

The Erpingham House,

SAINT MARTIN'S AT PALACE, NORWICH.

THE CITY RESIDENCE OF SIR THOMAS ERPINGHAM.

COMMUNICATED BY

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THE spacious mansion, the subject of this paper, stood in the parish of St. Martin at Palace, at the further end of a lane, now called *World's End Lane*, having a fine meadow and garden in front extending to the great tower or dungeon on the immediate bank of the river. The entirety of the house (in 1858) was well preserved, but the exterior had undergone much alteration and retained little of its original appearance. It formed a vast rectangular building formerly with two wings, one of which was removed about two years since to facilitate the entrance to the gas-works.

I will now refer to a manuscript of the late Peter Le Neve in the possession of Robert Fitch, Esq., to whose kind liberality and love of archæological research I am indebted for its perusal. The house seems to have been anciently called "Berney's Inn," and was an earlier residence of the family of that name than the house bearing the same appellation in King Street, on the north side of the churchyard of St. Peter per Mountergate. It was probably built by the

Berneys at the close of the thirteenth or beginning of the fourteenth century, for Sir Thomas purchased it of them, and when in Norwich constantly resided there. The mansion, the residence of his father, Sir John Erpingham, in 1370, is still standing on the west side of King Street, opposite Rose Lane. This street seems to have been a favourite locality for the residences of the great county families: several good houses, hostelries, or inns, as they were then called, are still existing, and it was to one of these that the Berney family probably removed on the sale of the house at St. Martin's at Palace. Mr. Le Neve says: "Berney's Inn was a capital messuage in y^e Parish of Saint Martin at y^e Palace, at y^e further end of World's end lane, on y^e North side next the river there, mentioned to have been y^e messuage of John De Berney (an. 1334) y^e 7th, 26th, 34th, and 45th Edward 3^d; afterwards of Sir Robert De Berneye Kn^t.; and 10th Henry 4th (1409) Tho. Longele, Bp. of Durham, John Tiptoft, John Straunge, Robert Berney, Knts., John Cokayne of y^e co. Hertford, John Doreward, Edmd. Oldenhalle, and Thomas Derham, conveyed by deed to Sir Thomas Erpingham Kn^t., and his hrs. y^e said Inn called Berneys Inn."

By a loose paper accompanying this manuscript, it appears that a letter of attorney, dated 18th June, 10th Henry IV., was executed by the same parties to Thomas Randall, "To deliver seizin to Thomas Erpingham, Kn^t., de hospicio nup. vocat Berneys Inn in Norwich, by them lately to him conveyed. It was afterwards y^e messuage of Sir William Phelip, Kn^t., Lord Bardolf, in right of the Lady Joane his wife, daughter and heir of Sir Thomas Erpingham. The said lord died 19 H. 6, and, A.D. 1446, the said Joane Lady Bardolph bequeathed this her Inn or messuage to be sold by her executors. Accordingly, 26 Hen. 6, it was sold and conveyed by deed as follows, viz., an Indenture betwixt Richd. Poringland, Richd. Burnstede, clerke, John Heydon, and John Danyard, executors of y^e testament of Johane

Lady Bardolph of y^e one part, and William Calthorpe, Esquire, on the other part, witnessing that the s^d executors have sold to y^e s^d William a meße cleped Berneye's Inn, in Norwich, in y^e parish of Saint Martin before y^e palays of y^e Bishop, with y^e garden and y^e pertiments as y^e said Johane was possessed in her life, and with divers instruments necessary and stuff under written: first y^e *Hallyng*, y^e day of this present writing in y^e said meße, being cuppeboards, formes, stoles, tables, tresselles, press boards, bed boards, two standardes in y^e wardrope there, a belle of brass, ledy's quernes, 'quernes,' brewyn vessells, rakks, manjourns, y^e barge there, with the apparail, for y^e somme of ccc and L marks of lawful money of England, to be paid to y^e said Richard, Richard, John, and John, to their executors, or to their attornies in this forme following: This day L marks, and ccc marks at certain sesns in twelve obligations mentioned; in w^{ch} obligations y^e s^d William Calthorpe, Thos. Garell of Kirkeby Kame, Dionise Willes of Langlee, Robert Harveys of Norwich, John Maynard of Marsham, Richard Yemmes of Norwich, and John Greistock of Strumpshaw, stand bound each of them to the said executors in xxv marks, which if they pay at y^e times appointed, then an obligation of c pounds in y^e wh^{ch} Henry Inglose, Knt., and y^e said Will. Calthorpe are bounden to y^e executors to be of noon effect. In witness, &c. Dat. 20 January, y^e yeer of y^e reign of K. Henry y^e VI. after y^e conquest y^e xxvi." Afterwards, "21 Henry 8, it was the messe of Sir Philip Calthorp, Knt.; 2 Edw. 2, of Dame Jane Calthorp, widow of said Sir Philip; after, of Elizabeth their only daughter, first married to Sir Henry Parker, Knt.; after, to Sir William Wodehouse, Knt., and lastly to Drue Drury, Esq.; Anno. Dom. 1600, of Sir Miles Corbet, Knt., of Sprowsson; afterwards of Thomas Corbet, Esq., his Son and Heir."

At the end of this valuable note Mr. Le Neve says, there remains in a window the arms of Corbet impaling Berney,

which were the arms of John Corbet, Esq., who died A. D. 1559, having married Jane the daughter of Ralph Berney, Esq. Subsequently to the Corbets, the property passed into various hands, and at a later period vested in Mr. Jackson, who sold it to Robert Lambert, whose executors passed it to A. A. H. Beckwith, Esq., from whom it came into the possession of the gas company, the present proprietors.

Part of this venerable mansion had been converted into a public-house, and the remainder into several small tenements. The extent of the original apartments might be traced by the chimney-pieces, carved ceilings, and mouldings. Fronting the south and adjoining the left wing, was a banqueting-room with carved chesnut panels, 17 feet wide by 35 in length, having a fine window 10 feet in width fronting the south. This room was ascended from a small court-yard by a staircase faced with stone, of which the brick-work was entire, and which was, I suppose, originally covered in or roofed. In the kitchen were preserved some beautiful arches extending over the cellar and offices. Several irregular original windows remained on the north side, two of which lighted large apartments quite entire. Dilapidated, and almost in ruins, it will still be a matter of regret to the antiquary, that after an existence of more than five centuries, this venerable mansion was taken down in 1858 by the proprietors of the gas-works, who required its site for the extension of their buildings and offices.

This house was the scene of many of our historical recollections connected with the city. Sir Thomas Erpingham exercised unbounded hospitality there, was a great friend to and much beloved by the citizens; he obtained for them, by the friendship and favour of King Henry IV., their new and much-desired charter, which had been opposed by Bishop Spencer, and was on all occasions the constant friend and most liberal benefactor to the city. The knight had been

conspicuously active in placing King Henry IV. on the throne, and was consulted in all the confidential affairs of that monarch and his successor.

The mansion must have been an ornamental and handsome residence: standing just without the buildings of the city, on the banks of a fine river, and surrounded by gardens of no common extent, its great size and spacious outbuildings were no doubt imposing. The approach to this noble dwelling was, as late as the reign of Queen Elizabeth, through a lane leading from St. Martin's at Palace to the building, as appears by an old map of the city at that period, which I have seen.

I cannot dismiss this subject without referring to the curious story from Heywood's *TYNAIKEION*, or *Nine Books of various Histories of Women*, printed in 1624, and quoted by Blomefield under "Erpingham," better known as the *Knight and the Friar of George Colman's "Broad Grins."* It is difficult to conceive the origin of this strange calumny on the memory of Sir Thomas Erpingham. It probably originated in the prolific brain of Heywood himself, for I have been unable to discover any traces of authenticity in support of the accusation elsewhere. There are also several inaccuracies in the account fatal to the veracity of the story; such as the vicinity of Sir Thomas's house to the monastery, there mentioned as being divided by a brick wall only, and which contained an abbot and twelve friars. The only religious house founded by Sir Thomas in Norwich, was the Austin Friary, for the reception of twenty-four friars, and which he did not live to see finished. This house, now called St. Andrew's Hall, is a considerable distance from the mansion of Sir Thomas; and the description is equally inapplicable to the Benedictine Monastery, now the Cathedral and Precinct, which contained sixty monks, and to which Sir Thomas was also a benefactor. The Carmelites, or White Friars, had a house adjoining the bridge of the White Friars,

on the same side of the water; but this house was certainly not founded by Sir Thomas Erpingham, and is at some distance from the garden, with a stack of houses between them, which it is presumed were then standing, or their site occupied by former buildings. The adjoining anchorage, containing a recluse only, could not have been meant; and to the Carmelites Sir Thomas was not even a benefactor. I conclude, therefore, that this idle story was a mere fabrication of Heywood, rendered more popular by the witty and talented effusion in the "Broad Grins."