

VI.—THE EARLY HISTORY OF THE CRASTER FAMILY.

BY SIR EDMUND CRASTER.

Although the parish of Embleton may have formed a single estate before the Conquest, five of the townships which compose it had become attached, by the reign of Henry I, to the extensive Vescy lordship of Alnwick. The rest of the parish, with an isolated property at Warenton on Chatton moor, made up the barony of Embleton. It was granted by Henry I in the latter part of his reign to a certain John son of Odard, younger member of an ancient Anglo-Saxon family which held the hereditary office of sheriff of Northumberland. The shrievalty ceased to be hereditary in the time of King Stephen, but John and his descendants adopted as their surname the name of Vesconte, that being the French rendering of the title of sheriff.

The portion of Embleton parish that lay within the Vesconte barony came to form four townships, namely Embleton, Stamford, Dunstan and Craster. Although these two last were already distinct townships by 1240, it is unlikely that they were always separate. The line that divides them almost touches Dunstan village. The services that the owners of Dunstan and Craster rendered to their feudal lord were closely linked. Their joint area (2,541 acres) does not greatly exceed that of Embleton township (2,130 acres). Craster, comprising no more than 695 acres, is by far the smallest township in the parish of Embleton; an inequality which can be explained on the assumption that the Craster estate was carved out of the territory of a village community settled at Dunstan.

The returns of 1166 known as the Barons' cartels give one a hint as to when the division took place. The object of these returns was to give information to the Crown regarding the military service owed by its feudal tenants, and the extent to which those who held their lands immediately from the king had devolved their military and financial obligations upon subtenants. John son of Odard reported that he held his barony of Embleton for three knights' fees, and that he had relieved himself of half the burden of that service by granting out or subinfeudating a part of his lands to three tenants. Their holdings were each reckoned at half a knight's fee and had been created since 1135. One of the three was named Albert. It is certain that his holding was Craster, for he heads the pedigree which his great-great-grandson, Sir Richard of Crawcestre, set out at the assizes in 1292*; and an Albert of Crawcestre appears in late twelfth century deeds which have been entered in the chartulary of the Yorkshire priory of Guisborough.

He naturally took his name from his habitation. Crawcestre, though now contracted into Craster through the elision of its second syllable, remained in common use in the longer form until the end of the fifteenth century. Its derivation is evident. Craise is the Old English for crow, and the term ceastre was applied to any kind of earthwork. The small British camp on the seaheugh south of the road down to Craster harbour is too far distant to have given its name to the medieval hamlet. That lay close to the present Tower; and, although all trace of it is now effaced, one may presume that here was once an old entrenched site, sheltered by trees in which rooks built their high nests, and that within it Albert had his timbered dwelling.

The name Albert is most frequently met with in the twelfth century in Germany, more especially in the Rhine-

* NCH II, pp. 169-70. The fairly full account of the Craster family there given at pp. 166-76 was compiled by Mr. Cadwallader Bates. Readers will find in it, and in the pedigree which follows it (pp. 177-82), references to authorities which it has not been thought necessary to repeat in the footnotes to this paper.

land. It is not specifically Anglo-Saxon, and there is therefore no necessity for supposing that the first owner of Craster was a native Northumbrian. If he was not, it is improbable that he came into the county before 1157, for during the preceding twenty years the earldom of Northumberland was in the hands of the Scots and is unlikely to have received settlers from the south. There is reason to think that he may have come from the Cleveland district in the North Riding of Yorkshire. His wife, Christiana, was a daughter of Robert de Argentom, a benefactor to Whitby abbey,¹ and brought with her as her marriage portion a little estate, lying partly in the coastal town of Redcar and partly in the neighbouring village of Upleatham.² A deed has been recorded in the Guisborough chartulary whereby Christiana's brother, William de Argentom, bestowed upon his brother-in-law a carucate of land, that is to say a hundred acres, lying together at the west end of Redcar village and extending to the sea-shore. From the fact that Albert's eldest son, William, witnessed the deed, one may conclude that Albert was a widower when he married the Argentom lady, and that he had a grown son by an earlier wife. He and Christiana subsequently presented the Augustinian canons of Guisborough with a plot of land at Redcar as a building site for a chapel.³ This may have been a preliminary to himself becoming a member of their community, which his grandson by his marriage with Christiana certainly entered later. The name Albert is sufficiently uncommon at this period in northern England to warrant the identification of Albert of Crawcestre with an Albert who occurs as a canon of Guisborough in 1175.⁴

After Albert died, or took monastic vows, Christiana made over the Redcar lands to their son Ivo, while Ivo's elder brother, William, succeeded to the Craster estate.

¹ *Whitby Chartulary* (Surtees Soc. publ. 69), vol. I, pp. 29, 65-7.

² *Guisborough Chartulary* (Surtees Soc. publ. 89), vol. II, p. 216; *Percy Chartulary* (Surtees Soc. publ. 117), p. 212.

³ *Guisborough Chartulary*, vol. II, pp. 231, 233.

⁴ Farrer, *Early Yorkshire Charters*, vol. II, p. 502.

William's son and heir, also named William, made appearance in a suit in the King's court in 1214, and was returned as holding Craster in 1242.⁵ But he was dead by 1245 and his son John was in possession, for in an inquisition or survey taken in that year on the death of John Vesconte of Embleton, the customs and services rendered from Dunstan to the lord of Embleton by the men of Reyner of Dunstan and by those of John of Crawcestre were valued at 9s. 6d. a year. John Vesconte had no male heir. His daughter and heiress, the lady Rametta, conveyed her barony of Embleton in 1255 to the greatest noble of the realm, Simon de Montfort, earl of Leicester, and her grant included John of Crawcestre's services. When Montfort rose in rebellion against King Henry III, it might have been expected that his Embleton tenants would be among his followers, and a family tradition has been current since the eighteenth century that John of Crawcestre fell with his lord in 1265 upon the fatal field of Evesham. But history ever comes in to spoil romance and has preserved a record of John's participation in a lawsuit eight years later.⁶ The barony of Embleton indeed was forfeited to the Crown, and was granted by Henry III in 1269 to his younger son, Edmund Plantagenet, earl of Lancaster. From that date it continued to be held first by earls, and then by dukes, of Lancaster, until the duchy became merged with the Crown upon the accession of Henry IV. Forfeiture of the barony did not involve, however, forfeiture by the tenants.

John of Crawcestre, though still living in 1273, was dead by 1278. A royal order issued in that year imposed upon all landowners whose income from their estates was more than £20 a year the duty of taking knighthood. It was not necessarily a welcome honour, for it involved military service, for forty days if so required, as a fully armed and mounted knight, or else providing a substitute. John's son Richard was required, like other landowners in the county,

⁵ *Curia Regis Rolls*, vol. VII, p. 276; *Book of Fees*, p. 1117.

⁶ *Northumbrian Pleas* (Surtees Soc. publ. 158), p. 12.

to find sureties that he would take knighthood. His manor of Craster was returned eighteen years later as having value of no more than £13 13s. 4d., but one may assume that his total rent roll was brought to a sum above £20 by Dunstan properties and by lands at Newton by the sea which had been in his family's possession since Albert's time.

As a knight, Sir Richard was entitled to bear arms in a heraldic as well as in a military sense. Edmund of Crawcestre, who was almost certainly his son, had on his seal a quarterly shield, charged with a bird in the first quarter.⁷ Evidence as to the tinctures or colouring of the shield is first supplied by a roll of arms of about 1410, in which the Craster arms are blazoned as quarterly or and gules, in the first quarter a 'merlet' (or blackbird) sable.⁸ The bird was certainly a 'crow' or crow, and punned upon the family name. The shield quartered gold and red should betoken relationship or feudal tie with some other family whose shield was quartered gold and red or red and gold, such as the Clavering lords of Warkworth or the Middletons of Belsay.

Rather more is known of Sir Richard than of his predecessors. In 1284 he accompanied his overlord, Earl Edmund, to Finchale Priory near Durham, and there witnessed a deed by which the earl gave to the monks of Finchale an endowment of twenty shillings yearly out of Embleton mills for the maintenance of lights round the tomb of their founder, St. Godric. In a lawsuit to which he was party in 1292, he claimed at the assizes the person of a man whom he alleged to be a runaway serf descended from a serf belonging to Albert. By way of establishing his right to set out his own descent, but, failing to prove the defendant's pedigree, he withdrew the case. In 1296 there was levied a subsidy or tax upon movable property, and the value of his goods or personal estate at Craster was returned as £10 4s. 8d., an average sum for a county gentleman of those days. It was probably made up for the most part of farm

⁷ *Arch. Ael.*, 3rd series, vol. XX, p. 127.

⁸ Thomas Jenyns' Book (*Antiquary*, vol. II, p. 242).

stock, for military equipment and ready cash were exempt from assessment, and household furniture was scant.

Earl Edmund died in that same year, and the inquisition taken at his death sets out in full the services by which Sir Richard held the property of Craster. Besides rendering the feudal service that attached to half a knight's fee, he did homage for his holding and, as a freeholder, attended his lord's manorial court at Stamford. He contributed to certain ancient rents, named castleguard and cornage, that were payable out of the barony to the Crown, his quotas being 6s. 8d. for castleguard and 1s. 3d. for cornage. In addition, he paid a special rent of 2s. 6d. for an old mill-pond, presumably the pond for which his father was returned in 1245 as paying sixpence a year and which fed a watermill on Howick Burn. Further, in accordance with the general practice of that age, he was bound to help in cultivating the broad fields of the earl's demesne in Stamford and Embleton, providing six ploughs for the ploughing, twelve horses for the harrowing, twelve men for the reaping of the harvest, and twelve carts for one day's carting of the corn and hay. The value of these agricultural services was assessed at five shillings, but by 1351, perhaps in consequence of the labour shortage resulting from the Black Death, their performance had been commuted for an annual payment of 8s. 6d.

The yearly charges payable on Craster were eventually consolidated in a fee-farm rent of ten shillings and a pound of pepper which a subsequent lord of the manor of Embleton granted to Tynemouth Priory. Upon the suppression of that monastery the rent became reunited to the manor, and so it passed to the Earl of Tankerville who in 1743 sold the fee-farm rent of 16s. for £21 to John Craster, the then owner of Craster Tower.

In the year after Earl Edmund died, a Scottish army, led by the redoubtable William Wallace, swept down upon Northumberland, burning the Earl of Lancaster's manor house at Stamford and the greater part of Embleton village.

Dunstan also suffered loss. If Craster escaped, Sir Richard must have had cause to be thankful.

A certain Richard Wetwang was at this time buying up property and founding a family which continued to own Dunstan until the end of the seventeenth century. He quarrelled with Sir Richard over a right of way and sued him at the assizes in 1301 for blocking the road by which Wetwang was in the habit of going with carts from his house in Dunstan down to the sea to cart seaweed.⁹ He must have sent his carts to what is called Craster North Side. The right of cutting seaweed on the rocks south of the village, and of burning it into kelp, was a strictly reserved manorial privilege which was noted in 1737 as bringing three pounds a year in to the Craster estate.

Earl Edmund had been succeeded by his son, Thomas of Lancaster, an ambitious noble and the most powerful of Edward II's subjects. Sir Richard lived long enough to see the beginnings of the great castle which Earl Thomas set out to build upon the rocky point of Dunstanburgh. But in 1314 he was dead. When the reeve of Embleton made up his accounts at Michaelmas, although he had entered Sir Richard's name as providing farm labour, the entries on the debit side are entered in the name of Edmund of Crawcestre. The battle of Bannockburn had been fought in June, and one may surmise, if one so pleases, that Sir Richard met his death in that disastrous campaign.

That Edmund was Sir Richard's son by his wife Dame Alice admits of little doubt. For the next two hundred years, possibly with one short interval, Craster was owned by successive Edmunds; and, although after Sir Richard the links in the family chain of descent are unproved until the reign of Henry VII, it is fairly safe to assume that the property descended regularly in the male line from father to son. There is no doubt either as to the origin of the Christian name which they share in common and which makes differentiation between them difficult. At the time when

⁹ PRO, Assize roll 658.

the first Edmund was born, the lord of the barony of Embleton from whom the Crasters held their lands was Edmund Plantagenet; and what more natural than that Sir Richard should give to his own eldest son the name of his feudal lord?

If the first Edmund of the Craster line was at one time a member of the household of Earl Edmund's son, the great Earl Thomas of Lancaster, that will account for an order that was given to hand over twenty-four oaks out of Pickering Forest for the building of a house for Edmund of Cwastre at the earl's charges in the North Riding village of Lockton.¹⁰ Nevertheless he did not share the downfall of his master, who met his fate in 1322 at Boroughbridge in rebellion against King Edward II. During that time, when Scots were pouring yearly over the Border, Edmund was serving as a man-at-arms in the forces of Sir John Cromwell, Warden of the Marches, under the indenture of service into which he had entered in 1319. In the year after Boroughbridge he, like many other county gentlemen, was quietly making purchases of the army stores that were being sold off in Newcastle.¹¹

In 1324 he was returned as one of the men-at-arms in the County of Northumberland.¹² He was not yet a knight, but he had attained knighthood by 1328. He may have lived to see the erection, about 1330-40, of the chapel in Embleton church known in later times as the Craster porch and which still holds the family pew. In the vault below it Crasters have been laid to rest at least from the reign of George I; and it is conceivable that it may have served from the very first as a chantry or family chapel, dedicated—as there is some reason for thinking—to the founder's patron saint, St. Edmund.¹³

¹⁰ *North Riding Records*, new ser., vol. II, p. 126.

¹¹ *Proc. Soc. Newcastle Antiquaries*, 3rd ser., vol. IV, p. 21; PRO, Exchequer K.R. accounts, 15/26, 16/24.

¹² Palgrave, *Parliamentary Writs*, vol. II, div. II, pt. i, p. 649.

¹³ The payment made to the Embleton church clerks for the vigils of St. Edmund, St. Katharine and St. Mary (for which see *NCH*, vol. II, p. 68) indicates the existence of pre-Reformation altars to those saints.

The Edmund who paid subsidy on his personal estate at Craster in 1336 was presumably the son and successor of the first Sir Edmund. A marriage with Maud, widow of William Clavering the young lord of Callaley, brought him in 1335 the wardship of his stepson's lands during a minority which lasted until 1347 and enhanced his position.¹⁴ Throughout his life he was active in county business. Knighted before 1340, he was appointed, in 1341, one of the collectors for Northumberland of the tax of one-ninth then imposed on movable property. In 1344, two years before the battle of Neville's Cross, he was made a commissioner of array in the shire and, as such, will have had the task of raising the local militia. In 1346, when an aid or feudal tax was levied on the occasion of the knighting of the Black Prince, he was appointed a collector for Northumberland. In 1348 and in the two following years he was again collecting taxes on movables; and in 1352 he was commissioned to report on the destruction committed by the Scots in their invasion of Northumberland in 1340-1.¹⁵

The collection of the aid of 1346 was a very tedious affair. Sir Edmund's two colleagues were both carried off by the Black Death in 1349 when the aid was only half levied. Nothing effective was done until 1353 when a new commission was issued. The five gentlemen whose names were then added to Sir Edmund's seem none of them to have found the task congenial, and by 1356 all five had been replaced by new commissioners. A reinforcement of three more in 1358 speeded up the work of collection, which was apparently completed in 1359, thirteen years after the aid had been voted.¹⁶ The difficulty of collecting such long-standing arrears in a county disorganized by the Black Death must have been considerable; and, if the collectors were called upon to make up deficiencies, it would explain the

¹⁴ *Cal. Fine Rolls*, vol. IV, p. 432.

¹⁵ *Cal. Pat. Rolls*, 1340-43, p. 158; *Rot. Scotiae*, vol. I, p. 649a; *Cal. Fine Rolls*, vol. V, p. 492, and vol. VI, pp. 91, 191, 270; *Cal. Pat. Rolls*, 1350-54, p. 283.

¹⁶ *Cal. Fine Rolls*, vol. VI, pp. 367, 425; vol. VII, pp. 4, 13, 78.

extensive debt of £71 16s. 2d. which Sir Edmund contracted in this year with Thomas Galoun, the well-to-do Lancastrian bailiff of Embleton. It is more likely, however, that the sum in question was purchase money due for Galoun's carucate or 120 acres of arable land in Warenton, which is known to have passed at some date before 1445 into the possession of the Craster family.¹⁷

It is probable that this second Sir Edmund was the builder of the stone tower which is first recorded in a list of border strongholds drawn up in 1415 and which still forms a part of the house of Craster. Its basement, originally lit by window-loops in the north and south walls; served as a storechamber. The door that led off the south-east wheel-stair into the chamber on the first floor has its threshold about three feet below the floor of the present drawing-room, and so indicates that the tower originally had three upper floors, whereas now it has only two. They were the living-rooms or private apartments of the lord of the manor, built, one must imagine, on at the west end of an earlier hall. For the hall was the real centre of the house. One may look on it as a long high barnlike structure, almost certainly wood-framed, and having beyond and outside it the kitchen and offices.

There is little else to tell of this second Sir Edmund. His wife, Dame Maud, long predeceased him, for she died in 1351. In 1368 he deposed as to the age of John Musgrave of Heaton, whose christening he had attended in Newcastle in 1346; and he was still living in 1377.¹⁸ Plague swept over the district in 1379, carrying off almost the whole population of Newton village, and other troubles were in store. In 1384 a Scottish army came and encamped in the fields of Embleton, laying waste the countryside. Sometime about this date Sir Edmund died, and throughout the reign of Richard II there is a blank in the family history.

¹⁷ *Cal. Close Rolls*, 1354-60, p. 657; PRO, Duchy of Lancaster, Ministers' accounts, no. 5846.

¹⁸ PRO, Coram Rege roll, Hilary term 30 Edw. III, m. 26.

By the time that the next Edmund is heard of, Richard II had been deposed, and the Duke of Lancaster had succeeded, as King Henry IV, to the throne of England.

During the fifteenth and the early sixteenth century four successive owners of Craster bore the same Christian name of Edmund, and one is reduced to distinguishing them numerically. None of them were knighted, for knighthood was becoming a rarer distinction: other ways were being found for recruiting the armed forces. But they continued to add to their landed estates. Edmund III was returned in 1427 as holding, jointly with another owner, property in Beadnell estimated at half a knight's fee. Edmund IV was possessed of Galoun's farm at Warenton, and of a house in Bamburgh, and he likewise farmed Embleton glebe under a seven-year lease taken from Merton College in 1443.

Although the Crasters held their lands of the Duchy of Lancaster, that did not prevent them from taking the Yorkist side in the Wars of the Roses. Edmund IV and a certain Richard Crawcestre, who was probably his younger brother, are said to have assisted in reducing the Lancastrian stronghold of Dunstanburgh when Warwick the Kingmaker came up against it in December 1461. The authority for that statement is doubtful; yet it is certain that Edmund and Richard chose the White Rose, and certain that they were rewarded for so doing; for Richard received a grant of the office of bailiff of the castle and demesne of Bamburgh, and Edmund was given in tailmale the demesne lands of North Charlton which Sir John Beaumont had forfeited after the battle of Towton. The latter grant was renewed in 1465 in an extended form, the Beaumont manor and demesne of North Charlton and lands in West Ditchburn being granted to Edmund and Richard jointly and to their male issue.

Edmund IV died some time before 1477, and his widow Margery married Ralph Carr, lessee of Newlands near Warenton. Carr brought an action in that year in King's Bench to recover dower in the lands of his wife's first

husband in Craster, Warenton, Beadnell, Bamburgh, Spindleston, Budle and Ditchburn.¹⁹ The manor of North Charlton is not included in this list of properties, though it does not appear to have been restored to the Beaumonts until the accession of Henry VII.

Richard, co-owner of North Charlton, migrated to Yorkshire and in 1470 was appointed ironmaster of the forest of Danby during the minority of the young Lord Latimer. A William Crawcestre who was given the bailiwick and wardship of Lord Latimer's Yorkshire manor of Sinnington on the same day that Richard had his Danby grant may have been his son. Brought up in the service of the abbot of Rievaulx, William attached himself firmly to the fortunes of the House of York and was for six years controller of customs in the port of Newcastle (1476-82). In 1484 he received from Richard III a grant for life of Lord Roos' forfeited manor of Roos Hall at Fulford outside York. He is described in this grant as one of the Yeomen of the Crown, from which it would appear that he was a member of the corps subsequently known as the Yeomen of the Guard. The accession of the Tudors did not end his official career, for in 1489 he was made controller of the customs at Kingston upon Hull. Dying in 1505, he was buried in Slingsby church before the Lady altar, after making a will whereby he left his goods to his wife Agnes. She soon consoled herself by marrying John Bircheley, a London citizen.²⁰

Edmund V, who had in the meantime succeeded to the Craster estates, was equally successful in coming to terms with the new dynasty. In 1489 Henry VII appointed him constable of Dunstanburgh Castle for life. Ten years later he became receiver or Crown agent for Dunstanburgh lordship, as the barony of Embleton had now come to be called; and at the same time he took a twenty-year lease of the Embleton demesnes and of a rent called Canefish, which

¹⁹ *Arch. Ael.*, 3rd ser., vol. VI, p. 81.

²⁰ *Rievaulx Chartulary* (Surtees Soc. publ. 83), p. 423; *Cal. Pat. Rolls*, 1467-77, p. 592; 1476-85, p. 455; 1485-94, pp. 269, 375; York Probate Registry VI, fol. 211; *Cal. Pat. Rolls*, 1494-1509, p. 627.

was the right to a quarter of every catch of fish landed in the lordship. He also had a part tenancy of Embleton water-mills.²¹ Farming, milling and the fish trade, along with his agency work, must have kept him busy at home, but he had time to take up public business too, and was one of the gentlemen of the county appointed in 1503 to collect an aid for the knighting of the King's eldest son, Arthur, Prince of Wales.²²

Chance has preserved his testimony given in 1506 in favour of a York draper, named Bertram Dawson, whose broad Northumbrian speech, mistaken for Scotch by his York customers, caused him to be 'sinisterly defamed that he should be a Scotchman born', with a consequent falling off in the drapery business. Edmund was able to give evidence that Dawson was born at Warenton, and that Richard Craster had sponsored him at his christening in Bamburgh church.²³

He just lived into the reign of Henry VIII, and died before 1512, leaving a young family of five boys and a girl. A little before his death he entailed his lands by a deed dated 31 July, 1509. The estates which he brought into settlement included, in addition to Craster and the properties previously mentioned, holdings at Spindleston, Adderstone, Shipley, Fallodon and Howick. All these he settled upon his sons in successive tailmale, with reversion, in default of issue, to his daughter. Six weeks later he gave his Newton lands, probably for life, to his second son whom he had named Jasper, after the late King's uncle, Jasper Tudor, Earl of Richmond, and who entered the service of Henry Percy, styled the Magnificent, fifth Earl of Northumberland.

His eldest son, Edmund VI, was still under age, and so came, as a minor, under the jurisdiction of the Court of Wards, where his marriage with Marion Widdrington may have been arranged for him. He died on 9 November,

²¹ PRO, Duchy of Lancaster records, class II, no. 21, foll. 72b, 92; Ministers' accounts, no. 5893.

²² *Rotuli Parliamentarii*, vol. VI, p. 539.

²³ *English Miscellanies* (Surtees Soc. publ. 85), p. 51.

1520, probably before reaching the age of thirty, and left a little five-year-old boy named George. Possibly he met a violent end, like his brother Jasper, whom a certain Richard Storey murdered in this or in the following year. An inquisition taken in Embleton manor court after his death shows him to have settled the township of Craster, his Dunstan and Embleton lands, and the property at Warenton, upon trustees as dower for his wife.²⁴

The wardship of the Craster estates came, for the second time in Henry VIII's reign, into the hands of the Crown, and so remained until the young heir came of age in 1536. It is likely that George Craster was brought up with his mother's family, the Widdringtons. He certainly kept up close relations with them.²⁵ His own wedding with Eleanor Forster linked him with yet another influential Northumbrian family. She was one of the numerous children of Sir Thomas Forster of Adderstone, Marshal of Berwick, who had died some fifteen years previously.

Their married life was a short one. Like his father, George died in early manhood at the age of thirty-one (16 March, 1546). In accordance with his will, which he had made two years before, he was buried in Embleton church, where a priest, in good Catholic fashion, sang masses for a year for the repose of his soul. His only son, Edmund VII, was a child of four. To his only daughter, Eleanor, who was not yet two, he assigned sixty pounds for maintenance and marriage portion. He left his wife guardian of their boy during her widowhood; but she promptly took for her second husband a kinsman of her first, one Robert Widdrington, who made Craster his home and was living there in 1550.²⁶ So the guardianship of the child passed to his two eldest Forster uncles—Thomas Forster of Adderstone and John Forster of Bamburgh—and to his Craster great-uncle, Thomas Craster, youngest of the sons of Edmund V.

²⁴ PRO, Duchy of Lancaster court rolls, no. 1540.

²⁵ *Northumberland and Durham Deeds* (Newcastle Record Series), p. 63.

²⁶ Hodgson, *Northumberland*, III, ii, p. 207.

The inquisition or survey taken on George's death, in conjunction with the livery of lands made to Edmund on attaining his majority in 1563,²⁷ gives information regarding the size and relative value of the various Craster properties. The total annual value of the estates was given as £43 9s. Of this sum almost one half, namely £19 4s., came from Craster itself. The other properties were calculated in terms of farmholds. These were more in the nature of small holdings than present-day farms, for a farmhold denoted an agricultural holding which comprised a number of arable strips or rigs, varying in number but generally amounting to about thirty acres, scattered through the open fields of the township; together with a share in the common meadow or leazes, a prescribed number of 'stints' for cattle on the commons and uncultivated ground, and a cottage with its barnyard or garth. In addition to Craster, the family estates included two farmholds and a cottage holding in Dunstan, three farmholds in Embleton, land of unspecified amount in Howick with half a watermill on the Howick Burn at which the Craster tenants doubtless ground their corn, and two farmholds in Newton which, since Jasper Craster's murder, had been settled upon his younger brother Thomas. These, taken together, had a yearly value of £15 3s. 8d. The outlying properties consisted of two farmholds at Warenton, and single farmholds at Adderstone, Shipley, Ditchburn, Beadnell, Shoreston, Budle and Spindleston. Obviously no single owner can himself have farmed so many small and scattered holdings, and they must have been let to local tenantry.

Thomas Craster received from the Crown a grant of his great-nephew's wardship, with an allowance of £10 a year for the boy's maintenance. He is found farming Ellington tithes in the south of the county, but he made his money principally by running a tannery business in Alnwick. Here he lived in a house which he left by will to his wife Margaret with reversion to their son, and, dying

²⁷ Craster title deeds, nos. 4 and 5.

in 1557, was buried in St. Michael's church. His personal estate consisted principally of stocks of leather and trade debts; and his household goods were not much more than ten pieces of pewter, five brass pots, three beds and a cupboard. Yet, as a squire's son, he could write 'gentleman' after his name, as many did who lived equally simply, and who left, as he seems to have done, descendants to sink lower in the social scale.²⁸

Sir John Forster of Bamburgh, into whose care young Edmund Craster appears to have passed, was a very different person from the Alnwick tanner. Grasping and unpopular, arbitrary and avaricious, a strong upholder of the reformed religion; as Warden of the Middle Marches during the greater part of Elizabeth's reign, he was the dominating figure on the Northumbrian Border. At the time of the Rising of the Northern Earls in 1569 he collected the loyalist forces of the county and, seizing the two chief Percy strongholds of Alnwick and Warkworth, put his young Craster nephew in as constable of the latter castle. Characteristically Forster seized his opportunity to strip both fortresses of everything that he could convert to his own use. 'It is great pity', Lord Hunsdon wrote to Lord Burleigh, 'to see how Alnwick Castle and Warkworth are spoiled by him and his.' Edmund was a favourite, or at least a useful, nephew; and when in 1539 Sir John drew up a family entail of the estates he had amassed, he made him a trustee of the settlement. He had Edmund with him on that day of broken truce at Windy Gyle four years before, when a surprise attack by the Scottish Warden left Sir John's son-in-law, Lord Francis Russell, dead upon the field. Together they sent up to Lord Burleigh a full account of an incident that was like to disturb the friendly relations of the two kingdoms.²⁹

It was an unruly time on the Border. There was con-

²⁸ *Letters and Papers, Henry VIII*, vol. XXI, pt. 1, p. 69; Gibson, *History of Tynemouth*, vol. I, p. 211; *Durham Wills and Inventories*, vol. III (Surtees Soc. publ. 112), p. 13; Hodgson, *Northumberland*, III, ii, p. 247.

²⁹ *Cal. Border Papers*, vol. I, p. 189.

stant cattle reiving on both sides. Twice over, in 1588 and again two years later, Edmund is found at meetings of the Commissioners for the Marches, filing his bill for cattle and oxen stolen from him by the Scots.³⁰ Blood-feuds were frequent. The Storeys, who had taken Jasper Craster's life two generations back, lived at deadly feud with the Hebburns; and Edmund, whose sister Eleanor had married Michael Hebburn, the head of that family, was chosen, with Luke Ogle of Eglington, to compose the long standing enmity. The joint award of the two arbitrators was issued in 1588, and has been several times printed from a copy remaining among the Craster papers.

Life was quieter on Tyneside, where trade was developing and commercial classes prospered. Consequently Edmund made an advantageous marriage when he took to wife Alice, the daughter of Christopher Mitford, governor of the merchants' company of Newcastle upon Tyne and twice mayor of that town. They had three sons and seven daughters. In addition to his own children, Edmund had the upbringing of a young Forster, son of his cousin, Cuthbert Forster of Brunton. His chaplain, Sir Thomas, who had the education of this large Elizabethan family, doubtless fully earned the legacy of ten shillings which Edmund left to him by will. The two eldest girls were married off in their father's lifetime—Jane, the eldest, to her cousin Bertram Anderson, member of another leading mercantile family in Newcastle; and Margaret to Henry Collingwood, eldest son of the Constable of Etal.

Edmund VII died at the end of 1594 or early in the following year, and was buried, like his father, in the church of Embleton. He had broken his great-grandfather's entail twenty years before, and appears to have sold off the small outlying farmholds. On the other hand he acquired a property far away at Barton in Richmondshire. This he devised to his wife, with remainder to their two younger sons, Edmund and Thomas, both of whom were appren-

³⁰ *op. cit.*, pp. 361, 364.

ticed to Newcastle merchants.³¹ The two boys also had £60 apiece for their portions; the two married daughters each had £10; and the five younger girls received, each of them, a hundred marks (£66 13s. 4d.). The total charges imposed upon the estate for the benefit of the younger children consequently amounted to over £470, a heavier load than it could have borne a generation earlier, but money had in the meantime fallen to half its former value.

On her husband's death, his widow, Alice, made a new home for herself in the half ruined castle of Dunstanburgh, where the Constable's lodgings were perhaps still habitable. Here, in September 1597, she made her will, leaving legacies of £20 each to her two younger sons and her two elder daughters; all her linen to her third daughter, Grace, now wife of William Armorer; and twenty marks (£13 6s. 8d.) to her fifth daughter, Isabel, who had recently married Luke Ogle, heir to Eglington, 'to buy her a gown, petticoat and forekirtle which I did promise her'. There were legacies of £33 13s. 4d. each to her fourth daughter Eleanor and to her sixth daughter Barbara, who subsequently married Cuthbert Bewick, a Newcastle citizen and a widower. The youngest girl, Catherine, was already dead.

An inventory of Alice Craster's household goods,³² taken at the time of her death, shows that she was in moderately easy circumstances. She possessed a standing bed (probably a fourposter) and two truckle beds, with suitable bed linen and table linen. Her furniture consisted of two tables, two chairs, seven buffet stools, a couple of forms, a cupboard and a corner chest. In addition to a silver salt-cellar and six silver spoons, which went by will to her son-in-law and executor, Henry Collingwood, her plate and crockery comprised eighteen pewter vessels and three trenchers. There were kitchen utensils of course, and a couple of spinning wheels. Bedding, pots and pans were devised to her eldest son, John. Her livestock (for she ran a farm) amounted to

³¹ *Newcastle Merchant Adventurers* (Surtees Soc. publ. 101), pp. 221, 223.

³² Durham Probate Registry.

eight ploughing-oxen, 32 cattle, three horses, 145 sheep and a dozen pigs. Her capital was out at interest on bonds and bills to the total amount of £436; and her debts, which were comparatively few, included £48 to her mother, Jane Mitford. That vigorous old Newcastle lady survived both her daughter and her granddaughter, Jane Anderson, and, living on into James I's reign, left legacies of £20 to each of her remaining Craster grandchildren.

John Craster, Edmund VII's eldest son, had received a university education at Queens' college, Cambridge. He succeeded to Craster and the other Northumbrian properties under his father's will, and, after his mother's death, sold off the Craster lands in Richmondshire,³³ presumably for the benefit of his younger brothers. About 1599 he married Margaret, sister to Thomas Carr, the young owner of Ford. Her brother had inherited a fine property in the county, but the Carrs were a spendthrift race, victims of violent family quarrels. In course of time Margaret presented her husband with four sons and two daughters, whose names were duly recorded when Sir Richard St. George, Norroy King at Arms, made his round of the county in 1615, registering arms and pedigrees.

The Greys had recently come to live at Howick Tower, two miles south of Craster. Several other freeholders, of whom John Craster was the chief, owned strips in the open fields of Howick; and in 1607 Edward Grey, with a view to forming a compact estate, arranged with his neighbour for a division of property. John was given a block of 129½ acres in the north-west corner of Howick township in place of his scattered holdings, and a contiguous lot of 40 acres in compensation for his rights in Howick mill. The land allotted to him adjoined Craster grounds on the west, and is to-day represented by the greater portion of Craster West Farm which is consequently still regarded as lying within the township of Howick.

John Craster chose his second cousin and close friend,

³³ *VCH, Yorkshire, North Riding*, vol. I, p. 152.

Matthew Forster of Adderstone, to arbitrate in case any dispute should arise over the terms of the Howick division. In 1618 he and Forster (who had in the meantime received knighthood from James I) were acting together as supervisors of the handing over of Warkworth Castle to the Earl of Northumberland. About 1622 they cemented their friendship by marrying John's son and heir, Edmund, then a young man of twenty-two, to Sir Matthew's daughter, Edith. It may have been the necessity of providing for a settlement that compelled John, with Sir Matthew's consent, to borrow £160 in that year from his cousin, Arthur Hebburn of Hebburn, on the security of the two Newton farmholds, and a further £130 from Nicholas Forster of White House in Hulne Park on the security of the three farmholds and five cottages in Embleton.³⁴ One way or another, money was slipping through John Craster's hands. Two years later he had to increase the mortgage on Newton, and subsequently, it would appear, to sell outright to Sir William Fenwick of Meldon.

Worse was to follow, for in 1631 the southern half of Craster township, estimated at 400 acres and known as Craster South Side or Craster South Farm, was sold off to Sir Matthew's eldest son Thomas, who bought it for his second son John Forster.³⁵ Three out of John Craster's four sons were parties to the sale, which at one stroke halved the Craster property and brought its boundary fence close up to the house. His second son, John, was away in Germany, fighting in the army of Gustavus Adolphus, perhaps as an officer in the old Scots Brigade. That regiment lost heavily at Lutzen in the following year, and there is a family tradition that young John was killed in the battle.

John Craster the elder was still alive in 1638, for he gave evidence that year on behalf of his nephew William Carr in a Chancery suit which young Carr had brought against his father and an intriguing stepmother.³⁶ But he

³⁴ Craster title deeds, nos. 7 and 8.

³⁵ Craster South Farm deeds.

³⁶ *NCH*, vol. XI, p. 397.

was growing old, and it is probable that he had handed over his property some years earlier to his son Edmund (VIII). This Edmund is last heard of in 1642, the opening year of the Civil War, when he paid his hearth tax. Dying without children, he was succeeded by his eldest surviving brother William.

William Craster was of the King's party, as were the Forsters and Hebburns and most of his near relations, with the notable exception of his Puritan cousin, Henry Ogle of Eglingham, who lived to sit for Northumberland in two of Cromwell's parliaments. It is not unlikely that he had already received some military training—perhaps like his brother John he had served in the Swedish army—for Lord Widdrington made him a major in the regiment which he raised for the King. One may accept his great-grandson's statement that he was put in command of the garrison of Morpeth Castle, a place described in contemporary memoirs as 'a ruinous hole, not tenable by nature and far less by art'. It is hardly surprising that Morpeth offered no resistance to the Scottish army when it crossed the Border under General Leslie in January 1644, its garrison presumably receiving orders to fall back upon Newcastle; but it was regained for the royalists by Montrose on 29 May. If William was then put in charge, he did not succeed in holding it for long, for, before a month had passed, the Earl of Callendar, marching southward with Scottish reinforcements, had no difficulty in recapturing the fort. The fall of Newcastle in the following October brought the Civil War in Northumberland for the time being to an end.

In Tudor and Jacobean days the Crasters had been marrying into leading families of the county or into the mercantile aristocracy of Newcastle, but Ann Kellam, whom William took to wife, and whose brother tenanted the Firth in Cawledge Park, seems to have been a farmer's daughter. She bore her husband four sons, all of whom were still under age when their father made his will in his last illness in 1650. William appointed his wife executor, and left her his

Craster and Dunstan lands during the minority of their eldest son Edmund (IX), and his Embleton lands for the remainder of the terms of existing leases as provision for the payment of his debts and for the portions of the younger members of his family.

It is of some interest to compare the inventory³⁷ of his household goods with that which had been taken of his grandmother's chattels half a century before. Simple though both their establishments were by modern standards, a comparison of the two shows the ways in which housekeeping had developed under the early Stuarts. Silver plate was coming into more common use; and in place of the silver salt and six silver spoons which were all that Alice Craster possessed, her grandson had ten spoons, a silver salt, three silver dishes and two silver beer bowls. As against her dozen and a half of pewter vessels he had three dozen great pewter and two and a half dozen small. Household linen had become more plentiful, for, whereas she had but seventeen napkins, he had six dozen and a dozen towels besides. He had an ample supply of bedding, namely ten feather beds, as many pairs of blankets and double that number of pairs of sheets; though as he had but four bedsteads, more than half his beds must have been 'shakedown' upon the floor. Furniture was still extremely scanty, and consisted of two cupboards, two 'falls', two presses, a cupboard and a dresser in the kitchen, five tables, two chairs and eight stools. If there were forms besides, they were not worth the trouble of inventorying. Iron fireplaces were replacing stone hearths, and William had six where his grandmother had only one. Still his home would have struck his descendants as bare and unfurnished, for neither carpets nor curtains nor even wall-hangings were as yet to be found in the houses of the smaller gentry.

The contents of his house, as here set out, were valued at a little over eighty pounds, and his wearing apparel and armour at twenty. There were brewing vessels in the

³⁷ Durham Probate Registry.

brewery, and in the farm buildings there were two long wains, two short wains, two ploughs and five iron harrows. His livestock comprised 25 oxen, 22 other cattle, a few horses and mares, half a dozen pigs, and 302 sheep with 127 lambs, valued in all at £322 10s. He had thirty stones of wool clip, priced at £24. His barns held 100 bushels of wheat, 420 bushels of barley, as many of oats, and 480 bushels of pease, of a total value of £220 18s. 4d. Potatoes and roots had not yet become English farm crops, and no mention is made of hay. The figures given in the inventory suggest a home farm of some two hundred acres, of which more than two-thirds was pasture. The rest of the property was let on lease.

Household stuff, corn and farmstock made a grand total of £689 16s. 4d. There were various small debts, to the amount of £77 12s. 9d., due to the estate. The testator's debts on the other hand totalled £426 13s. 6d. Still, there was no reason why the property should not pull round if carefully managed. As a royalist, William Craster was lucky at least in having by some means evaded sequestration.

He appointed his only remaining brother, George, to be one of his two trustees. George had at one time worked the Swinburne farm of Edlingham South Demesne. Now, after marrying the widow of William Fenwick of Lesbury, he had settled down at Little Houghton, which he rented from the Roddams.

Lieutenant-Colonel John Forster, for whom Craster South Side had been bought in 1631, was less fortunate than his Craster neighbour and kinsman, for he had to compound for his estate, and so perforce to sell it to Mark Fenwick of Kenton. Fenwick had a daughter Barbara, and she soon found a husband in Edmund Craster, the young squire. In 1670 Edmund released to his brother-in-law, Martin Fenwick of Elswick, any rights of redemption that his family may have retained in Craster South Side.³⁸

It was at about this time that Edmund improved or en-

³⁸ Craster South Farm deeds.

larged the old family mansion. In 1666 he had paid tax on four hearths, but by 1675 their number had increased to eight. More hearths mean more rooms, and it is likely that the old hall which stood at the east end of the stone tower was now replaced by a seventeenth-century manor house which subsequently became the servants' quarters of a Georgian residence. To this period there may be definitely ascribed the handpainted wallpaper, perhaps by an Italian artist, of which fragments remain in the wine-cellar at the south end of the Tower basement, and of which a better preserved fragment has been framed and hangs on the first floor landing. The new manor house will have had living-rooms on its ground floor and bedrooms on an attic floor above. From these upper rooms there was now communication with the first floor chamber in the Tower. The bottom of the newel-stair which formerly led up to that apartment was cut away to allow an entrance to the house to be made in the south wall of the stairwell. The new front door, which will consequently have been in what is now the back wall of the modern entrance-hall, gave on to a forecourt in front of which lay a formal garden, in one corner of which stood a summer-house. So much is shown in a plan of Craster made in 1723. Another plan, though later in date, records the lay-out of the offices that surrounded the kitchen court at the east end of the manor house. In the centre of the court was the kitchen well; a wash-house and a brew house occupied its north side, a dairy and a bake-house the south side, and ill-smelling piggeries the farther end.

While Edmund was living in style in his newly enlarged house, his mother Anne had retired to a house in Dunstan township, probably at Dunstan Steads. Here any daughters that she may have had will have lived with her until they found husbands.³⁹ Of her younger sons, John had only

³⁹ Margaret Craster, who married Nathaniel Salkeld of Hulne Park House in 1664 and who lies buried under a slab in the floor of the chancel of Alnwick church; Phillis, who a year later married Thomas Marley of Kyo in the county of Durham; and Elizabeth, who in 1668 married Ralph Grieve of Hulne Park, were in all probability her daughters.

survived his father a year and had died, while still a boy, at Berwick. William had been sent to Newcastle to be an apprentice and obtained his freedom in the Eastland Company which carried on trade with Russia and the Baltic Provinces.⁴⁰ Daniel, the youngest, had ambitions for a military career and obtained a commission as ensign in a regiment of foot which Colonel Henry Sidney was raising early in 1678 for the war in Flanders.⁴¹ The regiment went out in May and saw a year's service before being disbanded on the signing of the Peace of Nimeguen. Daniel returned home, followed his brother's example by marrying a Fenwick, and settled down to farm the Craster lands at Dunstan.

There seems to have been yet another son. His name is linked with a tragedy in the garden that fronted the house. A deposition made in regard to it runs as follows:

8 March, 1679/80. At Craster, Eleanor Gilchrist saith that upon Thursday last, betwixt three and four o'clock after noon, she being in Esquire Craster's garden and there she heard a noise. Thereupon she went to the top of the garden wall to see what made the noise. There she saw Mr. Edward Forster lying, and she also saw one Mr. Thomas Craster walking from him; and she see two swords drawn lying besides Mr. Edward Forster's drawn. Then she called unto Mr. Craster saying, 'What have you done to Mr. Forster?' but she heard no answer.

It is a graphic little picture—a sound of scuffling; a dead man lying in the garden, drawn swords beside him; a maid calling, and a duellist walking silently away. No more is known, nor would this little have been recorded had not Thomas Craster been summoned to take his trial at York Assizes.

Edmund, the head of the family, was not a man who could be content to look after a small home farm and measure his expenses by his income. Commercial specu-

⁴⁰ *Newcastle Merchant Adventurers*, p. 278.

⁴¹ Dalton, *English Army Lists*, vol. I, p. 218; *Cal. Domestic State Papers*, 1677-8, p. 677.

lation seems to have attracted him, and in 1677 he paid out £800 to Nicholas Whitehead of Boulmer for an assignment of a lease of Flatworth demesne near North Shields, the lease being subject to an annual rent of £200. This transaction may account for his having raised £324 in the preceding year on his Craster and Dunstan lands and for his borrowing a further £500 in 1678 from his second cousin, Sir Richard Stote.⁴² His eldest son John was another source of expense, for he had resolved to give him an Oxford education, and so sent him up before Christmas 1680 to Merton, the college which held the advowson of his parish church. Edmund was himself playing a part in county affairs. He was a justice of the peace, and at Michaelmas 1682 he allowed himself to be appointed Sheriff, an office which his father-in-law had held seven years earlier. Things might yet have gone well with him had he not united with the shrievalty the post of country keeper. This was how it happened.

The disturbed conditions which prevailed after the Civil War had produced an epidemic of crime on the Border. A class of thieves called mosstroopers, many of them disbanded soldiers, had taken to raiding property and committing crimes of violence. There was a renewal of the general insecurity that had marred Elizabeth's reign. Cromwell's remedy was to strengthen the police force and to place at the head of it an officer called country keeper. He was paid a salary of £500 a year, raised by a rate on property holders, in return for a contract to compensate owners for such stolen goods as he was unable to recover.

At their Midsummer sessions in 1682 the justices of the peace received a letter from the Duke of Newcastle upon Tyne, Lord Lieutenant for the county, recommending that the High Sheriff should in future be entrusted with the country keeping. For some years it had been in the hands

⁴² Craster title deed, no. 9. Sir Richard Stote's mother, Barbara Stote, was the only child of Cuthbert Bewick, by Barbara, daughter of Edmund Craster (VII).

of James Howard of Redesdale, and the Duke had little doubt that his suggestion would be taken as a hint that Howard should be the next sheriff. The justices accepted the recommendation, but their chairman, Sir Richard Stote, had his own views as to who the sheriff was to be, and worked for the appointment of his cousin, Edmund Craster. As 'a very loyal gentleman', Craster had the support of the Tory party, and was specially backed by Captain Ralph Widdrington, the blind governor of Berwick. The Duke learned with considerable mortification that his cousin Widdrington had obtained the country keeping for Craster, whose appointment as sheriff a month later became a foregone conclusion.

Unfortunately for Edmund, Sir Richard Stote died before the year was out, and the Whigs succeeded in putting in one of their own number, John Blakiston, as chairman of the bench. They now had a majority, for they numbered twelve against ten. The High Sheriff had annoyed them by keeping them and their dissenting friends off grand juries, and at the Christmas sessions they had their revenge. Finding that Howard was ready to take a reduced salary if only he might get back the country keeping, they invited Craster to accept the lower figure in place of the £500 which had been customary; and, when he indignantly refused any alteration in the terms of his appointment, they rescinded their former orders and re-elected Howard to be Keeper.

The whole county was in confusion, for Craster refused to accept his dismissal, and both he and Howard collected the country-keeping rate from whatever landowners they could get to pay. Appeal was made to the King, and a petition presented by the High Sheriff and seconded 'with some warmth' by Captain Widdrington, was referred to the Privy Council. Council met in Easter week and ordered the Northumberland justices to endeavour to compose their differences at their next sessions. This apparently unhelpful answer received its gloss in a letter from Charles II express-

ing the opinion that honour and equity required the sheriff's continuance in his office as country keeper. But the Whig magistrates were stubborn and contented themselves with producing legal opinion that the country keeping was legally let to Howard and could not be taken from him. The sheriff countered this with a contrary opinion from the Attorney-General, and the sessions were adjourned for a month with a view to finding some way out of the deadlock. The Duke of Newcastle might perhaps have helped, but, on being appealed to by Mr. Jenkins, the Secretary of State, he replied snappishly that he had no desire to meddle further in the business.

Meeting again at their adjourned sessions in May, the sheriff's party offered to compromise. They proposed that Craster and Howard should share the country keepership, and when this was refused, they fell back on a motion that the whole matter be referred to the arbitration of the Lord Lieutenant. The Whigs voted down their opponents and reported to the Duke and Secretary Jenkins their inability to compose the differences. Nothing, they said, would serve the sheriff but that he should be country keeper. Proceeding to direct attack, they accused the sheriff of having set at liberty certain Papists who had refused to take the oath of allegiance and of having appointed one of them to be his deputy. The Duke of Newcastle was worried past endurance and wrote to Secretary Jenkins resigning the Lord Lieutenancy. 'I cannot please everybody,' he wrote, 'and I desire nothing but quiet.'

Privy Council dealt with the matter in the only possible way, and required the justices to substantiate their charges against the sheriff, suspending in the meantime decision on the original cause of dispute. Seven of the Whig justices consequently set to work to obtain the required evidence. They visited the keeper of Newcastle gaol, and so frightened the poor man with the idea that he might himself be brought before the King and Council that he swore that the sheriff had not committed any indicted Papists to his custody.

Craster was prompt in his reply. He obtained from the gaol-keeper a statement on oath that the previous testimony had been extorted under threats and, while his enemies were busying themselves in collecting further affidavits, he placed Howard under arrest.

With June 1683 the correspondence from which this story is drawn⁴³ suddenly stops. Four months later Edmund Craster's term of office as sheriff came to its appointed end and Howard succeeded him. His shrievalty had brought him nothing but trouble and a train of debts. In addition to the old mortgage of £500 to Sir Richard Stote's trustees, there was a new mortgage of £300 to the arch-moneylender of Tyneside, Dame Dorothy Milbanke. Debts, too, of £400 to William Bigg of Newcastle, of £300 to a London attorney, and of £250 to Luke Collingwood of Lanton (which last may have had something to do with the Flatworth venture), and there were smaller debts besides to Newcastle tradesmen. Money was scarce, for economic depression had set in the year before and was to hold the country for four years in its grip. On top of all there was a sum of £360 due to the Exchequer, and the Treasurer was pressing for payment. In August 1685 there came an official letter threatening Edmund Craster with arrest if his accounts as sheriff were not completed in the coming term. By way of saving the family property he executed in October a deed of conveyance of Craster and of the Dunstan and Embleton lands to his son, John, now returned from Oxford. The precaution was a wise one. On Christmas Eve a warrant went out for Edmund's arrest. It was cold comfort that a warrant for the arrest of James Howard went with it.⁴⁴

Three years passed and, though various creditors obtained judgment for the sums that were owing to them, the debts remained unpaid. Edmund left his ancestral home and betook himself to Durham, relying perhaps on the Palatinate courts for the protection of his person. At last,

⁴³ It is set out in *Cal. S.P. Dom.* 1683. Country keeping is well described in Hodgson Hinde, *History of Northumberland*, pp. 393-4.

⁴⁴ *Cal. Treasury Books*, vol. VIII, pp. 311, 499; vol. IX, p. 914.

in October 1688, someone was found ready to produce the £2,100 needed to clear the Craster estates of all encumbrances. He was Alexander Browne of Twisel. Articles of agreement were entered into with him whereby Craster was to be conveyed to him for a term of twenty-one years, and he on his part undertook to advance the money needed to settle the sheriff's account, and to meet all other debts and pay off the mortgages.⁴⁵

For one reason or another no immediate step was taken to fulfil the agreement. More important events were on foot, for Civil War was threatening. Already Tories and Catholics were enlisting in King James' defence. Daniel Craster donned the uniform put aside since Nimeguen and received his commission, this time as lieutenant, in a regiment which the Duke of Newcastle was raising, chiefly from the Catholics of Northumberland.⁴⁶ But it was too late to stem the Revolution. The King had fled the realm by Christmas, and in the following month Newcastle's regiment was disbanded.

Edmund lay dying in Durham. In March 1690 they buried him in the church of St. Mary le Bow in that city. His affairs were in such confusion that four and a half years passed before his younger son Edmund obtained administration of his estate.

Though there was no longer any hope of preserving the family property intact, matters were gradually being set in order. At length, in June 1692, John Craster sold his Dunstan and Embleton farms to Alexander Browne for £1,500. After paying off the Stote and Milbanke mortgages, Browne handed over to the vendor the sum of £400 as purchase money and advanced him an additional £200 secured on Craster. Having £600 in hand, John was able at long last to meet his father's obligations as sheriff and obtain a quietus from the Exchequer.⁴⁷ There were other

⁴⁵ Craster title deed, no. 10.

⁴⁶ Dalton, *English Army Lists*, vol. II, p. 194.

⁴⁷ Craster title deeds, nos. 15-17; *Cal. Treasury Books*, vol. IX, p. 1659.

debts still outstanding, but these too were settled in due course.

Though the family estate had been much reduced in extent, its core had been saved. Crasters still owned Craster North Side, a little property of 425 acres comprising three farmholds of which one was the home farm. Younger members of the family continued to live on in the manor house. John Craster, its owner, left the district, for he had married in 1689 a young lady from near Chester-le-Street—Mary, the daughter of John Ayton of Fawside, and, after spending the earlier years of his married life in his father-in-law's house, he settled down, by 1701, in Chester-le-Street. How his son revived the family fortunes and his grandson built the present mansion of Craster Tower is another story.