

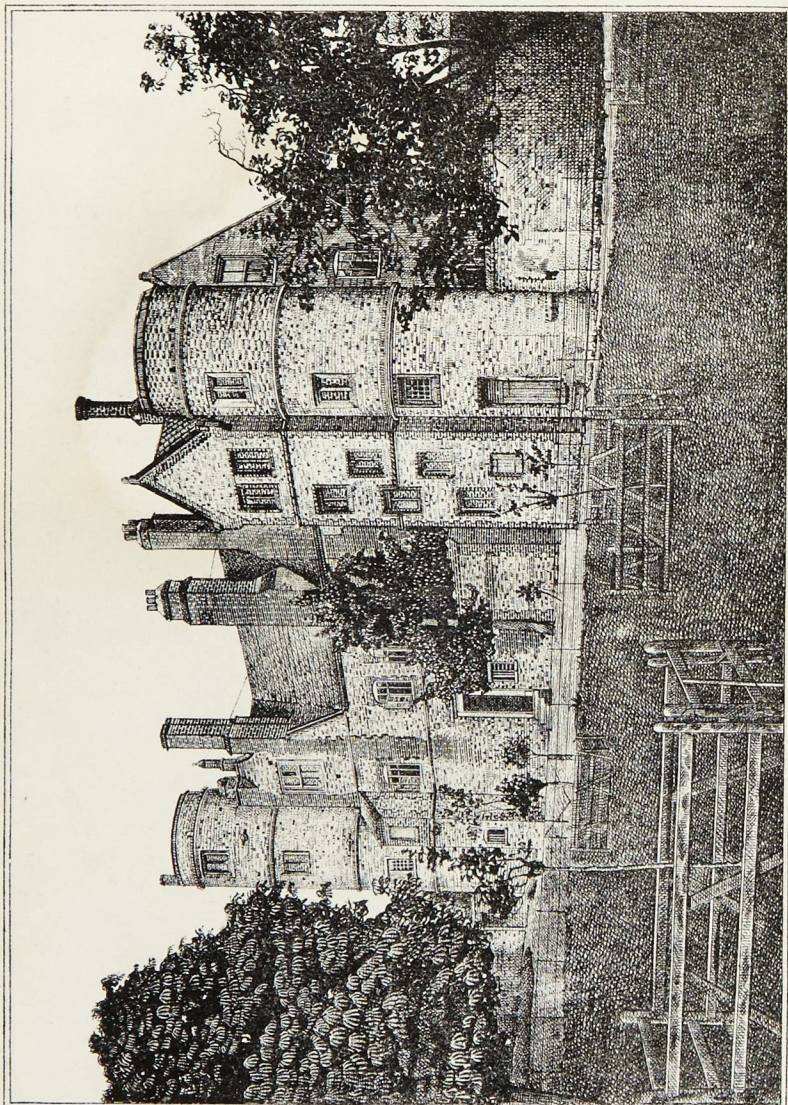
STIFFKEY:

A Sketch.

BY MRS. HERBERT JONES.

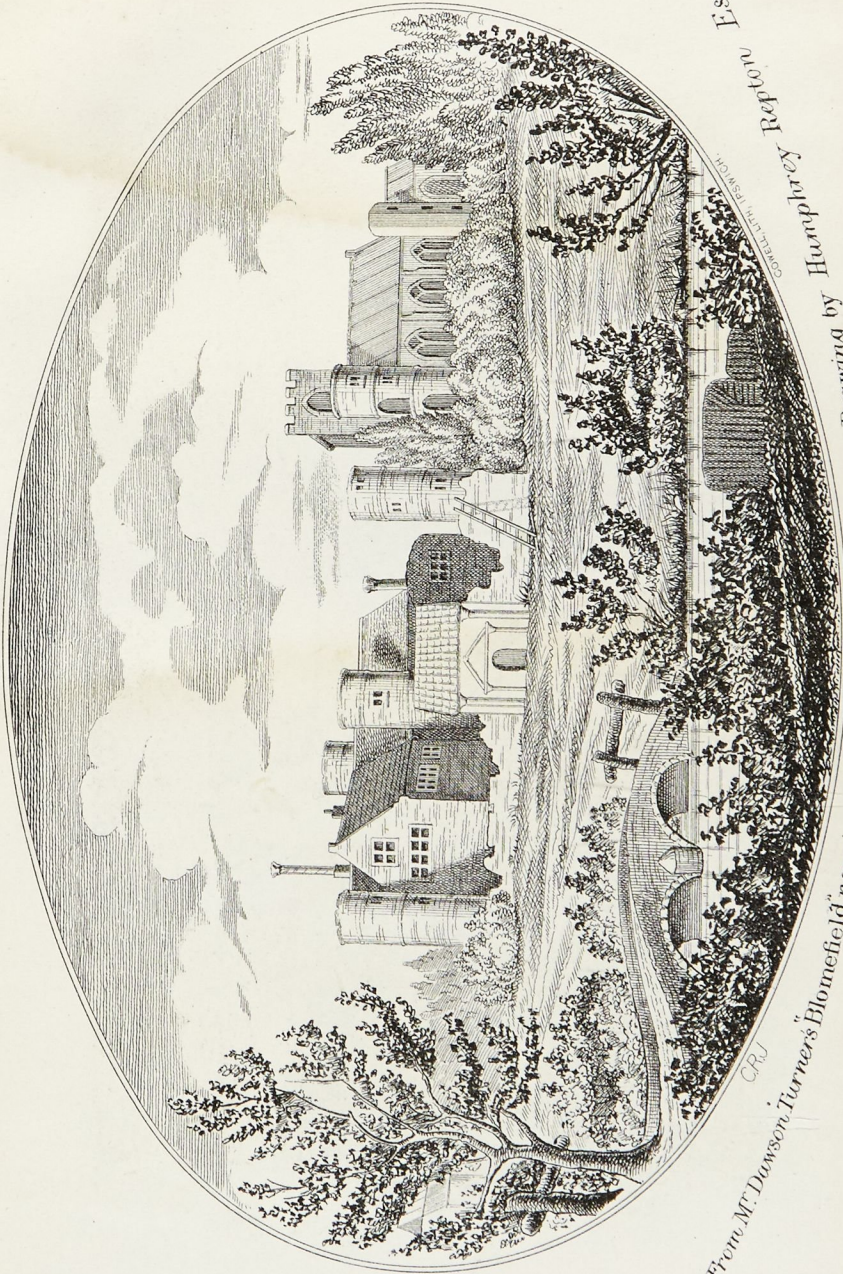
IN a sea-side Norfolk village, which afterwards became connected with a name celebrated in the annals of English history, there stood, side by side for centuries, two churches, one of which fell apparently into disuse about the year 1559, when the church of St. Mary, Stiffkey, alone remained. That of St. John Baptist, rescued from oblivion by the legend engraved on a silver chalice still in use,—“Sainte John and Mary, 1567,”—has left behind a suggestion only of the lives of the contemporary priests who ministered there, two of whom, in the fifteenth century, dwelt more than fifty years in the occupation of the two benefices, living a remote country life in their obscure locality, far from the strife of “the madding crowd,” which at that period of frequent civil war kindled into historic illustration so many of the nooks and corners of England.

A century later, and not long after the disappearance of the church of St. John, Stiffkey became the property of Sir Nicholas Bacon, the Lord Keeper of Queen Elizabeth's time, the second who had acquired pre-eminence in that well-known family, whose occasional members, rising above the level of its ordinary history, have, from time to time,



LOWE, LITH. 1854.

STIFFKEY HALL.
WEST SIDE.



Copy'd From Mr Dawson Turner's "Blomefield" now in the British Museum. From a Drawing by Humphrey Repton Esquire.
STUFKEY HALL, NORFOLK 1779.

GRJ

benefited, astonished, or charmed mankind by their endowments.¹

The estate was purchased by the Lord Keeper in 1571, of the families of Baynard and Andrewes, to whom it had belonged for a short time,² but this possession, so distant, in those days of tedious travelling, from the scenes of his public life, was perhaps unvisited by him, and was relinquished apparently, after a few years, to the son for whose provision the acquisition had been made.

The will of Sir Nicholas Bacon, a contemporary copy of which is preserved, is dated September, 1577, and consists chiefly of recitals of the settlements which he had previously made, and which he thereby confirms. In that portion of the will which relates to Stiffkey, he confirms certain indentures that had been made at the dates—"February 10, thirteenth of Queen Elizabeth;" "May 2, fourteenth of Queen Elizabeth;" and "February 17, sixteenth of Queen Elizabeth;"—but whilst there is no mention of any existing house at Stiffkey, the following sentence occurs in a part of the will dated 23rd of December, 1578: "I give to Nathaniel my sonne towards the buildinge of

¹ Bacon is a Norman name, and the family of Baconsthorpe is the same as that of Bacon. "The English family of Bacon appears to have descended from Grimbold, said to be a kinsman of the Earl Warren, and who came to England with him at the Conquest. It is likely that Grimbold held some manor in Normandy called Bacon, from whence the name of the family. The illustrious Roger Bacon can hardly have been of this family; but John de Baconsthorpe, the celebrated Carmelite Friar, of whom Fuller makes mention in his *Worthies*, was certainly son of Sir Thomas Bacon, of Baconsthorpe. The arms of this family varied much; they bore, Gules, on a chief argent two mullets sable, which are borne by the present family; and, Gules, three boars' passant or."—*Record of the House of Gournay*, page 338. It has occasionally, however, been assumed that Roger Bacon was of this family, and Hallam, in his *Middle Ages*, points out a remarkable resemblance between certain of his characteristics and those of his "greater namesake."—See *Middle Ages*, vol. iii. page 539.

² Blomefield's *Norfolk*, 8vo. edition, vol. ix. pages 250 and 252.

his house at Stiffkey two hundred pounds. And besides all my leases in Stiffkey, and my stocke of sheepe, goinge upon them."³

The evidence of an inscription upon a silver cup, still preserved, "left by Sir Nicholas Bacon to his house at Stewkey, 1574," points, however, to the existence of a previous house, which is also rendered probable by the earlier possession of Stiffkey by families of importance, and by the appearance of the building itself, which on examination suggests the idea that some modifications have passed over it, and that material of different dates has been incorporated in it. It seems likely that a house of some sort was purchased or begun by the Lord Keeper himself, but that it was enlarged, remodelled, and adapted to a new and much later design, by his successor.

The period of ownership, although short—only eight years—during which Stiffkey was associated with the celebrated lawyer, whose "quick wit, singular prudence, supreme eloquence, and steadfast memory,"⁴ secured to him the confidence of the Queen and of his contemporaries, has given to this place a touch of distinction and historical interest which will always cling to it; the image of the Lord Keeper, with his characteristics of wisdom, "moderation," and firmness, gilded by the sparkle of humour, and by the still brighter embellishment of parental fidelity, presents itself as the moving spirit, if not the immediate cause, which filled the atmosphere of Stiffkey, not only palpably and materially, where—

"Casual bricks in airy climb
Encountered casual cow-hair, casual lime;
And rafters, borne through wondering clouds elate,
Kissed in their slope blue elemental slate"—

³ Blomefield asserts (vol. ix. page 252, 8vo. edition) that Sir Nicholas Bacon gave the Stiffkey estate to his son Nathaniel.

⁴ Camden's *Annals of Queen Elizabeth* (Darcie's Translation, 1625, p. 396.).

but also with that memory of himself, which is its choicest and most abiding possession.

The individual of the race to whom, after Sir Nicholas Bacon, Stiffkey belonged, displays no especially striking qualities, but seems to have desired,—whether for the sake of “plain life and lettered peace,” or in order to “love the more his own gray towers,”—a quiet country abode; for he it was, the second son of the Lord Keeper, and elder brother of Francis Lord Bacon, who completed in 1604 the beautiful house still to be seen at Stiffkey, which, with its gateway carved with arms, and the six circular towers that define its plan, rose to embellish and dignify the little village.

The house, three sides of a square, the fourth side enclosed by a gateway and walls, was spacious and picturesque; at each of the four outer corners a round tower, with the same at the two inner corners facing the gateway; the building of red brick, with brick mullioned windows; the gateway with stone quoins, surmounted by a shield, inscription and date carved in stone. This little piece of heraldry,—a fragment of that useful art, which, developing from the early “standard” of the Israelitish tribes, into the individual and hereditary coat of arms assumed to proclaim identity, has continued since to tell tales and betray facts,—stamps the house as the work of the Bacons, the double star still glimmering down from under the familiar crest, and based by the coat of arms which Sir Nicholas Bacon, in common with his sons, habitually quartered. It is in this instance impaled with that of Hopton, the family into which Sir Nathaniel Bacon married, and whose arms, with his own, appear upon his monument in the church hard by.

The principal front of the building looks south, on to a rising ground some three hundred yards distant, from whose summit the russet walls and towers opposite still show stately in the sunshine, backed, first, by the church with

its large shining nave windows, standing on higher ground, but close above the house, and beyond, by the long gray line of the sea. In front and beneath, green meadows, and a clear and broad stream, willow-shadowed and fringed with flowers. It runs between the house and the wooded hill, which, when nearest the stream, sinks into a parallel belt of copse, as though in attendance on the rivulet in its progress to the sea.

This stream, which was probably in those days of much larger dimensions, rises some fifteen miles off in a southeasterly direction, the principal branch near Fulmodeston, and winding along by Thursford, Great Snoring, Thorpland, East Barsham, Houghton-in-the-Dale, and Walsingham, eventually reaches the sea slightly east of Stiffkey, traversing, after its course through that village, where the inequality of the ground, and some alternation of slope, dale, and wood, give a touch of beauty to the landscape—a tract of salt marshes, whose “level waste and rounding gray,” are only broken by the neighbouring harbour of Blakeney, and its high church tower and lantern turret, the welcome sea mark of that monotonous coast.

All the above localities, by which the Stiffkey stream flows, between its rise and the point where it delivers its “tribute wave,” are spots of interest:—Thursford, where it steals through the woods that skirt the graceful Tudor house to which it gives the name; East Barsham, whose dark red battlements and chimneys decked with ornament are almost reflected in its current; Great Snoring, preserving a remembrance of the Sheltons in an ancient manor-house; Thorpland, where the Calthorpes occupied their sheltered, sunny, large-windowed abode; the little chapel of Houghton-in-the-Dale, the west front still fretted with delicate and elaborate tracery; the priory of Walsingham, with its famous shrine, rich in historical associations,

and, bound to which the Royal Pilgrim,⁶ as he neared his destination, must have trodden the margin of these friendly waters on "his weary way;" the Danish camp at Warham; and, lastly, the hall at Stiffkey, placed, as were perhaps the other dwellings on its banks, with some reference to the convenient neighbourhood of the running stream.

Sir Nathaniel Bacon, if he, as appears most probable, was the builder of the house, was certainly happy in the site selected: sunshine and sea air warmed and freshened his abode, whilst the close vicinity of the church, and the ground behind it, secured a shelter from the too-keen breezes of the adjacent coast. Erected at the last moment of what is called the Elizabethan manner, on the eve of that period when the return of Inigo Jones from Italy introduced a totally new style and arrangement into English domestic architecture, the interior, as far as the plan can still be traced, affords a good specimen of the departing ideal, and comprises a large suite of rooms,—some now remaining, but altered and divided; others in which the arrangement and characteristics are indicated by the deep indentations of the wooden joists and beams, and the stone door and window frames; and those in a further stage of ruin, which give only the faintest suggestion of their existence, grass and weeds having long taken the place of those fair chambers which looked out upon the view of stream and garden, hill and meadow, and which have fallen so soon and so unnecessarily into hopeless decay.

Exactly opposite the gate-house, at a distance of 83 feet, was the principal entrance door, in the centre of the south front, and opening into a large hall, about 65 feet by 23,

⁶ Sir Henry Spelman, in describing the shrine at Walsingham, says, "obtinuit fama celebris me adhuc puero, Regem Angliæ Henricum VIII. nudis pedibus a Bashamia ad præsentiam Virginis perrexisse; conceptisq' votis, Monile peringentis pretii obtulisse."—Spelman's *Icenia*, (edit. 1723 p. 149, vol. ii.; also edit. 1698.)

the space adjoining the door being probably screened off, and containing a window, a door into the withdrawing-room on the left, and a low-arched cellar door. Beyond the screen, the spacious mullioned window on the right, with its square of sunshine, and the large fireplace in the north wall opposite, gave warmth and cheerfulness to the room; its further details consisting of a broad window at the garden end, a door into the eastern wing, a communication with the staircase tower, and the circular nook at the north-east corner. The east rooms, into which the hall opened, are so entirely ruined as to elude inquiry, the foundations of the walls, and a remnant of the south-east tower alone remaining; the tower in the angle, although much broken away, still shows traces of the winding stair within it.

On the west side of the hall there appear to have been two large square rooms, with mullioned windows of the same size and shape as the south one in the hall; one of these rooms communicates with the court through the corner tower, which contains, in perfect preservation, the staircase that led to the upper floors of that part of the house. Beyond these rooms are some which seem to have been used as offices; the first, judging from the form and size of its fireplace, was probably a kitchen, and opens into the court by a door bordered with stone mouldings; the further room is bounded on one side by a gabled projection, containing a staircase. Thus the three staircases with which this house was provided, were all placed without the actual walls, a result coinciding with the recommendation given by Lord Bacon in his *Essay on Building*, published towards the close of the century. "In the corners of the court, fair staircases, cast into turrets on the outside, and not within the rows of buildings themselves." Certain portions, indeed, of this elevation, bear much resemblance, although on a humble scale, to the ideal palace described by Francis Bacon in the *Essay* in question; the "house round

a court," the turrets, the staircases, the "fair and large cellar sunk underground," are all points of similarity which seem to hint at the possibility that in the completion of Sir Nathaniel Bacon's house his brother may have taken a share, supplied a suggestion, or inspired the faint image which these ruins present of the imaginary model of the philosopher.

The four turrets not containing staircases, were divided into a series of rooms forming a small circular addition to the apartment adjoining them on each floor. The house consisted of three stories, the rooms on the first floor of the west wing opening into a corridor lighted by windows towards the court; those looking south seem to have extended the whole width of the building, and were choice rooms, one especially, twenty-seven feet square, and ornamented with oak chimney-piece and panelling.

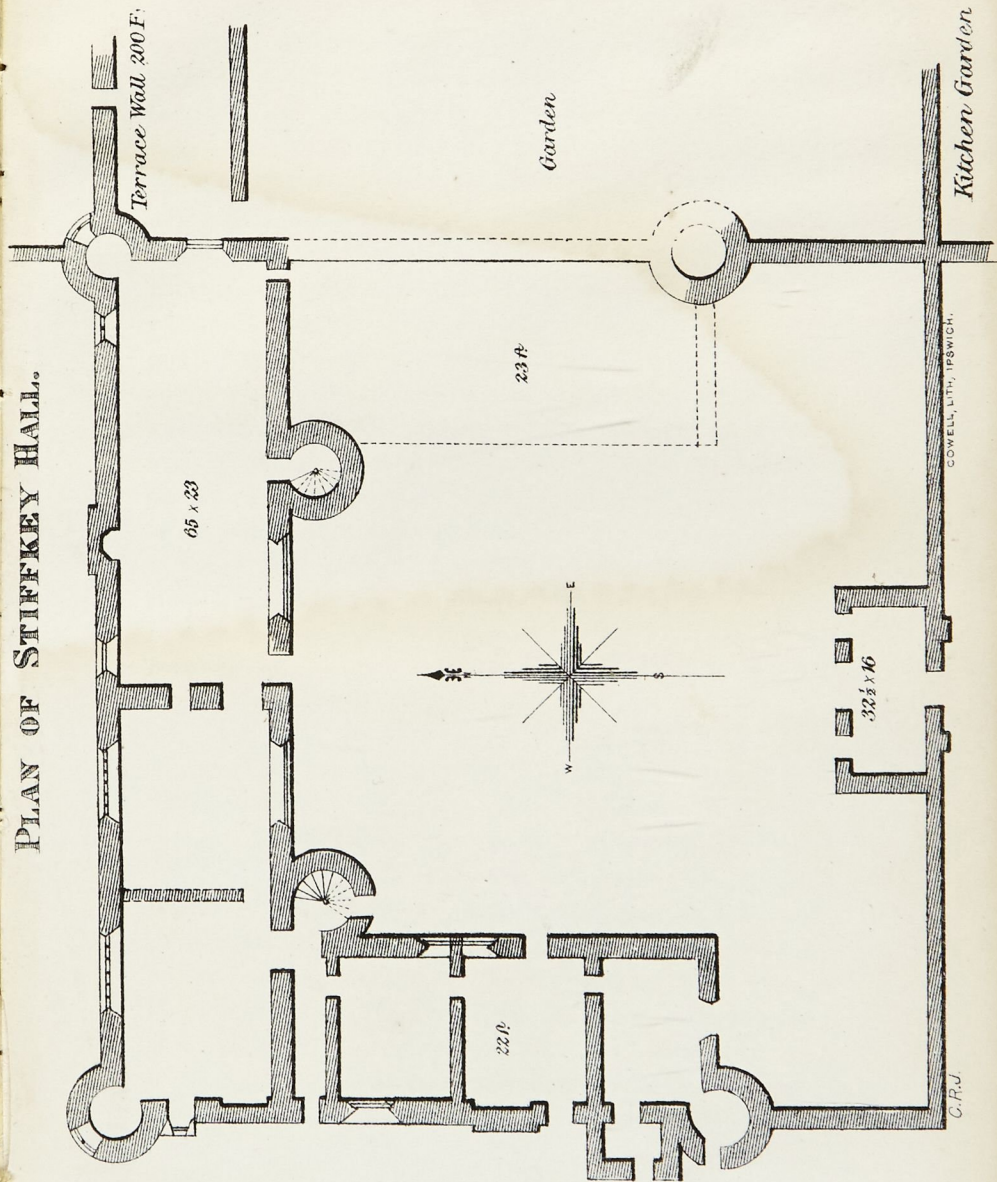
But the house itself would not have been complete without the fair garden which lay beside it, on a south slope, divided into three wide terraces. The upper terrace, still called "The Terrace Garden," overlooked by the hall window, a window not unlike that

"Oriel on the summer side
Vineclad, of Arthur's palace towards the stream,"

stretched its broad and sunny way along the lower edge of the churchyard, from which it was separated by a wall. Not far from the house a convenient door conducted the inhabitants to the south entrance of the church, a small archway in the nave wall exactly opposite, and which is perhaps not so much an original opening as one made to suit the needs of the manor-house; the principal entrance into the church, with its elegant porch, being on the north side, that in nearest proximity to the village.

The terrace, perfectly straight, and about two hundred

PLAN OF STIFFKEY HALL.



Scale
1 Inch to 16 Feet.

COWELL, LITHO, IPSWICH.

feet long, was picturesquely terminated by a large summer-house, from which a flight of steps descended to the stream, then near enough to be so reached, and, according to tradition, crossed by a ferry-boat moored beneath the bank. The summer-house, defined by the traces of its wooden roof, was built with three mullioned windows, now remaining, forming three sides of an octagon; one permitting a distant glimpse of the sea, whilst the other two must have looked upon the undulating lines of the low hills opposite; not as now, cultivated and planted, but veiled with the natural embroidery of the soil, tufts and threads of amber mosses, and the heavy network of the fragrant furze. Next to this terrace, a second, much broader—a swarded space; and on a lower level still, the kitchen garden, reaching down to the green meadows beneath.

It is much to be regretted that this interesting house, manifestly intended and specially fitted to form an abode ready to shelter generation after generation, and to descend unimpaired from father to son, should have become, from the circumstance of the want of an heir to inhabit it, and carry on the name, an appendage merely to a larger estate; this accident depriving it, not only of its dower of human interest, taking from it the light of life, the shadow of death, the doings and the fortunes of families, its natural and destined heritage,—but also of the common preservation due to its actual outward form and fabric, the proportion of ruin being so great that the larger part of the masonry, brickwork, and ornament which represented so much thought and labour, has, in the short space of 270 years, disappeared or crumbled into indefinable confusion.

Sir Nicholas Bacon had, besides the Stiffkey estate, other property in Norfolk, which he bequeathed to Corpus Christi College, Cambridge; he provided, for the most part, estates for his sons, leaving Mildenhall, Redgrave, and Culford to the eldest, Nicholas; Stiffkey to Nathaniel, and Gorhambury

to Anthony, from whom it subsequently passed to Lord Verulam. The building of houses and laying out of gardens seems to have been a passion in the Bacon family: the well-known house at Gorhambury, in Hertfordshire, with its elaborate gardens and orchards, was built by the Lord Keeper in 1568; the hall at Culford, near Bury St. Edmund's, was the work of his son Nicholas in 1591; Sir Nathaniel in 1604 completed that at Stiffkey; whilst the favourite occupation was elucidated and gathered into maxims in two exquisite essays, by the youngest and "brightest" of the sons, whose "castles in the air" will prove apparently less evanescent than the more solid elevations of the rest of his family.

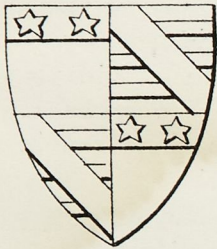
The inheritor of Stiffkey was born in 1546, and was twenty-five years old at the time of the purchase of the estate. He and two brothers, Nicholas and Edward, were the sons of Sir Nicholas Bacon's first wife, Jane Fernley; whilst the mother of his celebrated younger brother, born fifteen years later than himself, was Anne, daughter of Sir Anthony Cooke, and sister of Lady Burleigh; both ladies distinguished for their learning and attainments.

Nathaniel Bacon was Sheriff of Norfolk in 1599,⁷ and was knighted at Whitehall in 1604. He is frequently mistaken for his nephew and namesake, Sir Nathaniel Bacon, (the son of his elder brother, Sir Nicholas, the first baronet), who lived at Culford, in Suffolk, and who attained some eminence as a painter. An account of his pictures is given by Horace Walpole, in his *Anecdotes of Painting*, where he falls into the error of supposing him to be the son of the Lord Keeper, and brother of Francis Bacon; giving him, as well as his uncle's identity, his monument in Stiffkey church, in addition to his own at Culford. The two monuments sufficiently attest the distinction between the

⁷ Fuller's *Worthies*, (edit. 1811, vol. ii. p. 151) "List of Norfolk Sheriffs."

ARMS ON SIR NATHANIEL BACONS TOMB AT STIFFKEY.

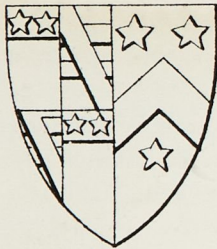
The Arms of Bacon.



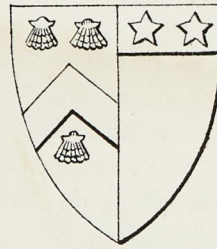
Knyvett & Bacon.



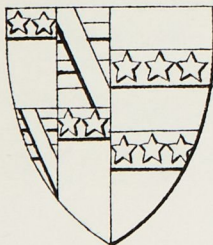
Bacon & Gresham.



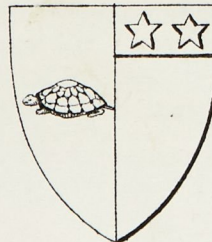
Townshend & Bacon.



Bacon & Hopton.



Gawdy & Bacon.



uncle and nephew; that at Culford⁸ describes Sir Nathaniel the younger, as "well skilled in the history of plants and in delineating them with his pencil," and is accompanied by one to his wife, the widow of Sir William Cornwallis.⁹ According to the list of members of Corpus Christi College, given by Masters, which goes back to 1358, the painter took his degree at Cambridge in 1628, six years after the death of his uncle of Stiffkey.

The monument in Stiffkey church, placed there by Sir Nathaniel Bacon, the elder, seven years before he died, gives an account, in his own words, of his descent, the two wives whom he married, and his three daughters. It is as follows:—

"Deo viventium sacrum. Nathaniel Bacon Eques Auratus, Nicolai Bacon Domini Custodis Magni Sigilli Angliæ filius secundo genitus, hic in Christo cui vivus invigilavit obdormit, cum duabus charissimis uxoribus, Annâ filiâ Thomæ Gresham, Equitis Aurati, et Dorotheâ filiâ Arthuri Hopton, de Whitham, ordinis ejusdem; è quorum priore tres suscepit filias, Annam enuptam Joanni Tounsend de Rainham, Elizabetham Thomæ Knivett de Ashwell-Thorpe, et Winefredam Roberto Gaudy de Claxton, singulis ex Ordine Equestri. Ille mortalitatis memor, spe certâ resurgendi in Christo, hoc sibi et suis posuit, anno ætatis suæ LXIX, ano domini 1615. Qui obiit die anno Dñi"

The tomb, which is now on the south side of the chancel, is of black marble, representing a coffin, the inscription above on a slab of white marble decorated with six coats of arms in alabaster, whose gilding and colour partly remain. These are, Bacon quartering Quaplude, with a crescent in the centre, the same exactly as the coat of arms borne by

⁸ It is detailed by Gough, in his edition of Camden's *Britannia* (published 1789) vol. ii. page 82.

⁹ These monuments are unfortunately now concealed by the modern arrangements of the church.

Sir Nathaniel Bacon's father, and placed over the entrance of the ante-chapel at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, when that addition was made by the Lord Keeper in 1578,¹ one of his gifts to the university, but which, unlike that bestowed upon the library,—a collection of rare books in Greek and Latin, still carefully preserved,²—has been swept away to give place to the execution of more modern ideas. This shield at the head of the monument in Stiffkey church found its position there no doubt in honour of Sir Nicholas Bacon, whose son, to complete his domestic history, placed by its side his own arms, impaled with those of his two wives: Gresham, Sable, a chevron ermine between three mullets argent; and Hopton, Argent, two bars, sable, on each three mullets or; and beneath, those of his three daughters and their husbands—the blue field and silver shells of Townshend; the tortoise on the grass of Gawdy; and the alternate light and shadow resting on the shield of the Knyvetts.

Strange to say, the space left to receive the date of Sir Nathaniel Bacon's death remains uninscribed still, and the parish register alone records the event in the following entry. "1622. Nov. 7. Nathaniel Bacon, knight, was buried."

Although the existence of the house and the eminence of the family have indelibly associated Stiffkey with the name of Bacon, its actual connection with that name lasted only fifty years, and ended with the death of Sir Nathaniel. The marriage of his daughters, all allied to well-known Norfolk families,—Townshend, Knyvett, and Gawdy,—had, as is shown above, taken place before his death, and it was to the elder, Anne, the wife of Sir John Townshend, Knight, that he bequeathed the house and property at Stiffkey.

¹ Masters' *History of Corpus Christi College*, p. 208, edit. 1753.

² From one of these books the bookplate engraved at the end of the article has been copied.

When Sir Nathaniel placed the inscription in the church in anticipation of his own death, and to preserve the remembrance, as connected with himself, of his three children, Lady Townshend had been a widow some years. Her husband's tragical end in 1603, from wounds received in a duel, left her with two children, the eldest a boy of eight years old. She survived her husband twenty-seven years, and seems to have been successful in the training of her son, whom she lived to see, according to the quaint description given by Fuller some years after,³ a "religious gentleman, expending his soul in piety and charity, and a lover of God, His service and servants." Besides the exercise of these higher qualities, he accomplished other worthy ends in life, and has left behind him certain finished undertakings which afford to the observer of to-day material and visible testimony to his memory.

Among the most interesting and stately of the old houses of Norfolk is that, which—standing slightly elevated above the surrounding park, flanked by large cedars, its grey walls overspread by time with a bloom of warmer colour—was designed by Inigo Jones in 1620; and was enriched a few years later by a collection of full-length portraits, of contemporary date, connected with a central figure of some historical interest, Sir Francis Vere, whose enterprises and successes in the days of Queen Elizabeth were commemorated by a series of likenesses of the soldiers who accompanied him in his expeditions to the Low Countries.

The early morning sun alone illuminates these portraits, which are placed, for the most part, in a room looking east. The three tall windows shed a somewhat demure light upon this gallery of knights, whose

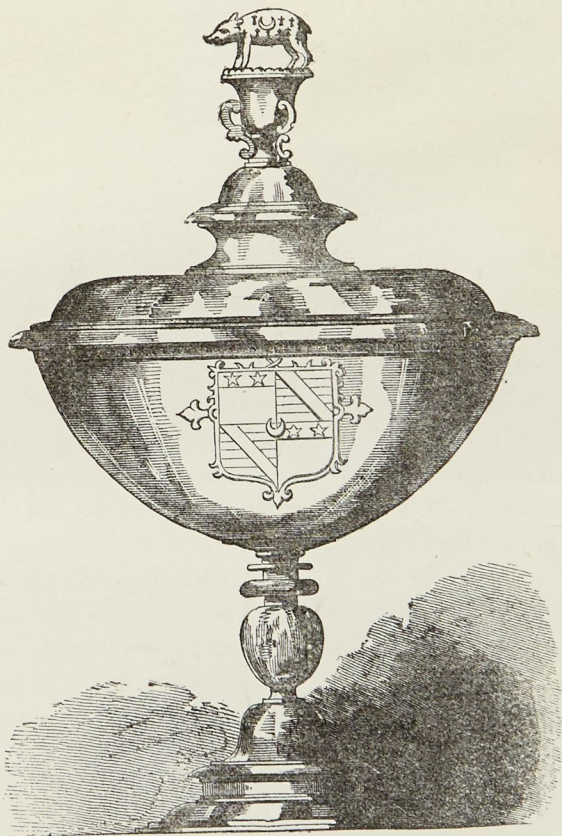
"Bones are dust,
Whose good swords rust,
Whose souls are with the saints, we trust";

but when, towards the end of a summer's day, the opposite

³ Fuller's *Worthies*, vol. ii. p. 152.

door communicating with the hall is thrown open, a beam of afternoon sunshine seems to penetrate into the distant room, startling into light the faces, and gilding with freshness the accoutrements, of the figures which thus keep guard in the long drawing-room at Raynham Hall.

The house is the work, and the pictures the acquisition, of Roger Townshend, the first Baronet of that ancient name, and the grandson, representative, and heir of Sir Nathaniel Bacon of Stiffkey. Anne, Lady Townshend, the last Bacon who possessed Stiffkey, died in 1630, and was buried at Raynham, and the estate, which thus passed 250 years ago into the hands of the Townshends has ever since remained in exclusive connection with that family. From time to time, as the Stiffkey house slowly declined in usefulness and importance, portions of its garniture were removed; a room lined with oak panelling,—arranged originally perhaps to carry out the opinion expressed by Lord Bacon, “music is better in rooms wainscotted than hanged,”—was dismantled to furnish the needs of another abode, where its small squares, delicate champfering, and rich cornice, contrast favorably with later wood-work of the same description. A cup, the material of which had once formed the Great Seal of England, was transferred to Raynham; the inscription on it tells its own story:—“A thyrde bowle made of the Greate Seale of Englande, and left by Syr Nycholas Bacon, Knygt, Lorde Keeper, as an heyrelome to his howse of Stewkey, 1574.” The cup is of silver-gilt, eleven inches in height, an elegantly shaped bowl on a pedestal; the lid with the motto, “Mediocria firma,” engraved upon it, and surmounted by the Bacon crest; the coat of arms of Sir Nicholas Bacon placed on one side of the bowl. The metal of which this cup was composed must have been that of the Great Seal of Philip and Mary, since no other great seal was broken up during the life of Sir Nicholas Bacon.



THE BACON CUP.

In the article on "English Seals" (by Mr. W. de G. Birch of the British Museum) in the *English Cyclopædia*,—where an interesting account is given of the custom of breaking with a hammer the seal of the previous reign on the accession of a sovereign, or as soon after that event as a new seal could be prepared,—a tabular synopsis is arranged of the Great Seals of English Sovereigns, from which it appears that the seal of Queen Mary, made in 1556, after her marriage, was the one in use at the time of her death; that Elizabeth's first seal was produced in 1559, and was used until 1585, when she adopted a second one, which remained until her death in 1603.⁴ On the death of Mary, Lord Chancellor Heath delivered the Great Seal to Elizabeth the day after her accession, November 18th, 1558, who, receiving it into her hand, ordered it to be placed in her private chamber until her appointment of a Lord Chancellor. She delivered it to Sir Nicholas Bacon on the 22nd of December, 1558, who used it until January 25th, 1559, when it was broken with the usual ceremonies, and the new seal of Elizabeth adopted.⁵ Sir Nicholas Bacon died in 1579, six years before this first seal of Queen Elizabeth, which was in use twenty-six years, was destroyed.

The date then of the seal, or rather seals, of which this cup is made—for a great seal was a double instrument, each half with its own handle, and engraved respectively with a design of the royal figure and arms—was 1556. Its associations are of rather a lurid character; a dim reflection of the blood and fire of Mary's reign tinges it; until the genial Lord Keeper, in the dawning light of happier times, to break the spell, changed it, by a stroke of his conjuring hammer, into the peaceful wine cup of succeeding days.

Lord Campbell, in his "Life of Sir Nicholas Bacon,"

⁴ *English Cyclopædia*. "Arts and Sciences" (1873) Supplement, p. 1890.

⁵ Close Roll, 1 Elizabeth, part xii. memb. 20.

gives an account of the breaking of this great seal, and in the Close Roll, 1 Elizabeth, details are given of this occurrence.⁶

⁶ The following extract from the original document has been furnished by the kindness of Sir T. Duffus Hardy, D.C.L., Deputy Keeper of the Records.

Close Roll, 1 Elizabeth, part xii. memb. 20.

De deliberatione Magni Sigilli in manus Reginae. } Memorandum quod die Veneris xviii. die Novembris anno primo dominæ Elizabethæ Reginae eadem domina Regina existens apud Hatfeld Regia in Comitatu Hertford' in domo ejusdem dominæ Reginae ibidem inter horas decimam et undecimam ante meridiem ejusdem diei in camera præsentia, tunc et ibidem præsentibus Edwardo Comite Derbiæ, &c. ac aliis magnum sigillum Angliæ in custodia Reverendissimi in Christo patris Nicholai Archiepiscopi Eborum adtunc Cancellarius Angliæ existens in præsentia prædicta præfatæ dominæ Reginae per præfatum Reverendissimum patrem deliberatum erat ac eadem domina Regina magnum sigillum prædictum de manibus prædicti Reverendissimi patris accipiens Ambrosio Cave militi deliberabat ac præfatus Ambrosius Cave miles per mandatum ipsius dominæ Reginae magnum sigillum prædictum in privatam cameram præfatæ dominæ Reginae secum ferebat ibidem per præfatam dominam Regiam custodiendum quousque eadem domina Regina aliter duxerit deliberandum.

De deliberatione ejusdem Sigilli Nicholao Bacon armigero. } Et postea videlicet die Iovis xxii. die Decembris anno primo supradicto magnum sigillum prædictum in custodia præfatæ dominæ Reginae sic existens apud Somerset place extra barras novi Templi inter horas decimam et undecimam ante meridiem ejusdem diei præfata domina Regina existens in interiore camera privata ejusdem domus idem magnum sigillum e бага de velveto rubro ac alia бага de corio extractum, ac ibidem in manibus dictæ dominæ Reginae retentum, In nobilium ac Egregiorum virorum Willielmi Marchionis Wintoniæ Thesaurarii Angliæ Henrici Comitis Arrundell' domini Senescalli Hospicii dictæ dominæ Reginae Francisci Comitis Bedford' Willielmi Comitis Pembroch' Edwardi domini Clynton magni Admiralli Angliæ Willielmi domini Howard de Effingham Camerarii Hospicii sui Willielmi Cicell militis primarii Secretarii sui Ambrosii Cave militis Nicholai Bacon Armigeri Thomæ Powle Contrarotulatoris Hanaperii Cancellariæ suæ et aliorum præfato Nicholao Bacon Armigero Custodiendum utendum et exercendum tradidit et liberavit, Ipsumque Nicholaum Bacon Custodem magni sigilli sui Angliæ adtunc et ibidem fecit ordinavit et

The seal, the impression of which is six inches in diameter, is engraved in Speed's *Historie of Great Britaine*, 1632, and also in Sandford's *Genealogical History of the Kings and Queens of England*, 1707. The figures of Philip and Mary,

constituit Et superinde præfatus Nicholaus Bacon sigillum prædictum de manibus dictæ dominæ Reginae gratulanter accipiens quoddam breve de convocationis summonitione ibidem sigillari mandavit, deinde sigillum illud in bagas prædictas iterum reponi et sigillo suo proprio munire fecit ac curam et custodiam ejusdem magni sigilli durante beneplacito dictæ dominæ Reginae super se assumpsit, ac penes se retinuit et retinet in præsentia.

*De cancellatione dicti Sigilli et
deliberatione alterius novi Sigilli
pro magno Sigillo Angliæ ordinati.*

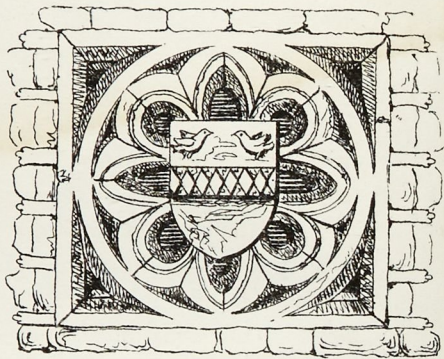
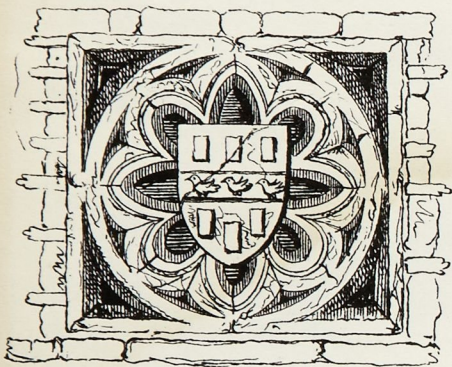
} Memorandum quod die Jovis, videlicet,
vicesimo sexto die Januarii anno
regni dominæ Elisabethæ Reginae
primo Egregius vir Nicholaus Bacon

miles custos magni Sigilli Angliæ a prænobili viro Henrico Comite Arundell' Senescallo Hospicii dictæ Reginae necnon egregiis viris Thome Parry milite Thesaurario Hospicii dictæ Reginae ac Willielmo Cicell Principali Secretario ejusdem Reginae comitatus ad præfatam Reginam apud Palacium suum de Westmonasterio in interiori privata camera sua infra Palatium prædictum existentem circiter horam sextam post meridiem ejusdem diei accessit secum deferens magnum sigillum dictæ dominæ Reginae imaginibus Philippi et Mariae nuper Regis et Reginae Angliæ insculptum in custodia dicti Nicholai Bacon militis adtunc existens ac idem Nicholaus adtunc et ibidem in præsentia Nobilium virorum prædictorum ac etiam in præsentia nobilis viri domini Roberti Dudley Magistri Equorum dictæ Reginae ac quorundam aliorum sigillum prædictum eidem Reginae obtulit et deliberavit Ipsaque sigillum prædictum aquo animo a præfato Nicholao adtunc et ibidem recipiens illud dirumpi frangi et quassari mandavit ac superinde dictus Nicholaus sigillum prædictum e camera prædicta in exteriorem privatam cameram dictæ Reginae portavit et illud in præsentia Edmundi Marten Armigeri Clerici Coronæ Cancellariæ dictæ Reginae Thomæ Cotton Armigeri deputati Clerici Hanaperii Cancellariæ prædictæ Thomæ Thomson deputati Contrarotulatoris Hanaperii prædicti Johannis Everton Spigurnelli sive sigillatoris dictæ Cancellariæ necnon Edmundi Daye Officiarii Ceræ ac quorundam aliorum ad mandatum Regium prædictum dirumpi frangi et quassari causavit, Eoque peracto dictus Nicholaus adtunc et ibidem quoddam aliud sigillum imagine armis et titulis honorum dictæ Reginae tantummodo insculptum ac pro magno sigillo dictæ Reginae Angliæ noviter ordinatum et fabricatum quod tunc in præsentia habuit in medium profert, ac quoddam breve de die clausit extremum cum eodem novo sigillo

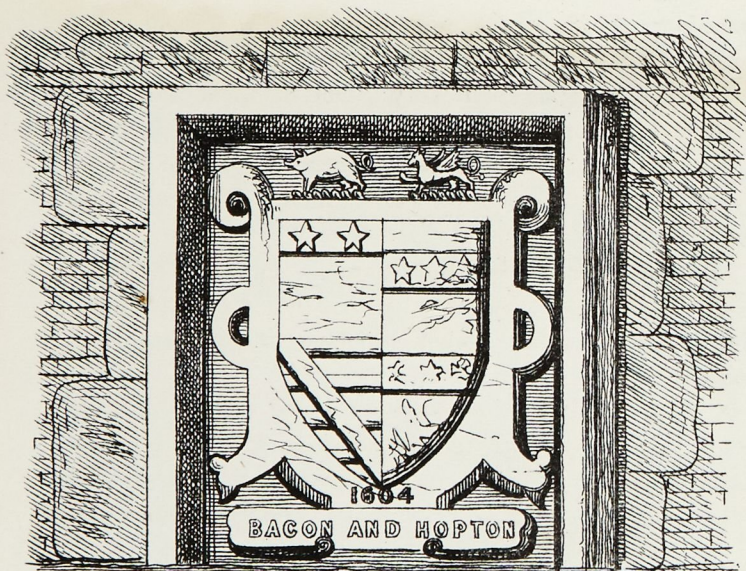
on horseback, form the design on one side, whilst the other represents them seated, crowned, with the Royal arms between them. Thus the silver cup which now forms one of the curiosities of Norfolk, the gift of Sir Nicholas Bacon to his son at Stiffkey, where no doubt it was the pride of the old hall, brings down to us, not only a memory and expression of the tyranny of Mary, the bigotry of Philip, the wisdom of Elizabeth and her advisers, but bears actually on its surface the touch of the royal fingers, and transmits a lingering atmosphere of the royal chamber; supplying us with a palpable link connecting our time and county with the public interests and the bodily presence of the "Great Lady of the greatest Isle," "the most royal Queene, renowned for piety, virtue, and all gracious government."

But long before the light of Elizabeth, "like Phœbus' lamp throughout the world did shine," and before that remote speck in her dominions had received a ray of illumination from its connection with her times, Stiffkey had its share of "simple annals," "destinies obscure," and dim biographies, and some record is discoverable of the earlier inhabitants and possessors of the sea-bound village.

sigillari fecit Et deinde ad præfatam Reginam in interiorem privatam cameram prædictam rediit deferens secum tam quassatum sigillum prædictum quam alterum illud novum unacum brevi prædicto in forma prædicta sigillatum ac ea eidem dominæ Reginæ videri et considerari deliberavit, Quibus visis intellectis et consideratis dicta Regina prædictum novum sigillum eidem Nicholao Custodi magni sigilli Angliæ pro magno sigillo dictæ Reginæ Angliæ utendum et exercendum in præsentia nobilium virorum prædictorum adtunc et ibidem commisit tradidit et redeliberavit Ipseque prædictum novum sigillum de dicta Regina adtunc et ibidem in præsentia eorundem nobilium virorum gratulanter recipiens in exteriorem cameram prædictam recessit ac illud in præsentia prædictorum Edmundi Marten Thomæ Cotton Thomæ Thomson Johannis Everton et Edmundi Daie adtunc in dicta exteriori privata camera existentium ac adventum dicti Nicholai expectantes in quendam perulam de corio poni et sigillo suo proprio muniri et sigillari fecit ac sic munitum et sigillatum in quendam sacculum velveti rubri insigniis regiis decoratum posuit, illudque penes se retinuit et retinet.



ARMS ON THE PORCH OF STIFFKEY CHURCH.



C.R.J.

ARMS ON THE GATEHOUSE STIFFKEY.

A curious parallel to the story of Sir Nathaniel Bacon and his three daughters appears some 250 years earlier, when a similar circumstance occurred in the place, and to the owner of the very same property; a member of a family who for some centuries lived at Stiffkey, the Irminglands, dying also without a son, and leaving three daughters, on whom the manor devolved. One of these daughters married a Daubeney, and the arms of Irmingland, and Daubeney not impaled, but on separate shields, carved in stone, very clearly and boldly, set in squares of ornamental masonry, are placed on the porch, in the spandrils of the entrance arch. The arms of Irmingland are,⁷ Argent on a fesse between six billets gules, three Cornish choughs: those of Daubeney, Gules, a fesse fusilly, argent and two martlets in chief.

The Irminglands came originally from a place of that name near Aylsham, "a numerous family which continued long at Irmingland, and had land."⁸ They sold their manor, and moved to Stiffkey in 1327. One of them, Margaret, sister and heir of John, who was rector of Stivekey in 1408, married Richard Calthorp; a monument, which was noticed by Weever in the church, shows another marriage with the Calthorpes.

"In the north side of this church," (miscalled Stiskey,) "John Calthorpe, Esq., and Alice Irmingland, his wife; the monument defaced, upon which are their portraits in coat armor."⁹

Stiffkey in 1491 ceased to be connected with the Irminglands, and, passing through the hands of the Wynters, was for a time the property of Sir William Fermor, that "illustrious" and "mighty knight," who, as narrated by

⁷ The arms are given in Glover's *Ordinary*, Ermingland or Ermyngland, Norfolk.

⁸ Blomefield, vol. vi. page 320.

⁹ Weever's *Funeral Monuments*, page 548, edit. 1767.

Sir Henry Spelman, "built the house" at East Barsham called Wolterton Manor House, which, rising antequely from the valley meadows, with picturesque and varied outline, elegant decoration of moulded brickwork, and turretted gatehouse enriched with royal arms, attests the taste and affluence of its earliest owner. He appears to have paid a tribute to two kings, the arms on the entrance door being flanked by the supporters of Henry the VII.,¹ whilst those on the gatehouse display the lion and dragon of his successor.²

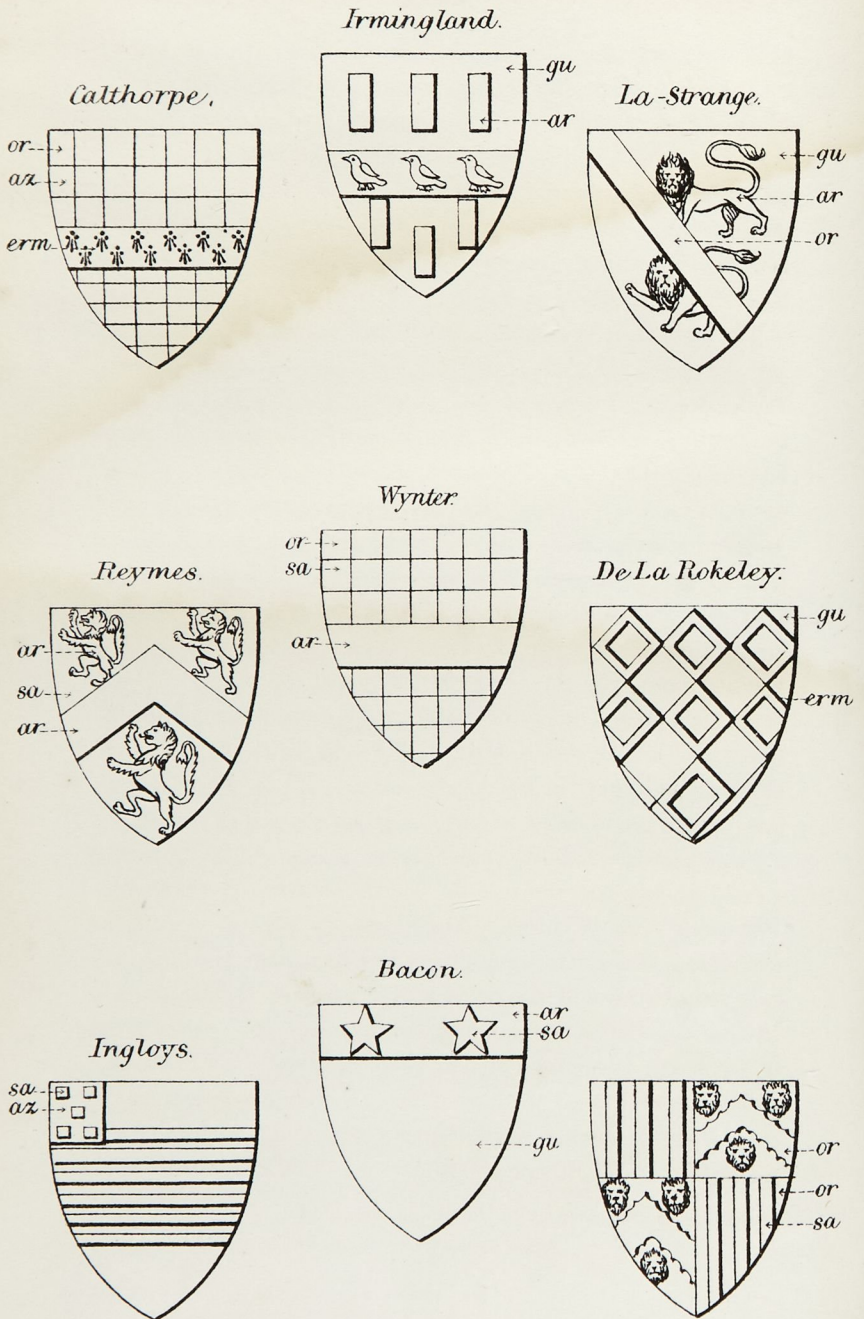
Stiffkey again changed possessors once or twice before becoming the property of the Bacons, and the memory of the families who were connected with the place was kept up, as was so often the case, by the presence of their coats of arms in the church. These shields, nine in number, are no longer visible; but are enumerated by Blomefield. They were those, partly, of the successive owners, and the families with whom they intermarried, up to the time of Sir Nathaniel Bacon; and it is therefore probable, since the arms of no later owner are inserted, that they were placed in the church by him.

The heraldic page, therefore, which presents itself at Stiffkey,—the "writing on the wall,"—consists of, first, the nine shields which have already been described, namely,

¹ Greyhound and griffin or dragon.

² Some uncertainty attaches to the date of this house. Sir William Fermor, who is said by Sir Henry Spelman to have built it, inherited the property in 1534 from his father, Sir Henry Fermor. The assertion of Spelman; the date on the window in the hall, 1538, mentioned by Blomefield; and the same date given by other authorities as the probable one; the arms of Henry VIII. on the gatehouse,—would all seem to identify it with Sir William Fermor. Mr. Kerr, the author of *The English Gentleman's House*, where he gives a plan of the Mansion at East Barsham, places it (page 47) in the list of sixteenth-century houses, although he remarks (page 41) that the arrangement is characteristic of an earlier date, and asserts that it has been assigned to the last years of the previous century.

ARMS IN THE CHURCH, STIFFKEY, BEFORE THE ALTERATIONS OF THE ROOF.



the arms carved upon the gateway of the house, the six on the tomb of Sir Nathaniel Bacon, and those on the porch of the church; all of which remain in fair preservation,—and that other nine, which have long ceased to yield either the information or the ornament which they were once intended to afford; the welcome morsels of vivid colour being as effectually reduced to dust as the individuals whom they represented.

The coats of arms were, those of Irmingland, Calthorpe, Le Strange, Wynter, Reymes, de la Rokeley, Bacon, Inglois, and the following shield—Or, three pallets sable, quartering, argent, a chevron engrailed between three leopards' heads or. The word argent is probably a mistake or misprint, and the shield intended may be that of Wilford—Gules, a chevron engrailed between three leopards' heads or. These arms are on a portrait at Costessey Hall, with the name, Sir Jacob Wilford, 1547. Barsham of Norfolk bore, Or, three pallets gules; several names have been attributed to the arms, Or, three pallets sable.³

The arms of Inglois occur in many churches in Norfolk; the name of Reymes was well-known in Norfolk; a branch of the Essex family of whom, according to M. Planché, traces are perpetually to be found among the relics of the Anglo-Norman nobility; the reason of the "relic" of this race in Stiffkey church being an alliance between the Reymes's and Wynters. The other shields were, with the exception of Le Strange, de la Rokeley, and the last one mentioned, those of the owners of the manor. The church, besides the Bacon monuments, contains now no special point of interest; it consists of a nave and chancel; at the south-east and north-west corners of the nave an octagon turret of some height; and a north porch of the fifteenth century, decorated with mosaic of flint-work, and with the arms of Irmingland and d'Aubeney, as before described. Of

³ Athol, Bewley, Farley, Ayrlie.

the companion church no traces remain above-ground, although there are indications of foundations in the vicinity of the present church. The situation, unless excavations were made, can only be surmised; but light is thrown upon the existence of the actual building, traditionally recognized, and upon the date of its disuse, by some of the old Stiffkey wills preserved in the Court of Probate at Norwich, where mention is made of these two churches. From the will of Edward Lecke of Styvekey St. John, dated May, 1489, it appears that he gave legacies to the high altar of St. John, and to the high altar of St. Mary's, and legacies for the "amendment of the bells" in St. John's Church, and for the "amendment of the bells" in St. Mary's.

Margaret Branch of Styvekey, widow, by will dated February, 1490, directs to be buried in the chancel of St. John's Church; in 1546, Alice Greve, widow, gives sixpence to each of the high altars of St. Mary and St. John; in 1552, John Framyngham of Stiffkey St. John, directed his body to be buried where it should please his executors; gives to the parson of St. John's, "my curat," 6s. 8d.,—to the parson of St. Mary's, 6s. 8d.; in 1557, Robert Sherryngam of Stiffkey, labourer, desires to be buried in the churchyard of St. Mary's; in 1558, Henry Howman of Stewque, directs his body to be buried "in the churchyard" of Stewque, and gives to "Stewque Church" 10d. The subsequent wills do not mention the Church of St. John Baptist, and Blomefield, who asserts the fact of the two churches,⁴ the ruins perhaps standing in his day, gives the double list of Rectors up to the year 1559, after which one individual only is recorded as holding the two benefices.

In the *East Anglian*,⁵ vol. ii. page 225, an extract is

⁴ Blomefield's *Norfolk*, 8vo. edition, vol. ix. p. 253.

⁵ Edited by Mr. J. L'Estrange, who has supplied the substance of the information afforded by the above wills.

given from the certificates for the Norwich Archdeaconry; the particular certificate quoted being undated, but of which the mention of Nathaniel Bacon (before his knighthood in 1604) determines the period. It is as follows:—"A true certificate of such churches and chancells which are notoriously ruinated and decaied within the Archdeaconrie of Norwich, and by whose means, default, and necligence they have been so ruinated and decaied, so far forth as canne be presentlie learned according to comandement given by the right reverend ffather in God Will^m by God's providence the now lord bishop of Norwich in that behalf. D Walsingham, Stifkey. In the saide towne wer two churches in tymes past, one of them whollie ruynated and pfaned. M. Nathaniel Bacon is lord and patron thereof, the other church is verie sufficientlie repaired and maintayned by the prishners wth all ornaments belonging to the same."

Two church steeples then, had, up to some twenty years before Sir Nicholas Bacon was lord and patron of Stiffkey, overshadowed the humble mounds where "the rude forefathers of the hamlet" slept to the sound of the waves, and, from their guardian walls, two sets of bells rang out their magic duet to dispel, according to the old belief, the fury of the rising gale,—a pardonable superstition in the vicinity of that stormy and dangerous coast; or announced, from time to time, to his wondering dependants, the news of those foreign victories in which Sir Walter Manny, one of the heroes of Froissart, and who for several years possessed this manor, took so prominent a part.

The story of Stiffkey, which includes this early association, lingers on until the disappearance of the last "Bacon" from the scene,—when all connection with recorded events and personages ceases, and the place, yielding nothing further of family or public interest, becomes one only in that series of illustrations of the past, durable and suggestive, of which Norfolk possesses its share in common with the rest of this



*N. Bacon eques auratus & magni
sigilli Angliae Custos librum hunc bi-
bliothecae Cantabrig. dicauit*

1574.

country, whose comparative freedom from foreign invasion, and the destruction which accompanies it, has permitted so many a secluded English village to offer still its contribution of historical evidence, or its memorial of human skill and life long passed away.