HOWARD OF THETFORD, FRAMLINGHAM AND ARUNDEL

There is no more illustrious family than that of Howard standing, as it does, next to the blood royal at the head of the aristocracy of England. Originally East Anglian Gentry, the first record is of a John Howard of Wiggenhall St. Peter in Norfolk in the 13th century whose son William was appointed Justice of the Common Pleas in 1297. From thence onwards his descendants intermarried with the great baronial families of the time and rose rapidly to prominence so that by the 15th century when Sir John Howard was created Duke of Norfolk, the Howard line included not only the royal Plantagenets of England and the royal de Valois line of France, but also the de Mowbrays of Thetford - who were Dukes of Norfolk before the Howards - and their cousins the FitzAlans of Arundel, who were amongst the most powerful and influential families in the land. The major part of these two families' inheritances was thus to come to the Howards, including the great castles of Thetford in Norfolk, and, later, of Arundel in Sussex.

It is Sir John Howard, however, the first duke, whose career as a staunch liegeman of his King during the brutal struggles of the Wars of the Roses, most fires our imagination. An eminent Yorkist, he fought and gained royal notice in the French wars under King Henry V1. He then rose rapidly in favour, was made Sheriff of Norfolk and Suffolk by King Edward 1V, Treasurer of the King's Household (1468) and Captain General of the King's Forces at Sea (1470) to counter the attempts of the Lancastrians then rallying under his brother-in-law Neville, Earl of Warwick "The King Maker", with the Duke of Clarance - Shakespeare's "poor foresworn Clarance" - and others. He fought at Barnet on Easter Day 1471 when Warwick was killed and the Lancastrian hopes destroyed for more than a decade. That same year he was made Governor of Calais and created Earl Marshal of England, and on the 28th June 1483 he was made Duke of Norfolk by King Richard III. He was also appointed Lord Administrator of England, Ireland and Aquitaine for life, with lordships in the counties of Suffolk, Kent, Cambridge, Cornwall, Somerset and Wiltshire; these being not hereditary tenures, but holdings of governance, thus increasing his power though not his estate. Seldom has a subject earned and had conferred upon him so many distinctions in his lifetime by a monarch grateful for such singular loyalty. There were marked similarities of character between Richard and John Howard of Norfolk. Both were gentlemen of honour, chivalry and courage; great warriors and unswerving in their feudal loyalties with little taste for court intrigues. Their inclinations were more in tune with the eleventh than the fifteenth century and unlike their arch-enemy Henry Tudor, were always to be found leading their men from in front. John Howard was a renowned soldier, though by preference a seaman; and he represented in his actions and his loyalties the true interests and authentic traditions of the royal house of Plantagenet.

John Howard was indeed of the essential stuff from which the triumph and dominion of York had been fashioned. Bred from a union of

the gentry with the high peerage, he was some thirty years old when Edward 1V assumed the crown in 1461 and he made his first notable appearance in history as the new king marched towards Towton. Sir John Howard joined young Edward with a sword in one hand and a bag of gold in the other. This moment symbolises the pattern of his subsequent life; devotion to the King's cause and a readiness to fight for it; a strong sense of the practical and a habit of being on hand at critical moments. Fortune and his abilities raised him to consort with princes and he came to know the lavish hospitality of Louis X1 as well as the luxury of Edward's court. Yet he seems always to have remained the East Anglian country gentleman; plain, solid, tough, a careful householder with a generous heart, a kind and true overlord to his vassals concerned with their welfare as well as with his own family's, and a lover of Colchester oysters and of the sea from which they were taken. The sea was indeed his element. He traded in ships; he fought in ships; ships were his dearest substance. But like most captains of his time he fought on land as well. In the summer of 1462 he was besieging the Lancastrians in Alnwick Castle in Northumberland; three or four months later he was commanding part of the fleet which harried the French coast. He engaged in the rough and tumble of East Anglian politics and cooled his heels in prison for a short while because of a fierce bout with that other great family of Norfolk, the Pastons. His wife remarked that if any of Sir John's men found Paston, his life would not be worth a penny. Soon however it was John Paston's turn to taste prison life and John Howard was set at liberty by Edward, a monarch who needed and appreciated men of such energy and worth in the unruly world of the 1460's.

Again it was John Howard who pursued Warwick's fleet in the spring of 1470 and before the Earl slipped into Honfleur, wrested prizes from it. Taking sanctuary when Edward fled to Burgundy during the short Lancastrian resurgence, he managed to reach London again on Good Friday 1471, the day after the King had re-entered his capital, and thus to fight for his king once more at Barnet and again at Tewkesbury. By now he had been made a peer and soon after was elected a Knight of the Garter.

During the 1470's, a decade of peace in England, he became diplomatist. It was he who wove the web of treaties between Duke Charles of Burgundy and Edward 1V which led to the invasion of France in 1475. But he was not becalmed of adventure. On one of his missions the ship in which he was sailing to Calais was attacked by three Hanse vessels, driven ashore and in the fierce fighting saw sixteen of his men hacked to death by the Easterlings. Lucky as well as good with his sword, John fought his way out without a wound. On the expedition to France of 1475, he was one of the four commissioners who negotiated the treaty with Louis X1. After accompanying King Edward onto the bridge at Picquigny, he was dined the same evening by King Louis. With the exception of Hastings, he received the handsomest of the French pensions, one thousand two hundred crowns a year and many a fine piece of plate to boot. Subsequently he became Edward's chief envoy to the court of France.

It was the war which Edward launched against the Scots in 1481 which gave him his greatest opportunity as an independent commander and on the element he loved. He struck the first blow early that summer, boldly sailing with his fleet into the Firth of Forth, capturing eight large men-of-war and destroying many smaller ships before landing and burning Blackness. But the offensive on land which was to have complemented this brilliant victory, never came. King Edward's energies were failing and "adverse turmoil", as he confessed in a letter to the Pope, kept him in the south. But all England rang with the name of John Howard, destroyer of the pride of Scotland's navy.

The sketch which his career draws, the outline of a man of action, is transformed into a living portrait by the record of his account books. For all his honours, his battle scars and his service at Court, he yet remained essentially the country gentleman, concerned with the welfare of his tenants and neighbours, immersed in the business of his estates, and familiar with every detail of his household's affairs. At home on his manor at Stoke by Nayland, west of Ipswich, he sat with his steward each Saturday to go over his accounts, annotating in his own hand. Yet his purse was always open. He enjoyed pleasing children with little gifts and was constantly bestowing alms wherever he went.

"Item", reads his account book for October 13th 1482, "To the young man of the stable that is sick, 4d." From his revenues he supported several promising youngsters at Cambridge University and he encouraged other talents as well. On October 18th 1482, we read, "My Lord made covenant with Will Wastell of London, harper, for a year to teach him to harp and sing: for the which my Lord shall give him 13s. 4d. and a gown." Howard dearly loved music of all kinds. The earnest drone of the village bagpiper, the martial airs of Richard of Gloucester's trumpeters, the lovely polyphony of trained voices, all were sweet to him. He retained "Thomas the Harper", a singer Nicholas Stapleton and at least four children to sing in his chapel for whom he bought masses and anthems and doubtless also provided schooling. Wandering musicians and the minstrel bands of other magnates, alike found a warm welcome in his hall. The "Waytes" of London caroled for him at his request when he visited the capital. Plays he took great pleasure in too; the strolling companies in noble livery and the humbler players from neighbouring towns visited him often and fared well. And when he sailed from Dunwich to fight the Scots, he took with him not only calthorpes and serpentines and steel harness, but French treatises on dice and chess, and Les Dits des Sages.

Though for two decades John Howard had done service of peace and war with Richard of Gloucester, relations between the two men seem to have become even more intimate after the Scots war broke out. On that naval expedition of 1481 he and Richard had conferred about operations while at Newcastle. or Scarborough. The success that each achieved in the North itself provided a fresh tie. In the course of 1481 Richard sold John Howard his East Anglian manor of Wysnowe for 1,100 marks. The following

February John Kendall arrived at Stoke by Nayland to deliver the title of the property. He returned to Richard's castle of Middleham in Yorkshire with a generous amount of Howard's silver jingling in his purse and in his baggage Howard's gift to his master of seven crossbows of wood and one of steel. What more fitting present from the first admiral to the first general of the realm.

That summer Howard was entertained by Richard's players on the shawmes, and at Christmas by a travelling quartet of his actors. Armour and music. . . . . the two men had interests in common. There were also other reasons why Richard and Howard might develop a relationship different from that of the other great barons of the King's Council. Unlike Hastings, Howard was not a boon companion of Edward 1V's idleness; unlike Stanley, his hard service in the cause of York was flawed by no lapses in allegiance. There were affinities of temperament as well; plainness of mind, hardihood developed by long experience of action, and a mutual sense that each was a man deeply rooted in his own 'country' and imbued with the spirit of the feudal past.

After Edward had died and despite his association with Hastings and Stanley, John Howard chose to regard Richard, The Protector, as the stable and meaningful centre of the new regime. On May 15th, the day after he had been granted the stewardship of the Duchy of Lancaster south of Trent, Howard presented Richard with a cup and cover weighing 65 ounces of gold; and when Richard's wife, Anne Duchess of Gloucester, arrived in London three weeks later, she sent that very day a box of 'waffers' to John Howard's wife.

It was August 11th 1485 when news of Henry Tudor's landing in Wales was brought to Richard at Nottingham. He was now King and at once sent word to John Howard of Norfolk, Percy of Northumberland, Lovell, Brackenbury, Stanley and Stanley's son and his other principal captains, commanding them hastily to assemble their men and to join him at Leicester. John Howard despatched his messengers without delay and along the flat roads of Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridgeshire and Essex knights, men at arms and yeomen archers began to converge upon Bury St. Edmunds, ready to march beneath the Norfolk banner of the Silver Lion.

Amongst those whom John Howard called to join him was John Paston of the great north Norfolk family to whom he wrote: "My well beloved friend, I pray you that ye meet with me at Bury for by the grace of God I proposed to lie there upon Tuesday night (August 16th); and that ye bring with you such company of tall men as ye may goodly make at my cost and charge - beside those that ye have promised the King - and I pray you to ordain them jackets of my livery and I shall content you at your meeting with me. Your lover Norfolk."

But John Paston and John Paston's men did not come. He preferred to remain peaceably on his acres rather than to play a part in the trial

by battle for the English throne, though it was John Howard who had voluntarily given back John Paston the great estate at Caister which an earlier Duke of Norfolk — not a Howard — had wrested from his family. But this was not enough. By the year 1485 the oath of loyalty to one's feudal lord had lost the power to bind. There were many who felt like John Paston, commons, gentry and lords. It was not that they longed for King Richard's overthrow; it was that they were weary of alarums, marches and battles. It was that the feudal giving of allegiance was dead and the discipline of obedience to one's King had been eroded. The Crown had changed hands so often that its sanctity, its magnetic power of attracting loyalty, was dulled. Many a man who was content to see King Edward resume his sway in 1471, had not fought for him at Barnet. Now again, many a man who had no desire for an unknown, exiled pretender named Henry Tudor, refrained from calling up his men. The Duke of Suffolk, as had always been his wont, sat tight upon his estates, even though his own son, John of Lincoln, was Richard's heir to the throne. Doubtless there were many who comforted themselves that the King had no need of them. Outside of Henry's partisans there were probably few who believed that the Welshman and his tail of followers could stand in battle against the King, the most famous warrior alive in England.

The gifts that Richard had bestowed out of generosity rather than of policy; the treasure that he had dispensed to show his goodwill, rather than withholding it to toughen the sinews of his enterprises; the justice he had done at the risk of alienating powerful interests; the service he had performed for the weak - none of these stood service for him now. His kindness to the wives of rebels; his munificence to friends; his statutes to curb oppressions; his attention to the humble causes of commoners, would not support him in this hour of mustering a steel host. In the Castle of his Care, Richard was now reaping the consequences of his rupture of the royal succession, of his rule by desert, and of half a century's accumulation of others' broken loyalties.

These were the factors that were to decide the issue on the fatal field of Bosworth eleven days later. When the hosts met that day, Percy of Northumberland with his men held aloof; the Stanleys of Derby, father and son, and their forces avoided the fray, standing to one side and waiting first to see which side prospered. And then when risking all to destroy the pretender at a blow, King Richard led the charge of his knights and esquires of the Household against Henry Tudor himself, sheltering behind his bodyguard, and lost his horse in the valley swamp, the Stanleys quick to seize their chance, hastily changed sides, charged his force in flank and cut Richard and his men down. The die was cast. The other laggards, led by Northumberland, were quick to bow the knee to the victor. Alone of all the great nobles, John Howard stands out in gallant contrast. True to the last to his friend and at the head of his men with his son Lord Surrey hewing at his side, he died fighting for his king in the thickest of the press. There he fell as he would no doubt have wished and no one knows where he was buried.

The disaster of Bosworth Field on Monday August 22nd 1485 and the continuing bitter animosity of the Tudor monarchs intent on eliminating the leaders of the old nobility and on replacing them by more pliant creatures of their own making, might well have seen the end of a family less resilient than the Howards. John's son Thomas, Earl of Surrey who had fought beside his father at Bosworth, was attainted and imprisoned in the Tower. Fortunately Henry VII was short of able warriors of the Howard stamp and when the Scots war broke out again, Thomas was redeemed. He was given command of the English army, marched north and annihilated the Scots under James 1V at Flodden Field in 1513.

Thomas was later restored as the 2nd Duke of Norfolk and it was he who transferred the family seat from the old motte and bailey castle of Thetford to the spacious stronghold of Framlingham in Suffolk where the helm he wore at Flodden still hangs amid the Howard tombs in the chancel of the parish church. He is also distinguished as the grandfather of two of Henry VIII's queens; Anne Boleyn and Katherine Howard, both of whom were beheaded; and of the 2nd Lord Howard of Effingham who commanded the English Fleet which defeated the Spanish Armada a century after Bosworth in 1588.

But the hand of the Tudors lay still more heavily on the family after the Reformation. They had remained true to the old faith and as the leading nobles of the Plantagenet aristocracy they were also a natural target for the new masters.

Thomas, son of the 2nd Duke was imprisoned and died in the Tower on a charge of having aspired to the hand of Margaret Douglas, niece of King Henry VIII. Thomas the 3rd Duke and his son Henry Earl of Surrey were also seized by Henry, thrown into the Tower, attainted with High Treason and condemned to death. The Earl of Surrey was actually beheaded, but the Duke escaped the same fate the following day through the providential death of Henry who expired a few hours before the time set for the axe to fall. Mary, who succeeded, immediately reprieved him and restored him to his titles.

It was the marriage of his son Thomas, the 4th Duke, to Mary FitzAlan heiress to the earldom of Arundel, that brought the family the premier earldom of England and the vast estates of the FitzAlans including the great castle of Arundel itself, now their principal seat. The 4th Duke removed there, selling Framlingham on condition that it was slighted, and the property passed eventually to Pembroke College, Cambridge in whose care it still is. Although Framlingham castle is no longer habitable, it is well worth a visit, as is also Framlingham Parish Church whose chancel was enlarged by the family to serve as their mausoleum and shelters the tombs of all the great Howards who died during the century after Bosworth.

The accession of Elizabeth 1, who succeeded Mary, did nothing to ameliorate the Tudor rancour. The 4th Duke was executed in the Tower in

1595 for alleged complicity in the plot to restore Mary Queen of Scots; and his son the Blessed Philip was imprisoned by Elizabeth as a recusant and died in the Tower in 1595 after 13 years incarceration, a martyr to his faith.

But this mercifully was the end of the bloody Tudor interlude and with the accession of James 1 the family entered into quieter times. Henry Frederick Howard, Earl of Arundel, married Lady Elizabeth Stuart of the Scots royal family in 1630 and so the cadet line came finally to combine the royal bloods of England, France and Scotland, a distinction now shared through them by the senior branch of our own.

GENEOLOGICAL TREE

PEARS of YORK and CONSTANTINOPLE