, unto the which Mr. Gifford I desire [?] you would addresse before you shall have my answere for a further warrant, For Sir Richard Fermor his half yeares Rent of Nine pounds was never yet tendred mee (saving one twenty shillings overplus on it at my chamber here in Oxford) At the Temple Fount I weene, and the which I have ever there demaunded et caet. For the rest of the other arreares of forty seaven pounds per Annum dewe unto mee for three yeares last Michelmas past, which comes (as you say) but to Fifty foure pounds, Excepting £25 more, which (as you say lykwise) be deducted for Taxes for Parliament, I do desire your answere howe you doe proceede therein. So with my commendations I end July the 11th 1647

Yours WILLIAM PERCY

From Mr. Nicholls his howse in St. Ebbes Oxford 1647

To Mr. Henry Champion at St. Jameses be these Delivered. London.

Here are a few notes on the persons mentioned in the letters. Mr. Thomas Cartwright, to whom the first letter was addressed, and who lived at the sign of the Frying Pan in Fleet Street, was the ninth earl of Northumberland's solicitor, and is mentioned in the earl's accounts from 1605 onwards.³⁰ Mr. Henry Champion, to whom the two other letters are addressed, lived at St. James's, and was a trustee

³⁰ De Fonblanque, *op. cit.* II, pp. 599, 638.

under the will of the tenth earl of Northumberland in 1668; he was of the Inner Temple and is described as the earl's servant. He was the family solicitor who succeeded Cartwright.³¹

Sir Richard Fermor was of Somerton, Oxfordshire, and married William Percy's first cousin. This lady was Cornelia daughter and coheiress of Sir William Cornwallis of Brome in Suffolk by his wife Lucy, daughter and coheiress of John Neville lord Latimer. Lucy's sister and coheiress was Catherine the wife of the eighth earl of Northumberland, William's mother. Sir Richard Fermor was a Roman Catholic. He was sheriff of Oxfordshire in 1602 and was knighted by James I in 1603. He was buried at Somerton on 12 January 1642/3. His will is dated 7 January 1642/3, and was proved at Oxford on 8 June 1643. His eldest son and heir Henry Fermor, mentioned in the last two letters, was not one of the executors, who were Sir Richard's nephew George Gyfford and Edmund Plowden.³²

Mistress Petronilla Stanley, whose letter was lost, to William's great concern, was one of the daughters of his cousin Lady Lucy Percy, the third but second surviving daughter of the unfortunate Thomas seventh earl of Northumberland. Lucy married Sir Edward Stanley of Eyesham, Oxford, and Tong, Shropshire, and had a large family of daughters, of whom the most celebrated was the youngest, Venetia, the wife of Sir Kenelm Digby. Petronilla was one of the four daughters and coheiresses of Sir Edward Stanley in 1618. She seems never to have married.³³

Mr. Barnes is named in the second letter as someone who was unable to send William Percy's rents to Oxford, probably on account of the civil war. It is impossible to identify him on these slender grounds, but as William was

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 478, 488, 639.

³² *Genealogical Collections Illustrating the History of Roman Catholic Families of England*, ed. J. Jackson Howard and H. Farnham Burke, part I, (1) Fermor, pp. 6, 27.

³³ *Vict. County Hist. Lancaster*, vol. IV, p. 128, note 56.

the friend of Barnabe Barnes the poet, who died in 1609, this Barnes probably belonged to the same family. Barnabe left no descendants, but two of his brothers married and had children.

Mr. Gifford, mentioned in the last letter, was probably George Gifford, nephew and one of the executors of Sir Richard Fermor. It may be noted that the Gifford and Barnes families were closely connected by marriage. The mother of Barnabe Barnes the poet was Fredesmunda Gifford.³⁴

Mr. Byrd, mentioned in the second letter, was probably Hugh Birde, bailiff of Tynemouth and a servant of the ninth earl of Northumberland, who in 1597 reported to the government that in searching a Scottish ship lately come to Newcastle he had found a Scots gentleman, Mr. John Wedderborne, disguised in mariner's apparel. This man was a follower of Lord Bothwell, who had sent him to Scotland to murder Sir Robert Kerr.³⁵

Sir Richard Percy was William Percy's younger brother, the fifth son of the eighth earl of Northumberland. He was a soldier who served in Ireland under the earl of Essex and later under Lord Mountjoy. He went there as a gentleman adventurer, that is he joined the army as a volunteer, paying all his own expenses, in the hope of eventually obtaining a command, but though he saw a good deal of fighting, and distinguished himself as a brave and capable soldier, he was never able to obtain a commission. His brother the ninth earl made him an allowance of £100 a year. This with the £30 in rents from the Marches and the £18 lease made up his income to £148, which was more than William's. It seems probable, however, that he was so deeply in debt that he was obliged to live abroad. Nothing is known about Mr. Gregory Gawsell, but as Sir Richard's income was paid over to him "by way of distress," he was probably a creditor with whom Sir Richard

³⁴ Longstaff, *Hist. of Darlington*, pp. lxxxii-iii.

³⁵ *Cal. Border Papers*, II, p. 359.

had been obliged to come to a composition. Sir Richard Percy is chiefly remembered for the claim of James Percy of Dublin to be his great grandson and consequently the male heir of the Percy family, when the last earl died in 1667 leaving an only daughter. As James Percy was born in 1619, it was obviously impossible that Sir Richard should have been his great grandfather, but Sir Richard was in Dublin in 1599 and remained in Ireland for some years. It is possible that he had a son in Dublin who was James Percy's father, and that either because the marriage was secret or because there was no marriage, James Percy may never have discovered the truth.³⁶

³⁶ De Fonblanque, *op. cit.* II, pp. 210 12, 365, 486.