

CURSORY NOTICES
 OF
 THE REV. FRANCIS BLOMEFIELD,
The Norfolk Topographer;
 CHIEFLY EXTRACTED
 FROM HIS PARISH REGISTER-BOOK AND FROM HIS CORRESPONDENCE,
 1733-7.
 COMMUNICATED BY
 S. WILTON RIX, ESQ.,
 IN
 A LETTER TO DAWSON TURNER, ESQ., V.P.

MY DEAR SIR,

On a former occasion I ventured to express the hope that some competent member of our Society would collect and communicate the unrecorded antiquities of Blomefield's own district; pursuing the inquiry with *his* persevering diligence and singleness of purpose. It affords me much pleasure to be enabled now to offer some particulars bearing upon the incidents of his life, and calculated to illustrate the value of his example.

All that relates to the father of Norfolk Topography, however imperfectly told, must be in some degree interesting to our members. To yourself, especially, I may appeal for a favourable reception of these notices. You will be prepared, not only to admire his industry and zeal, but to store up every incidental touch of his personal character: you will contemplate, with something akin to veneration,

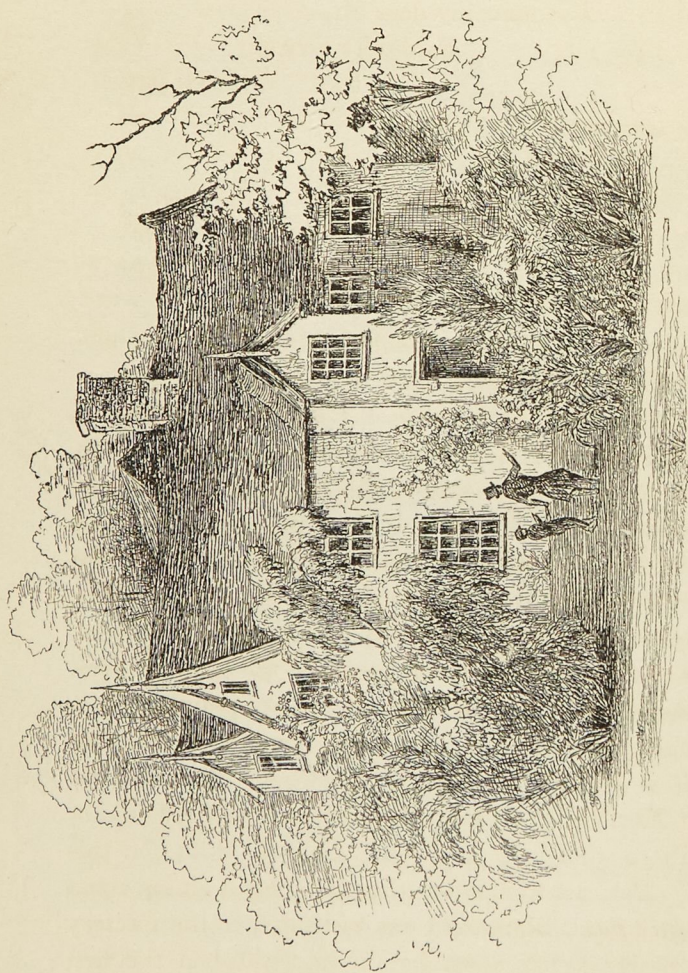
the scenes of his birth and of his labours; and you will lament afresh his too early removal, and bring a willing garland to adorn his tomb.

Having occasion, some time ago, professionally to examine the "Old Register" of Fersfield parish, extending from 1565 to 1741, I was kindly permitted by the Rev. Benedict Pering, the rector, to make the extracts from that record which I now propose to lay before you.

But these, characteristic as they are of the careful antiquary, will be rendered far more acceptable in conjunction with other materials derived from Blomefield's Autograph Letter-Book, in your own library. This volume, you are aware, is described by Mr. Thomas Barber, of the Customs at Yarmouth, who was its possessor in 1772, as "*Liber, trium annorum commercium epistolare Rev. Fran. Blomefield complectens.*" Commencing in the year 1733, it relates to the busy period when he was preparing to publish, and during which a portion of his work was ushered into the world. This record appears to have subsequently passed through the hands of Tom Martin and of Mr. Ives. Here, Blomefield's ruling passion, his plans and projects and the suggestions of his friends, his discouragements, his undaunted energy and his cheering success—appear in detail and vivid reality.

Should it be objected, that such a picture is but indirectly connected with the chief design of our Society, I would reply, that the men who, more than a century ago, embarked in the pursuit of Archæology, may be almost said to have become part and parcel of its objects. Moreover, the Society is intended not only to investigate antiquities, but to extend the knowledge and promote the study of them. All will admit the value of Blomefield's aid in the former province. In the latter, his *example* will be found not unworthy of regard.

I heartily wish that these gatherings could have been



Fersfield Rectory — Blomefield's Residence. (p. 203.)

selected and arranged by yourself; but if, amidst your numerous avocations, I had waited for this, I should have been disregarding one of the first lessons of Archæology—a lesson sufficient to redeem it from the common charge of uselessness and folly—“*Do something; do it.*”

I remain, my dear Sir,

Faithfully yours,

SAM^L WILTON RIX.

Beebles, 21st July, 1848.

NOTICES OF BLOMEFIELD, &c.

The student of Norfolk Archæology should make a pilgrimage to Fersfield. In the most remote part of that secluded village, there yet remains the ancient residence of the Blomefield family. Humbly tenanted, now, and, as to its exterior, in picturesque decay, the building is profusely timbered, and retains the thick-mullioned projecting windows and some of the pargetting and other ornaments which we associate with the residence of a wealthy yeoman in the olden time. One of the apartments, sadly mutilated and dismantled, is shown as having been formerly the dining-room. “And through *there*” (said my informant, pointing to a recess roughly bricked up) “was once another room: *that* was the Rev. Mr. Blomefield’s study, where he wrote the History of Norfolk.” At first, there seemed reason to doubt whether there could be any foundation of truth for this statement. For, not to mention that the alleged dining-room is on the *first floor*, Blomefield was instituted to the Rectory in 1729, nearly seven years before he published the first part of his “*Essay*,” and his father lived till 1732. But it should be recollected that he began to collect materials for his History as early as 1720, when he was but fifteen

years of age.* The tradition, that he had a study in his father's house, is confirmed by a letter which he wrote in January 1735, to an engraver (who will be mentioned afterwards), proposing to find him employment at Fersfield: in this he says, "I have a tenant that lives within a small mile of me, where I reserve some rooms to myself, and whither I walk every day; and there you shall have a room of mine."

Francis Blomefield was born in this house on the 23rd July, 1705—"y^e sonne of Henry Blomfield and Alice his wife,"—and was baptized on the 7th August following.†

The course of the Baptismal Register is interrupted by memoranda of his institution and induction to the benefice; from the notice of the former of which the annexed facsimile of his hand writing is copied.

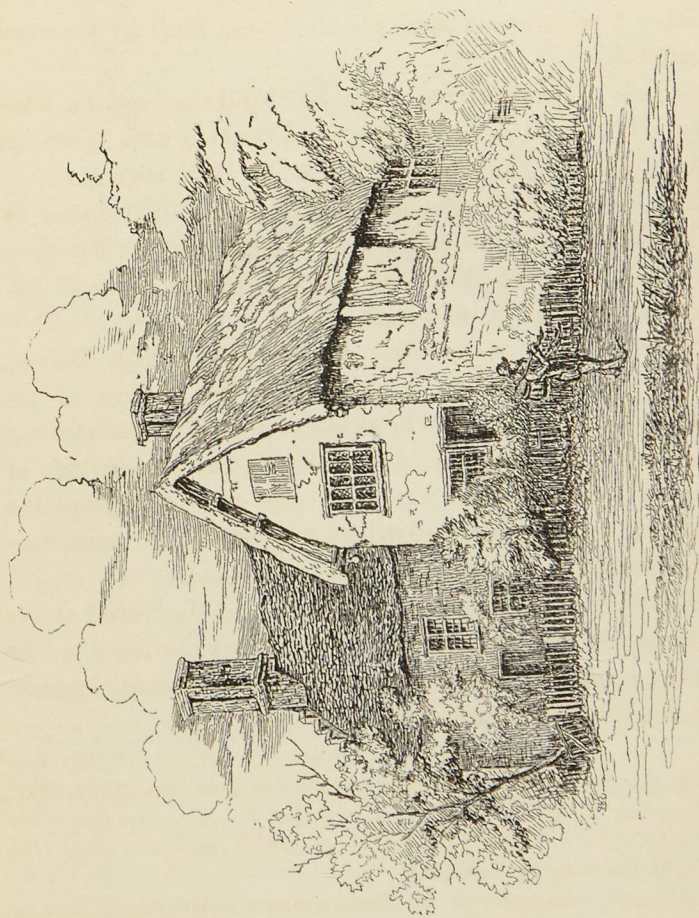
The burial of his predecessor, the Rev. John Barker, furnishes occasion for a more lengthened account of the same occurrences, and of the devolution of the preferment.‡ But this I pass by, rather submitting to the Society two or three extracts, which, at the same time that they prove the minute accuracy of the writer, are honourable as testimonies to his character and to the goodness of his heart.

In the place of the usual brief entry of the burial of his maternal grandmother, he gives the following tribute to her memory—entered, as are several similar memorials, entirely in a bold Roman character.

* He charges himself with having expended £175. 16s. from 1720 to 1733, in "travelling to collect the churches, in paper, &c., and some few MSS. purchased for the work." The *Norfolk Tour* gives a much later date—"as soon as he was settled at Fersfield."

† A careful inspection of the Parish-register would furnish various details omitted in the Blomefield pedigree, as compiled and printed by the topographer himself in his *History of Norfolk*, Vol. I., p. 101.

‡ Blomefield's father had purchased the next presentation of Lord Rochford, who was patron of the advowson; not the Duke of Norfolk, as stated in the *Norfolk Tour*, Vol. II., p. 1155.



Blomefield's Birth-place, Fersfield. (p. 204.)

Franciscus Comfeld Pleij A. B. 2 Coll: Gouv. et Pajus
Cant Rector Eccl^{ie} de Hargham nisi hujus sit in
Rectoriam Eccl^{ie} parochialis de Fensfeld 13^o die Sept. 1729.
Francis Comfeld Rector

"Mrs Elizabeth Batch,* widdow and relict of Mr Henry Batch of King's Lynn, in the County of Norff:, one of the daughters of Mr Thomas Bacon of Bungey and Frances his wife, was here buried, December the fifth, An^o Domini one thousand seven hundred twenty and nine. She died on Tuesday the second day about ten at night, and was buried in the aisle of the Church of St. Andrew the Apostle in Fersfield, right against the poor's box, A^o Ætatis suæ 81^o. E septem liberis unicam reliquit filiam, Aliciam, modò uxorem Henrici Blomefield hujus parochiæ Gener^{si}. Quoad *χαρακτηρ*, hoc sufficiat, quòd vitam semper instituit suam, ita ut, cursu peracto, mori non timuit. In cujus piam gratamque memoriam, Franciscus Blomefield, hujus Ecclesiæ Rector et e filiâ nepos, tantæ benefactricis memor, hoc inseruit."

With similar minuteness, and still more tenderly, he has recorded the death and embalmed the memory of his mother,† who was "here buried, on Thursday, the 19th of March, 1729. [O.S.]

"She died on Tuesday, y^e seventeenth day, between four and five of y^e clock in y^e morning, and was buried in y^e south isle of y^e parish church of St. Andrew the Apostle, in Fersfield, right against the vestry door; anno ætatis suæ 52^{do}.

"Sex peperit liberos, e quibus quinque supersunt, sc. Franciscus, Petrus, Johannes, Elizabetha et Hester.

"Fæmina Deo, ecclesiæ, et conjugii, omni quo debuit obsequio ex animo devota, quæ, si vitæ integritas, si affectus conjugalis, si mens, paucis non contenta modò, sed suæ sortis amantissima, si pauperum commiseratio, si mores denique omni fuco, fastu omni carentes minùs valuissent, seriùs ad superos rediisset. Sed matura virtute (heu nimium properante fato!) Deo rationem redditura discessit. In cujus memoriam, gratitudinis pietatisque memor, Franciscus Blomefield, filius natù

* Blom. *Norff.*, Vol. I., p. 111.

† Ibid.

maximus, hujus ecclesiæ Rector, hoc memoriale manû propriâ inseruit."

An interval of little more than two years brings us to the following memorandum :

"Henry Blomefield* of this parish, Gent., died June the first, [1732] between the hours of five and six in the morn, of the small-pox, and was buried at three of the clock in the morn, June y^e 2nd, in the south aisle, at the south door.

"He was a man of strict probity and integrity, of great piety towards God and love to his family, who practised what he declared, and declared what he practised, giving an example of goodness to those that knew him, by whom he died much lamented; but by none more than by me, Francis Blomefield, Priest, Rector of this parish, his eldest son."

The will of Henry Blomefield is dated 27 May, 1732. It contains a particular distribution among his children of divers "Christening Spoons," and other plate.† He charges his son Francis with a debt of more than £300 which the testator had borrowed and lent him at the time of his taking the degree of B.A., or had paid for the purchase of the turn in Fersfield living, and otherwise laid out for him.

Just three months after the death of his father, Mr. Blomefield married Mary Womack, daughter of the Rev. Laurence Womack. Her family had been very long connected with the parish of Fersfield; three of its members in succession having officiated in the church for a period of ninety years.‡

* *Blom. Norf.*, Vol. I., p. 111.

† See Brand's *Christening Customs*.

‡ Besides the two children of the historian named in the published pedigree, the register mentions a third, named Alice, born the 18th May, 1738, who survived him many years. Peter Blomefield, his brother, was married 6th October, 1738, to Frances Womack, his wife's sister. They had issue, Francis, Katherine, Frances, and Mary, which last died an infant in

Settled in his ecclesiastical and domestic relations, Blomefield applied himself with renewed energy to the preparation of the work by which his name is known to the world, and is more especially endeared to our Society. Some years earlier, "Honest Tom Martin" had come to reside at Palgrave, within five miles; and his "large and valuable collection of antiquities," including those of his deceased friend, Peter Le Neve, Norroy, became more easily accessible than before to the topographer; circumstances which could not fail to stimulate as well as to aid his efforts. He was accustomed in summer to make excursions at once in search of materials for his History, and to test the accuracy of the information he had otherwise obtained. It was after such "a collating ramble of six weeks," that he finally determined to issue proposals for printing what he modestly termed his "Topographical Essay."

On the appearance of these, meeting with unexpected encouragement on all hands, he looked around for a suitable printing establishment. At Diss, no press was then to be found, nor was there until many years after his death; and the following extract from a letter he wrote "to Mr. Chase, Printer, in Norwich," on the 1st of July, 1733, affords no very flattering picture of the state of the art even in our great Eastern metropolis.

"I have endeavoured to procure a set of Saxon types, but find I can't do it. And, upon looking over my book, find a good number of Greek inscriptions, some Hebrew words, and some Gothic. So that I must print it in London; it being impossible to have those types any where in the country [!]. . . I wish heartily I could have done it with you; for, I liked your terms, and could have been glad to

1746, and was buried at Buxton. Elizabeth, sister of the topographer, was married, in 1737, to the Rev. Edward Chappelow, Rector and Patron of Roydon, and Vicar of Marham: Leonard, Edward, Christopher, Elizabeth, and Mary, are mentioned as their children.

have corrected the press myself, which then I could easily have done."

In the autumn of the same year, Mr. Blomefield "fell ill on his rounds;" not the least inconvenience of which was, that he lost an interview with his friend, Dr. Tanner, who, after having been successively Chancellor and Archdeacon of Norfolk, had then recently been promoted to the See of St. Asaph. To this prelate our antiquary applied by letter, requesting the loan of his Lordship's "Book of the Collation of the Registers in the Office at Norwich, if it was not lost." The Bishop replied:

"Christ Church, Oxford, Oct. 22, 1733.

"Good Sir,

"I had the favour of your letter and proposal in Wales. . . . I was glad to find the History of Norfolk in such forwardness; and, when closely followed by one of your youth and abilities, I may hope to live to see good part of it published. And tho' I must now for ever bid adieu to Norfolk, yet I must ever wish well to whatever may tend to the honour of a county I so long lived happily in. Of this nature I take your design to be, and shall therefore readily subscribe for six copies, and perhaps may give you a plate of some ancient venerable ruins. Several of my papers about Norfolk were lost in my shipwreck,* and others are so mislaid that I can't tell where to find them at present; and my collections out of the Registers having several other things in the same volume, which are of almost daily use, I can't tell how to spare them. But, if you will please to transmit your copy or any part of it to me, I will supply and improve it with any thing my collections will

* It is mentioned in the *Biographia Britannica*, that, as the Bishop was removing his collections by water, "some of the boxes in which they were enclosed happened, unfortunately, to fall into the Thames, whereby some of the books were damaged."

afford. I am very glad you have the use of Mr. Le Neve's and Mr. Martin's collections. Pray my service to Mr. Martin. . . . I am concerned that the trust King Peter was pleased to repose in us, should be delayed or evaded.* I heartily wish you success, and am, sir, your very faithful friend and brother,

"THOM. ASAPH."

Again, on the 4th January, 1734, his Lordship writes :

"I shall, upon any proper occasion, encourage your work ; giving you a plate of a good prospect of ruins, church, or other buildings. The decaying fine parochial church of Cromer, with the ruins of a most noble chancel, suffered to fall down within memory, used to strike me with the greatest concern."

Among the most effectual methods adopted by the Norfolk Historian in furtherance of his object, was the distribution of "Queries," on the principle of the valuable "Heads of Local Information," published by the Right Reverend President of our Society.† Addressing Mr. Beaupré Bell,‡ Blomefield says :

"I would beg the favour of you to collate for me every thing, antique and modern, in the churches following: Wisbitch, Emneth, Hacbech, Outwell, Walsoken, Terrington, and Eslington, and in their churchyards ; and in the method

* His Lordship and Mr. Martin, it will be recollected, were jointly entrusted with Le Neve's collections. Martin's position with regard to them was, no doubt, modified by his somewhat precipitate marriage with the widow of Le Neve. But Bishop Tanner, Blomefield, and Parkin, give their united testimony to the fact, that Martin held the MSS., &c., as a *trustee*. (See Blomefield's *Norfolk*, Vol. I., *Introduction*, p. xv. ; Vol. VI., *Preface*, p. ii.) A curious anecdote, respecting Martin's second marriage, is inserted in the Rev. A. Suckling's *History of Suffolk*, Vol. II., p. 206, *note*.

† See also *Gentleman's Magazine*, Vol. LV., p. 157.

‡ June 26th, 1733.

following. Whether square or round tower; five or six bells; spire or not; clock or not; chimes or not; nave leaded, thatched, or tiled; aisles, south and north, whether thatched, leaded, &c.; south and north porch (the same); chancel (same); whether there be any cross aisles or chapels at upper end of the aisles; whether the inscriptions are on brass or not; mural or altar monuments, or flat-stones, and in what place; whether the letters be capitals, old text, or modern Roman; the present lords and rectors. I shall be exceedingly obliged for such an account of the abovenamed places, they lying so much out of my way."

At a somewhat later period he observes to Mr. Norris:

"It is impossible to tell you what great helps have come in by my queries; sometimes having twenty or thirty sheets, besides books, letters, records, and papers, for a single Hundred."

Having recovered, in the spring of 1735, from a "violent fever," he obtained access to the evidence-room of the deceased Earl of Yarmouth, at Oxnead.* There he "boarded a fortnight," and employed himself among the Paston archives, sorting the voluminous contents of "between thirty and forty chests of antique curiosities and evidences of Norfolk only." His letter to Major Weldon, dated 13th May, 1735, gives the following account of his labours.

"There are ten boxes of court-rolls, surveys, extent-books, deeds, and other things material to the several manors; and, though a great number of them are very ancient, they may be of service, and therefore I cautiously preserved them all. There are three trunks and chests full of the ancient and present title-deeds to the manors and estates, all which I carefully put together. There are two boxes of old leases

* The Rev. Laurence Womack, Blomefield's father-in-law, had held the Rectory of Oxnead by sequestration. (See *Blom. Norf.*, Vol. VI., p. 496.)

only, which I laid by, not knowing but they might be of some service. According to your order, I put all the chemicall papers into a box by themselves, and gave them to Mrs. Amyas to preserve for you. There is another box full of the pardons, grants, and old deeds, freedoms, &c. belonging to the Paston family only, which I laid by themselves, for fear you should think them proper to be preserved with the family: they don't relate to any estates. In another large chest I placed those antiquities that I made use of, and that are of no manner of service to the title (always placing those that were among the useful evidences): they are chiefly ancient deeds, account-rolls, muster-rolls, and many other things of that nature in relation to the county. I looked over every loose paper and what letters were historical: as to such that related to the surrender of Norwich and Yarmouth charters, &c., I took them out and carried them home with me; as I did the History of Yarmouth,* and some other things which were too tedious to extract there: all which I entered in a note, which I left for you with Mrs. Amyas. There are innumerable letters of good consequence in history† still lying among the loose papers, all which I laid up in a corner of the room on a heap, which contains several sacks full; but as they seemed to have some family affairs of one nature or other intermixed in them, I did not offer to touch any of them, but have left them to

* This is the MS. recently edited by C. J. Palmer, Esq., which was in the possession of Mr. Ives in 1774, as appears by his memorandum in the margin of Blomefield's *Entry-Book*. In another letter he describes it as "a fair noble folio MS., judiciously compiled in King James I.'s time." The intelligent editor supposed that the MS. had been given by Le Neve (who died in 1724) to Blomefield. (*Foundacion and Antiquitye of Greate Yermouthe*, Preface, p. xi.)

† Are these the same of which Sir John Fenn, in his *Introduction to the Paston Letters*, states, that on the death of the Earl of Yarmouth they became the property of Le Neve, and from him devolved to Mr. Martin? If not, what was the fate of these letters?

your consideration, whether, when I go to that part of the country, I shall separate and preserve them, or whether you will have them burnt, though I must own 'tis pity they should; except it be those (of which there are many) that relate to nothing but family affairs only. I have placed everything so, that, now, the good and bad are distinguished, and preserved from the weather. A great number have perished entirely. I shall be ready to return those things that I have, when you please to command me."

Blomefield now decided upon printing his work upon his own premises, a task at once singular, arduous, and costly.* Having engaged a good workman, named Nicholas Hussey, at £40 a year, he proceeded to fit up a printing-office and furnish it with all requisite materials, including a press bought of a person in London, who subscribes himself "Doctor Gaylard," at the price of £7. Writing to the Bishop of St. Asaph on these arrangements, he says:

"I shall have the oversight of the press myself; which, though it be a great charge at first, yet will be a continual satisfaction to me; for, by this means, I shall be certain that neither myself nor subscribers can be imposed upon by stolen copies, which is too often the case in such subscriptions. . . . I design, God willing, to begin the work with the new year, the 1st of January, to be published in the middle of February."

Some further delay occurred; for there is a memorandum, that "Mr. Hussey began to work regularly," 16th February

* He appears to have had some doubt as to the lawfulness of such a proceeding. Among memoranda of information he had obtained on various points is this: "No law against the press: Craftsman conquered the whole company, at law." On this subject see Blackstone's *Comm.*, Vol. IV., p. 152; Stephen's *Comm.*, Vol. IV., p. 284.

1736.* And in the succeeding month of May, elated with success, our author wrote to Dr. Briggs of Holt, "I should be extreme glad of the honour of your company at Fersfield to see my presses at work."

While the seclusion of his residence, however, invited study and saved him from many interruptions, it was not easy to guard against the inconveniences of a situation not only remote from the metropolis and provincial cities, but no otherwise to be approached from the nearest market-town than through four miles of road scarcely passable in winter.

At that time, distance and difficulty of intercourse made any want of punctuality most annoying; and the plan of printing at home involved the necessity of a great variety of type and other materials. Meanwhile, type-founders, paper-makers, stationers, and engravers were but too much given to weary him with delay, or to disgust him with fraud. Beginning a correspondence with frankness and civility, we find him afterwards urging and reiterating entreaties of attention—alternately coaxing compliance with "half-a-piece" to drink his health and success to his work, or with "promise of making amends," or a "fowl at Christmas,"—and then arousing himself to earnest complaint and remonstrance; or rebuking with a reluctant severity, which, after all, seems the result of his devotedness to his object, not of bitterness against those who thwarted him in its accomplishment.

In January 1736, when Blomefield was full of anxiety to commence operations, Francis Hoffman, an engraver, was introduced to him, as an individual "something low in circumstances, but a man well-bred,"—one who might "romance a little in conversation," but would "cut and design

* In the *Letters from the Bodleian Library*, Vol. II., p. 103, it is stated that Blomefield "*began to print his History in 1739.*" This is the date given in the title-page; the first volume of the folio edition having been completed Dec. 25th, 1739, as appears by the author's note at p. 771 of that volume.

finely." "I will" (said he, addressing our author with abundant self-confidence) "put you in a way to print your whole work better and more beautiful than was ever yet published, I will engrave the cuts and perfect the draughts where necessary, and do you, in this affair, many other services, perhaps beyond your expectations."

Three days afterward he wrote again :

"As I have engraved for most of the printers in Europe, in the space of twenty years, from place to place abroad, and for every printer in our own dominions, and often sell *letter* between printer and printer, and print my own cuts better than any printer living can do, I must know and be able to do more than any of them; for there are many ways of printing abroad which our printers know nothing of. . . . If you will be at the expence of my journey to you, I will come to you, and give you a perfect light into the undertaking you are about, which no man can meddle with to advantage and satisfaction but from right advice of such as have had long and thorough experience."

Blomefield was no artist; and although he had, doubtless, much assistance from Mr. Martin, whom he calls "as good a drawer as any in England," he complains that he had "great difficulty in finding friends to draw" for him. On this and on other accounts he was caught by Hoffman's representations, and lost sight of the significant hint, that he would "romance a little." That individual, having been applied to for his terms and specimens of his work, answered in the same strain as before; observing, with reference to some heraldic engravings which should have been sent as samples of his talent, that, "Not being satisfied what the birds are, and the colours not being expressed, and there being no number nor reference, et quia qui dubitat in errorem irreparabilem incidat, (at least it would be mere lucky

accident to hit right,) I thought it better to postpone, till by mutual consultation every thing may be ascertained and done rightly."

In allusion to the rooms it was proposed he should occupy at Fersfield, he adds:

"As to an apartment, I don't care how mean it is, so it be warm, safe, retired, and the bedding and light good. I covet no conversation but the most learned, free, and best tempered: to such I am an 'omnium horarum homo.' I live in the appearance of the greatest poverty and meanness, yet have undermined sorrow and sickness, and even necessity itself, almost to the utter eradication."

Mr. Blomefield's rejoinder displays somewhat of the buoyancy of his new correspondent.

"Fersfield, Jan. 21, 1735.

"Good Sir,

"I received yours, which I shall answer in every particular. And first, as to the public taste of printing, &c., I don't care one farthing, if I print my work in a manner to my own liking. I don't care twopence for all the world except my subscribers, most of which are gentlemen in my own way, whom I don't at all fear but I shall please. You must understand I don't print (I thank God for it) for my bread, having a comfortable subsistence independent of all men, and therefore fear no loss of reputation. And as to the management of my letter, press, &c., have committed it to my printer only, with my own inspection. So that I want nothing that way; being a man, to speak truly, that am determined in all things to please myself; though I heartily thank you for your advice as to that matter. . . . Take particular care to make no alteration from the common shield;* all new nick-nacks to me are nothing. I am to

* See the fanciful shield containing the arms of Fitzwalter, Blom. *Norf.*, Vol. I., p. 7, (which were engraved by Hoffman,) as compared with the plain shields at p. 107 and elsewhere.

represent things as I find them: good or bad, 'tis all one. All that I ask, in your way, is only to cut well, but exactly in the method of the draught before you."

The result was, that Blomefield sent for this facetious artist to Fersfield, where, having paid him for his journey, he found him a house, and supplied him with money; and that Hoffman remained there about three weeks, "agreed for a large parcel of work, and cut several of the things, all which *he ran away with.*"

Other vexations sprang out of the very patronage and assistance most valued by our author. To the learned prelate before mentioned, he wrote on the 5th of April, 1735, with the manuscript of the "Hundred of Diss," for his Lordship's perusal: through some strange negligence, neither the letter nor the parcel by which it was accompanied reached his Lordship's hands until several months had elapsed,—months of suspense and anxiety to Blomefield. The 7th of November had arrived before he had the happiness to enter the sub-joined memorandum:

"Rec^d. my collections of Diss Hundred back again from my Lord of St. Asaph, with his approbation, alteration, and additions to every town, in his own hand."

In the letter which announced the transmission of the MSS., the Bishop said he had perused them "with great satisfaction," and observed:—

"The respect I have for you, and my love to Norfolk, and any design which may be for the credit of that county, induce me to submit to what I have refused many others—your dedicating it to me, if upon further thoughts you shall not find it to your prejudice, and not think of a better patron. . . . Is there no compassing a map of every hundred, or, as your hundreds are but small, of one, two, or three put into a sheet together, with the roads, dis-

tinctions of parish-churches, townships and hamlets, and other civil and ecclesiastical divisions? I am told there is a very exact man, this way, who lives about Wickham Market, and is now about a map of Suffolk.”*

This welcome communication was acknowledged as follows :

“ Fersfield, Nov. 17, 1735.

“ My Lord,

“ I received your kind letter and my Diss Hundred papers very safe, with your notes, for which I am not capable of returning sufficient thanks; but shall endeavour to do it in the best manner I can, which is in exactly following them in all points, which your Lordship may depend upon. I can’t express the satisfaction it is to me that your Lordship is so kind as to permit me to dedicate it to you; and so far am I from thinking of any other patron, that I look upon it as my great happiness to have one that I should choose above all mankind. . . . I would get a map of each Hundred if I could, but find the expense will be so much to have them actually surveyed, that I dare not undertake it, having ventured a very large sum upon the undertaking already. But hope, that if I should live to finish it, I may prevail upon him that hath done Suffolk, to do Norfolk in the same way; Suffolk being the most exact thing I ever saw. . . . The Image of Hypocrisy is an original MS. of Skelton’s own hand, which Mr. Martin tells me he hath now by him at Palgrave, and came out of the Ashwell Thorpe library.† . . . I did once transcribe the

* John Kirby, author of the “Suffolk Traveller,” father of John Joshua Kirby, and grandfather of the well-known Mrs. Trimmer. The son painted the famous sign of the White Hart, at Scole, in 1740. (See *Gent. Mag.*, 1807, p. 499; Page’s *Supplement to Kirby’s Suffolk Traveller*, p. 189.)

† See Blom. *Norf.*, Vol. I., p. 32: “The Image of Ipcrisy” is appended to the Rev. A. Dyce’s edition of Skelton’s Works, from Lansdowne MSS., 794. The editor remarks: “The original has very considerable alterations

parcel of lands belonging to Thetford, but suppose before my study was burnt.* Should be glad of a copy, if it be not too much trouble."

With the above, Blomefield sent for the Bishop's perusal the MS. History of several parishes in Guiltcross Hundred, little anticipating the calamity which awaited him. The remainder of the page, on which the last letter was transcribed, is occupied by the following note.

"The 14th day of December, being the third Sunday after Advent, at three o'clock in the afternoon, died Thomas Tanner, LL.D., Bishop of St. Asaph and Canon of Christ Church, Oxford, late Chancellor of Norwich, Archdeacon of Norfolk, and Rector of Thorpe by Norwich, my great friend and dear patron; whose loss to me is very great, as well as to the Church in general, to the discipline of which he was a strict adherer, and to its poor of unlimited charity.

"Heu! lachrymandus obiit.

"Cætera, quæ desunt, narrabit fama superstes. †

"FRA. BLOMEFIELD, CL."

Blomefield's gratitude was not stained by selfishness, nor was his intercourse with others hindered by any want of

and additions by a different hand: the first page is, here and there, illegible, partly from the paleness of the ink, and partly from the notes which Peter Le Neve (the possessor of the MS. in 1724) has unmercifully scribbled over it. Hearne and others have attributed this remarkable production to Skelton." Mr. Dyce, however, is of opinion that the poem contains decisive evidence that Skelton was not its author. (Dyce's *Works of Skelton*, Vol. II., p. 413.)

* The mortifying occurrence here alluded to, evidently took place before the printing of the Norfolk History was begun. The Entry-Book, so often quoted, does not, I think, contain any other notice of it; nor mention the fire which (according to the *Norfolk Tour*) consumed "not only all the numbers printed off, but press and printing-house, when he had scarcely got through the first volume." (*Norf. Tour*, Vol. II., p. 1156.)

† See Blom. *Norf.*, Vol. III., p. 636.

transparency in his own character. His advice and assistance were given to men of congenial spirit, with a readiness and candour very worthy of imitation.

Benjamin Mackerell, known as the author of a *History of Lynn*, having introduced himself to him as "a lover of Antiquity," he wrote in reply :

" Fersfield, Nov. 4, 1735.

" Good Sir,

" I received your kind letter, for which I thank you ; and shall make bold to call on you some afternoon at my next coming to Norwich, which I expect will be very soon. Mr. Parkyn, who is now with me, gives his service to you ; and no longer ago than last week, Mr. Martin mentioned you to me, and wondered I had not been acquainted with you. I am glad to learn we have another brother in the county ; for there are but few of us.

" I am, your most humble servant,

" F. B."

Soon afterwards we find him communicating his views, at the request of the same individual, as to a projected work on Coins.* The following passage is characteristic :

" I am not acquainted with a pewter-engraver, though there are numbers in London, and I will find you one out. Mr. Pennock is my wood-cutter. He lives in Lewin Street, in Aldersgate Street. But, to deal freely with you, as is always my way with all mankind, I would not have you send him any specimens as yet ; for he hath near 150 plates of mine under his hands now, and I am afraid it might stop him in carrying them on speedily."

* See *Norfolk Topographer's Manual*, p. 39. Mr. Beaupré Bell appears to have entertained the design of publishing on the same subject. Blomefield, in a note of a letter he addressed to that gentleman, says, " He hath a catalogue of what I have, any of which are at his service. . . . ' Let me know what forwardness your work is in : if you have not agreed for all your plates, perhaps I may be serviceable that way.' "

If Mr. Blomefield had departed from the resolution he had often expressed, that, to the memory of Bishop Tanner alone, he would dedicate his book,* it would have been that he might have had the honour to lay it at the feet of royalty. In June 1737, we meet with him corresponding on this subject with William Winde, Esq., who had been on a visit at Fersfield.

“ Since your departure, a thought has occurred to me which I would have your opinion upon ; and, if it be not too presumptuous, would willingly dedicate my book to his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, who, as I am informed, is a great encourager of arts and sciences. And, if I should be so happy as to have the approbation of his Royal Highness, would humbly crave a copper-plate of any picture which he shall judge most like himself, to perpetuate it to posterity, by placing it as a frontispiece to my work ; there being so few of the effigies of the preceding Princes of Wales now extant. This would add lustre to the undertaking, to have so noble a person appear at the head of so many Princes of the royal blood, that have anciently been great benefactors to this county, and especially the renowned Black Prince, who, as well as his Royal Highness, was the darling and delight of the people. And I am fully persuaded that the nobility and gentry of the county would think it a great honour, to find themselves and their ancestors under the protection of so noble a patron. I leave this entirely to your consideration, and shall do in it as you shall direct. As there are already several numbers published, I have sent a set, which I desire (if you think it right) may be presented to his Royal Highness, that he may see my method, and what sort of work it is, before I dare be so bold as to ask his approbation. . . .

“ I am, your most obliged humble servant,

“ FRANCIS BLOMEFIELD.”

* See his *Introduction*, p. i.

In another letter to the same gentleman, our author draws attention to the strong language he had employed in his "Introduction," where he certainly appears to have precluded himself from seeking a new patron, however exalted. "I must manage," he observes, "so as to turn the compliment consentaneous to that,"—a difficulty which, no doubt, he found to be insuperable.

As regards the amount of success that followed his exertions, he had abundant reason to be satisfied with it. The Introduction is dated 25th March, 1736; and before the end of the following month he wrote to Mr. Thurlbourn, his Cambridge bookseller:

"I have met with encouragement far above my expectation; and tho' I printed a good number above my subscribers that I was aware of, wanted some hundreds, so that I have been forced to reprint it."

Again, in the middle of May he writes to Mr. Carlos of Norwich:

"I have had such a run, that I have only eight of those of the first number that I printed off the second time, in the whole world, and must reprint it again; but by degrees, because it would retard my going on for a month, if I did it at once, which I am resolved not to do."

And again, addressing Dr. Briggs, 21st May:

"You are not sensible with what pleasure I find, by your and the rest of my friends' encouragement, the work goes on briskly, having had such a run of subscribers that, in one fortnight after the publishing of my first number, I got as many new subscribers as I had in the whole before, which occasioned me to reprint it. And then also mistook my number; for I have had such an increase that they are all gone; and now I am forced to print promissory notes that I will deliver No. 1 before the first volume is finished."

Neither of Blomefield's parents had lived to reach what the Psalmist designates as the full term of human life; and he was himself cut off, in the midst of his labours, before his years had numbered half a century. The Parish-register, in which he had delighted to do honour to members of his family less eminent than himself, supplies no more than the following cold record of this event:

"Francis Blomefield, Rect^r of this parish, departed this life on Thursday, the 16th day of January, 1752, and was buried in the chancel, on the south side of the altar, on Saturday evening, Jan. y^e 18th, 1752."

A black marble slab covers his grave, bearing the sub-joined inscription:

"Beneath this stone are deposited
the remains of FRANCIS BLOMEFIELD,
formerly of Caius College, Cambridge,
late Rector of Fersfield and Brockdish
in this County,
and Author of the History of Norfolk,
A work which, had he lived to have completed it,
would have conveyed a lasting obligation
on his native County,
and on himself the merit of
extensive powers successfully exerted.
To the grief of his family and Friends,
and the regret of learning,
he was snatched away
in the midst of his labours
at the age of 47,
on the 16th of January, 1752."

"In the same vault also are consigned
the remains of Mary his wife
Daughter of Arthur * Womack,
Rector of Buxton † and Oxnead,
and Caster next Yarmouth.
She died much lamented for
Her tenderness, piety, and virtue,

* *Sic*: should be Laurence.

† Buxton is a Vicarage.

January 12th, 1796, aged 89,
 leaving two daughters — Elizabeth
 married to William Mason, Esqr.
 of Necton in this County,
 and Alice who still remains unmarried."

As regards the Le Neve Collectanea, Blomefield writes to Bishop Tanner, "Mr. Martin desires me to acquaint you, that he takes care of Mr. Le Neve's collections, *till I have finished*;" and this he probably did, though it is a well-known fact that he sold them in his lifetime, and sold them avowedly as having been the property of *King Peter*. They had been "freely communicated" as the History of Norfolk had progressed; and the author, in return, had publicly avowed an intention that his own collections should be joined to those of Mr. Le Neve, so that *being together*, they might be consulted at all times.* Melancholy sentences these, pointing at unfulfilled projects and vain hopes! A portion, indeed, of the antiquarian stores from Fersfield fell into the hands of Martin. And, truly, his must have been a noble accumulation of materials. But his death, it is well known, led to their total dispersion, in which we, of the Norfolk and Norwich Archæological Society, have so far reason to rejoice, as that by means of this dispersion our worthy member, Mr. Carthew, has materially enriched our volumes; and this very paper is indebted to that circumstance for much of the little interest it may be allowed to possess.

Still farther, let it not be forgotten, that, from the same cause, those collections may have become the more extensively available and useful. Contributing to enrich numerous libraries, and finding their way, by degrees, into many

* Blom. *Norf.*, *Introduction*, p. xii. By his will, executed but a few days before his death, Blomefield directed a general conversion of his personalty into money, to be applied towards the payment of his debts. Administration was granted on the renunciation of the executors to two principal creditors.

a publication, over how broad a surface have they spread the light of other days! In how many minds have they assisted to cherish that sober taste for antiquities which, in some measure, supersedes the more frivolous literature of the present age!—Who can calculate their influence in scattering pleasures intellectual and pure, in affording occasions for that interchange of friendly offices which, like the quality of mercy, “is twice blessed,” and in multiplying the “few” allies of Archæology into a goodly host?

Almost innumerable manuscripts, not deemed to be of such “good consequence in history” as to have been offered for sale, remained with the Martin family. A large mass of these was buried in the earth by the late Mr. Robert Martin, Sen., of Bressingham. Surely there were, among them, some which the descendant of an antiquary might have spared so ignominious a fate? It would be delightful to know that any documents of general interest had escaped: much more, that they were destined to do service to an Association which aims to cultivate and extend the territory, traversed, in a by-gone age, by the laborious but cheerful footsteps of Tanner and Blomefield, Martin and Le Neve.

