

'parliamentary' relatives was his cousin Thomas Dannett, whose other patron was the Lord Treasurer's old friend Archbishop Parker. His business associates in mining ventures included Sir Rowland Heyward, a prominent London merchant. Thomas Wilbraham was Attorney of the Court of Wards, of which Burghley was Master. Lawyer-clients included James Dalton.³⁵ Furthermore, because London was the only loan market in the kingdom, the Lord Treasurer was drawn into an intimate connexion with it. In the process he recruited his most important parliamentary clients.

The most notable of these was Thomas Norton, the Lord Mayor's secretary, whose obsessive hatred of popery and devotion to the Queen were his distinguishing characteristics. Norton's patrons included Sir Christopher Hatton and Sir Francis Walsingham, but above all 'my good Lord Treasurer [who] is the only man in whom I have and do lay the course of my relief'. Another equally reliable client was William Fleetwood, Recorder (legal counsel) of the City. He was, to say the least, eccentric—indeed dubbed by some 'the mad Recorder'—and certainly one of the most engaging Elizabethans. He was scholarly and loquacious, larding his Commons speeches with classical allusion and legal precedent. The clerk might describe an address as 'long, tedious ... nothing touching the matter in question' but that was not the general opinion of the house. His lengthy speeches—often an hour or two—were admired by most. The house indulged itself in his irrelevant ramblings: on a bill to impose a lower age limit of 24 years on ministers of the Church, he commenced one morning: 'You would think that I had studied this [a] year I am so ready and perfect in it, but I promise you I never heard this bill before, but I could keep you here until two o'clock.' He then wandered off into a discourse on poisoning—which, perhaps, was taking anti-clericalism too far—ending with the confident reflection, 'I think you would be content to hear me these two hours.'³⁶

Fleetwood, like Norton, was utterly devoted to Elizabeth and Burghley and rabid in his anti-catholicism. He energetically hunted down and unearthed Jesuit missionaries and 'naughty printed popish books', whilst ensuring that Burghley did not remain ignorant of his endeavours: 'I have not leisure to eat my meat, I am so called upon. I am at the best part of an hundred nights a year abroad in searches. I never rest.' In 1576 occurred his *pièce de résistance*. English catholics were attending mass in the Portuguese Embassy. At the head of a body of armed men, but without the moderating advice of a Sancho Panza, he broke down the doors of the Embassy. He scuffled with the porter, swept past him with drawn sword and 'seized the Host, the chalice and the