



ST ALBANS & HERTFORDSHIRE
Architectural & Archaeological Society

We are grateful to Lord Verulam for his permission for this digitised copy of the following article to be published.

February 2013

Gorhambury: 1561—1652.

BY H. M. M. LANE, B.A.

“The true movement of English thought for the next century was born amid the gardens of Gorhambury.”

Francis Bacon: A Biography, by M. STURT.

A CHAPTER in the history of Gorhambury and St. Albans ended when the last Abbot, Richard Boreham of Stevenage, and his thirty-eight monks surrendered their monastery at St. Albans with its possessions to Henry VIII on December 5th, 1539. For Gorhambury it had been a comparatively short one, as barely a century and a half had passed since Abbot Thomas de la Mare had recovered it for the monastery after it had been in lay hands for nearly three hundred years. The Hail, built by Abbot Geoffrey de Gorham in the first half of the twelfth century, before its alienation from the monastery, seems still to have been in existence, as an inventory of the “stuff” in the house is mentioned in a mid-sixteenth century will.¹

For St. Albans the chapter had been lengthy, as the town had grown up on the lands granted to the monastery by its founder, King Offa of Mercia, at the end of the eighth century. The town had so prospered under the rule of the monks that the inhabitants, ever since the thirteenth century, and perhaps earlier, had been desirous of self rule, and vainly risked their lives more than once for this end. Fourteen years after the dissolution of the monastery their wish was at length realised when, on May 12th, 1553, Edward VI granted them a charter establishing the town as a borough governed by a Mayor and Corporation, having as officials a steward, a chamberlain, a clerk of the market and two sergeants of the mace. Probably they owed this long desired privilege to the fact that among those who

¹ *Herts Genealogist and Antiquary*, edited by W. Brigg, Vol. II, p. 125.

acquired portions of the Abbey lands were men of influence at Court; such as Sir Richard Lee, the celebrated military engineer of Henry VIII; Sir Thomas Wendy, physician to Henry VIII, Edward VI and Mary; and Richard Raynshaw, sergeant-at-arms to Henry VIII. Sir Thomas Wendy was one of the representatives of St. Albans in the parliament of 1554. Sir Richard Lee did much to improve his property, and built his house at Sopwell, the ruins of which can still be seen. Childwick was obtained by Sir William Cavendish, the builder of Chatsworth.

Gorhambury Manor was bought by Ralph Rowlett, goldsmith and merchant of the Staple at Calais. He built himself a house at the foot of Holywell Hill. This was destined to shelter the Princess Elizabeth on her journey from Ashridge to London, when summoned to Court on suspicion that she had been implicated in Wyatt's Plot against her sister, Queen Mary; and later to be incorporated into the house, John Churchill, later Duke of Marlborough, built for his wife Sarah, a descendant of its original owner. His son, Sir Ralph Rowlett, though twice married, had no children, and in 1561 sold the Gorhambury estate to Sir Nicholas Bacon, Lord Keeper of the Great Seal, whose second wife, Anne, was the second daughter of Sir Anthony Cooke, tutor to Edward VI, and celebrated for her learning.

If the record in Mr. G. Ballard's *Learned Ladies*, published in 1752, is correct,² Sir Ralph and Sir Nicholas were brothers-in-law, as Sir Ralph is said to have married Margaret, the youngest daughter of Sir Anthony Cooke, the same day as her sister Elizabeth married Sir Thomas Hoby. If this were so, she was his second wife, and possibly died a few weeks after her wedding day of June 27th, 1558, as she is said to have been buried in the parish church of St. Mary Staining on August 3rd of that year.² Sir Ralph, in his will dated July, 1566, directs that the bodies of his dear and beloved wives Dorothe and Margaret, which lie buried

² *Strype's Ecclesiastical Memorials*, Vol. III, part II, pp. 22, 125. It is possible that the date of December, 1557, which puzzled Strype refers to the burial of the first wife of Sir Ralph Rowlett. A statement of Sir Thomas Hoby's printed in the *Camden Miscellany*, Vol. X, p. 127, shows that the record is correct.



Copyright reserved. SIR NICHOLAS BACON, LORD KEEPER.
(From the terra-cotta bust at Gorhambury.)

in the parish church of St. Mary Staining in London, shall be re-buried in Sandridge Church within a year of his death.³

Lady Bacon's eldest sister, Mildred, was Sir William Cecil's second wife, marrying him a year after Henry VIII had appointed her father to superintend Prince Edward's studies, Sir John Cheke, brother of Sir William's first wife, being his classical tutor. Of her Roger Ascham wrote to his friend Sturmius in 1550:—"But there are two English ladies whom I cannot omit to mention . . . One is Jane Grey . . . the other Mildred Cooke, who understands and speaks Greek like English, so that it may be doubted whether she is most happy in the possession of this surpassing degree of knowledge, or in having for her preceptor and father Sir Anthony Cooke, whose singular erudition caused him to be joined with John Cheke in the office of tutor to the King; or finally in having become the wife of William Cecil, lately appointed Secretary of State: a young man indeed, but mature in wisdom and deeply skilled both in letters and affairs."⁴

But Lady Bacon was equally learned, and did not allow her marriage to check her studies. When her younger son, Francis, was a year old, a defence of the changes in the Church of England was published by Bishop Jewel in Latin, that it might be read throughout Europe. Lady Bacon, a passionate adherent of the Reformation, translated it into English, and sent a copy both to the author and to the Archbishop of Canterbury, Matthew Parker, a contemporary of her husband at Cambridge. The Archbishop sent her the printed translation in 1564, neither he nor the author having found occasion to make any alteration, "no, not the least word." Neither the name of the author nor the translator appeared on the title page, but the book was prefaced by a letter of appreciation: "To the right honourable, learned and vertuous Ladie A.B., M.C.⁵ wisheth from God, grace, honour and felicitie." On a Visitation in the Diocese of Norwich the Archbishop urged the Bishop to see that a copy of the

³ *Herts Genealogist*, Vol. II, pp. 185, 186.

⁴ *The Great Lord Burghley*, by Martin Hume, p. 13, note.

⁵ M.C. stands for Matthew Cantuar.

translation of the Apology was placed in every church of the Diocese. Lady Bacon's translation is still in use. Fourteen years before she had translated twenty-five sermons of Bernardine Ochine from the Italian originals. In this case the title page recorded that the translation was the work of a "young Lady."

Neither Sir William Cecil nor Sir Nicholas Bacon, the chief mainstays of Queen Elizabeth's early years of rule, belonged to the ruling classes, though both belonged to families who had the right to bear arms. Cecil's father and grandfather, however, had held positions of trust in the household of Henry VIII, and his grandfather also in that of Henry VII, and his family had much property in the neighbourhood of Stamford. His mother was heir to a Lincolnshire family, and Cecil was born in her father's house at Bourne.

The numerous branches of the Bacon family are said to be descended from Grimhild, who came to England from Normandy in 1066, and settled at Letheringsett, near Holt, in Norfolk. Later, members of the family settled at Bradfield St. George and Hessett, Suffolk villages near Bury St. Edmunds. The Hessett family had arms granted to them on May 9th, 1514. Little is known of Robert Bacon of Drinkstone, the father of Sir Nicholas, save that he belonged to the Hessett branch of the Bacon family, some of whom the subsidy rolls show to have been men of substantial means. He and his wife Isabel, daughter of John Cage of Pakenham, are both buried at Hessett. Sir Nicholas was born in Kent, at Chislehurst, the native place of Sir Francis Walsingham, father-in-law of Sir Philip Sidney. He was the second son; both his brothers were citizens and merchants of London. Thomas, the elder, who settled in Northaw, was a member of the Company of Salters, and the youngest, James,⁶ of that of the Fishmongers. James was elected an alderman in 1567, and served as Sheriff in 1568, but died in 1573, before

⁶ *Machyn's Diary* has the following entry in 1562. "The 20th day of April was married in the parish of St. Dunstan's in the East, Master Bacun's daughter the Salter, and brother unto my Lord Keeper of the Seal of England; and there was a great wedding; and after the marriage done, home to dinner, for there dined my Lord Keeper and most of the Council, and many ladies and many of the Queen's maids gorgeously apparelled, and great cheer."

reaching the dignity of serving as Lord Mayor. The two daughters of the family married citizens of Bury St. Edmunds—Barbara being the wife of Robert Sharp, and Anne of Robert Blackman.⁷

Both Sir William Cecil and Sir Nicholas Bacon studied several years at Cambridge, and then studied law at Gray's Inn, but they were not contemporaries, as when Cecil entered St. John's College in 1535, Sir Nicholas had been called to the bar two years, and was shortly to be recommended by Archbishop Cranmer to Cromwell, Henry's minister, as a good candidate for the vacant post of Town Clerk of Calais. Cranmer described him as of "such towardness in the law and of so good judgment touching Christ's religion that in that stead he should be able to do God and the King right acceptable service." Cromwell, however, did not recommend him for the post, but in 1557 he was appointed Solicitor in the Court of Augmentations, the Court which dealt with the property surrendered to the Crown by the monasteries.

His work appears to have been varied. In 1559 he claimed for the expenses of seven horses for fourteen days, when he was sent to survey the lordship of the Collegiate Church of Southwell and certain commanderies held by it in Lincolnshire and Yorkshire. The next year he served with Sir Richard Gresham, the King's chief financial agent on the continent, and Sir Anthony Cooke, of Gidea Hall, as a Commissioner of Sewers in Essex. A year before the death of Henry VIII he became the Attorney of the Court of Wards, a post which, in spite of the vicissitudes of the times, he retained through the reigns of Edward VI and Mary.

Soon after obtaining the post of Solicitor in the Court of Augmentations, Sir Nicholas must have married. Stowe records in his *Survey of London* that he lived in Noble Street, Foster Lane, in Aldersgate Ward, in a house that was known as Shelley House from its owner in the reign of Henry IV, but, when rebuilt by Sir Nicholas, was known as Bacon House. Jane, his

⁷ Item. "I geve to Roberte Blackman my nephewe all my intereste in the lease of the meadowes and groundes at Hame." *Extract from the will of Sir Nicholas Bacon.*

first wife, like himself, belonged to a Suffolk family; her mother being Agnes Daundy, of Ipswich, and her father William Fernley, of West Creting, but also a citizen and mercer of London. Sir Nicholas and Jane Fernley had six children, three sons and three daughters. Aubrey records in his *Brief Lives* that Blundevill's well known Exercises in Arithmetic were first planned for that "vertuous gentlewoman," Mistress Elizabeth Bacon, the daughter of Sir Nicholas Bacon. Elizabeth's first husband was Sir Robert D'Oyly, of Chiselhampton, in Oxon. Later she married a judge. Anne, the eldest daughter, was the first wife of Sir Henry Woodhouse, of Waxham, Norfolk. The middle daughter, Jane, married Sir Francis Wyndham, a member of a Norfolk family. The three sons, Nicholas, Nathaniel, and Edward went to Trinity College, Cambridge, when Edward was twelve, and later were students at Gray's Inn. All three sons married heiresses. Nicholas, who inherited Redgrave Hall, married Anne, grand-daughter of Sir William Butts, physician to Henry VIII. She not only inherited the Butts estates, but also those of the Bures, her mother's family. Hence it was possible to provide liberally for their large family of seven sons and three daughters, and in 1591 to build Culford Hall, finally settled on their youngest son Sir Nathaniel, the painter. Nathaniel, the second son, married Anne, daughter of the wealthy Sir Thomas Gresham, and step-daughter of his aunt, Anne Fernley, Lady Gresham. The Stiffkey estates, bought in 1571, were left to him by his father. They passed in the next generation to the Townshends of Rainham by the marriage of the eldest daughter, Anne, to Sir John Townshend. Edward, the third son, married the heiress, Helen Litell, a grand-daughter of Sir Thomas Lytton of Knebworth. They settled at Shrubland Hall, not far from Ipswich, though for a time they also lived at Twickenham Park. Their descendants retained possession of Shrubland Hall until 1795. All three sons were knighted; the eldest by Queen Elizabeth the August before his father's death. They all served as Sheriffs of Norfolk or Suffolk, and were frequently elected as Members of Parliament.

Sir Nicholas's large purchases of monastic property,

chiefly of manors which had belonged to the monastery of Bury St. Edmund, show his growing prosperity. The purse of his father-in-law seems to have been at his disposal in case of temporary need. But more important factors in his career were probably the intimacies which were largely the result of two marriages towards the end of the reign of Henry VIII—those of Sir William Cecil and Sir Thomas Gresham. It was probably Cecil's appreciation of his brother-in-law's wisdom and integrity that led Queen Elizabeth to appoint Sir Nicholas as Lord Keeper. She may also have been influenced by Sir Thomas Gresham, the financial agent of her government abroad. He also was a brother-in-law, for he was the second husband of Anne, the elder sister of Jane, the first wife of Sir Nicholas. Like Cecil and Bacon, Sir Thomas Gresham had been educated at Cambridge, and then become a member of Gray's Inn. He was the government's financial agent on the continent in the reigns of Edward VI and Mary. Of strong Protestant sympathies, he lost this office on Mary's accession, but the consequences were so disastrous she was compelled to reinstate him. He was a friend of Cecil's, who visited him at his house in Antwerp in Mary's reign. The early death of the nephew of Sir Nicholas in 1564, the only son of Sir Thomas, seems to have led Sir Thomas to devote his fortune largely to the public service, for it was after this loss that he undertook to carry out his father's project and built the Royal Exchange at his own cost, the Merchant Companies of London bearing the heavy expense of the site. Sir Nicholas Bacon, as a member of the Privy Council in Elizabeth's reign, probably owed much to his knowledge of City opinion which this connection would increase.

One use Sir Nicholas Bacon made of his prosperity was to build a country mansion for himself. For this he chose a pleasant site at Redgrave, just beyond Botesdale, fifteen miles north of Bury St. Edmund's, and ninety miles ride from London. He cannot have lacked horse exercise in the nine years it took to complete the house, for he seems to have made most of the bargains with the men employed himself, though for some time his cousin John Bacon acted as his general

superintendent. Begun two years before Henry VIII's death, it was finished about the time of Queen Mary's marriage to Philip II of Spain. The total cost of Redgrave Hall is given as £1,461 15s. 11d. Before this work was finished Sir Nicholas was able to use his newly gained experience for the benefit of Gray's Inn, as the Hall there was rebuilt between 1553 and 1560, during which years he was the Treasurer of the Inn, and supervised the work of rebuilding.

There is much uncertainty as to the date of the marriage of Sir Nicholas with Anne Cooke, the second of the five learned daughters of Sir Anthony Cooke, Director of the studies of Edward VI. It seems probable that it took place before the accession of Queen Mary in 1553. There is a sudden cessation of the work at Redgrave Hall in 1549, which may have been caused by the death of the first wife of Sir Nicholas, whose youngest son was born in 1548. Miss Strickland, in her account of the events after the death of Edward VI tells how Mary dealt gently with Cecil after the account his sister-in-law, Mrs. Bacon, gave her of how he became involved in the proclamation of Lady Jane Grey as Queen. Miss Strickland adds that Mrs. Bacon was one of the ladies of the Queen's bedchamber. Also among the papers of Sir Nicholas Bacon, preserved at Redgrave Hall until 1920, there is the record of a receipt given to Anne Bacon. "one of the gentlewomen of the Queen's Majesty's most honourable privie chamber in the first year of Philip and Mary."

Sir William Cecil, being out of office in Mary's reign, busied himself in building a second country mansion near Stamford, also about ninety miles from London. He already had a house at Wimbleton as well as his town house, his wife preferring to live retired from the Court. Burleigh House, however, was on a scale only possible to a man who had inherited a large fortune, as Cecil did on his father's death in 1552. He and Sir Nicholas each exchanged visits in their new houses towards the end of Queen Mary's reign. Though of Protestant sympathies, both conformed to Queen Mary's restoration of the ancient rites and ceremonies of the Church, as did their wives and the father of Sir Philip

Sidney, though Sir Anthony Cooke and Sir Francis Walsingham with many others left England rather than do so.

Early in Elizabeth's reign Sir Nicholas, whom the Queen had appointed Lord Keeper of the Great Seal at her accession, in place of the Archbishop of York, probably realized he would find it more convenient to have a country house nearer to London than Redgrave Hall. But his leisure in those perilous first years of Elizabeth's reign must have been scanty, for, like Sir Thomas More and his son Francis, he allowed no arrears of work to accumulate in the Court of Chancery. A poem in his honour, written by G. Whetstone after his death, suggests that his growing unwieldiness of body in his old age was largely due to his diligent attendance at his Court.

“ He spoil'd his legs in sitting over-long
He cloy'd his heart with care for others' ease.”

Also whatever leisure he had would probably be given to planning how best to use the delightful garden running down to the Thames, that must have been one of the chief charms of York House, of which he obtained the lease when he succeeded the Archbishop of York as Lord Keeper.

Towards the end of 1560 Sir Nicholas bought “ a copyhold ferme ” called Playdell's, in the parish of St. Michael's, from Sir Richard Lee, and the next year he bought the manor of Gorhambury from Sir Ralph Rowlett, the eldest son of Ralph Rowlett, the merchant of the Staple at Calais.⁸ The will of Ralph Rowlett, the merchant of the Staple, made in 1543,⁹ has three interesting references to Gorhambury. He left to his younger son, Affabelle, all the store of Gorhambury, that is to say, sheep, beasts, kine, horses, carts, and all the timber and “ selyng boarde and pale ” wholly as it should stand at his death. In addition he gave him all the implements of the house of Gorhambury aforesaid, as shall appear by an inventory thereof to be made by my

⁸ The latest account of the Rowlett family and pedigree is to be found in *Miscellanea Genealogica et Heraldica*, Vol. VIII, Parts 3 and 4. September and December, 1932.

⁹ *Herts Genealogist*, Vol. II, pp. 125, 126.

son Jennyns and my son Skipwith. He also added that all such goods as shall happen to be at Gorhambury that were ordained, used and appointed to be at his house at St. Albans for the apparelling of the same should be delivered to his executors there to remain. Affabelle Rowlett in his will, proved in 1546, gave to his brother Rowlett all his goods, stock and store belonging to his house at Gorhambury. Thus it would appear that in 1546 there was a house at Gorhambury¹⁰ that was still habitable. In a very dry summer it is still possible to discern the site of an older house than that built by Sir Nicholas Bacon. He, however, preferred to start afresh on a new site, and the early rumours of his intention must have been pleasantly exciting news for the frequenters of the St. Albans markets in 1563 to carry home, as Sir Nicholas must have had a reputation as an employer who was both just and generous. About this time Sir William Cecil built his house at Theobalds, which later so delighted King James I that he insisted on exchanging his Hatfield property for it, and Cecil's son, Sir Robert, then built Hatfield House, as the older house was too small for his requirements.

Sir Francis Bacon, writing in 1592, remarks on the passion for building men of wealth showed in Queen Elizabeth's reign. "There was never the like number of fair and stately houses as have been built and set up from the ground since her Majesty's reign. Insomuch that there have been reckoned in one shire that is not great. to the number of three and thirty, which have all been new built within that time and whereof the meanest was never built for £2,000. There was never the like pleasure of goodly gardens and orchards, walks, pools and parks as do adorn almost every mansion house." This passion for building may have been a sixteenth century attempt to stem the growing unemployment, equally a problem then as now, as improved

¹⁰ Burke in the *Seats and Arms of Great Britain*, Vol. II, p. 21, writes:— A very detailed survey of the manor (of Westwick Gorham) and of the house in 1337 is still preserved in a fragment of one of the burnt Cotton MSS. (Tiber. E.VI, ff. 218b, 219, 219b). It then consisted of "a hall with chambers; a chapel, with a chamber; a storied edifice beyond the gate, with a chamber; a kitchen, a bake house, a dairy, a larder, with a certain chamber; a granary, with a chamber for the bailiff; a dwelling for the servants of the manor; two cow-houses, two sheep houses, a pig-stye and gardens."



Copyright reserved.

LADY (ANNE) BACON, MOTHER OF SIR FRANCIS BACON.
(From the terra-cotta bust at Gorhambury.)



Copyright reserved.

SIR FRANCIS BACON.
(From the terra-cotta bust at Gorhambury.)

methods of agriculture in the sixteenth century enabled fewer men to produce better results. Possibly Queen Elizabeth's many visits to the houses of her more wealthy subjects were her private contribution towards the solution of the problem, for with a steadily declining income which Parliament refused to augment, she could only help by indirect action, once she had courageously followed Sir Thomas Gresham's counsel and called in the debased coinage issued by Henry VIII and put good coin into circulation. The size of her famous wardrobe was probably due to the many customary offerings of her subjects on New Year's Day.¹¹

Gorhambury House was built in six years, being completed in 1568, and cost £500 more than Redgrave Hall. Sir Nicholas's moderation, however, did not meet with the Queen's approval, for on her first visit she remarked: "My lord, what a little house you have gotten." His ready wit suggested the wise reply: "Madam, my house is well, but it is you that have made me too great for my house," but he added another wing before the Queen's next visit in 1577, when probably his chief wish was that his son Francis should gain office under the Queen in the future. He seems to have had the artist's delight in creation, for the building of a house at Stiffkey was occupying his mind, when he made his will on December 23rd, 1578, for he left his son, Nathaniel, two hundred pounds for this purpose. It was only completed in 1604. The Cursitor's Office in Chancery was also built by him. The garden at Gorhambury seems to have claimed much of his attention. Sir William Cecil's gardens had a European reputation, and probably slips of his rare plants would be sent by Lady Cecil to her sister Lady Bacon, so that the gardens of Gorhambury would be full of interest as well as beauty. Sir Francis would be seven years old when Gorhambury was finished, and so would experience his father's interest in watching the development of the grounds there.

During the building of Gorhambury, Sir Nicholas, for the only time during his twenty years of office as

¹¹ In 1599 Mr. Francis Bacon's gift to the Queen was "one pettycote of white satin embroidered all over like feathers and billets with 3 brode borders, fair embroidered with snakes and fruitage."

Lord Keeper, fell under the serious displeasure of the Queen. In that year his accounts show a great diminution in the amount spent, which may have been the result of the loss of favour. The cause of his offence was the publication of a book in favour of the claims of the descendants of Mary, Queen Dowager of France and Duchess of Suffolk, to the Crown. He was supposed to have encouraged its publication. Friendship existed between the Cookes and the Greys, for, later, Sir Nicholas Bacon's brother-in-law, William Cooke, married Frances, cousin of Lady Jane Grey. The Queen banished Sir Nicholas from the Privy Council, and only her inability to find anyone willing to be Lord Keeper in his stead prevented her from depriving him of his office. Lady Bacon's help to Cecil in 1553 was now requited by her brother-in-law, for, owing to his good offices Sir Nicholas was restored to favour and was able to retain it till his death in 1579.

Sir Nicholas Bacon showed his interest in St. Albans in several ways. He accepted the office of High Steward of the Liberty of St. Albans, thus compensating the town for the loss of the long experience of public affairs inherited by the Abbey officials. He also took a keen interest in the Grammar School, and was of help in the unemployment problem. St. Albans had possessed a Grammar School from time immemorial, but after the Dissolution changes were needed, even if the school did not close for a time. One of the privileges granted to the Burgesses in the charter of 1553 was the power to erect a Grammar School in the Abbey church or other convenient place in the borough, and the power to receive gifts up to the value of £40 per annum for the endowment of the school. The burgesses bought the Abbey from Sir Richard Lee, and established the Grammar School in the Lady Chapel, cutting it off from the rest of the church; but the problem of the school master's salary had to be solved. In this Sir Nicholas used his influence with the Queen to help them, as when she visited his house in 1570 he persuaded her to grant a charter to the Corporation, allowing them to appoint two persons, who alone had the privilege of selling wine in the town. From the profits of this, £20 yearly was to be paid for the salary of the head master. Later, in

1571, the Mayor and his brethren received a legacy of £100 from Sir Ralph Rowlett "towards the erection of their free school."¹²

Sir Nicholas also drew up the rules under which the school was governed for many years. These are identical with those of the Free School he founded himself at Botesdale, near Redgrave Hall. The year he bought the manor of Gorhambury he obtained a patent from Queen Elizabeth to enable him to found a Free School at Botesdale, but he does not seem to have used this permission until about 1571, possibly not until about 1576. But he had considered the question of education long before. He is said to have gained the approval of Henry VIII by a scheme he and two others drew up for the founding of a college in London, to be maintained by revenues from dissolved monasteries for the training of "Ministers of the State." In 1561, when asked by Cecil to draw up a report on the Court of Wards, of which he had been Attorney, that abuses should be remedied, he pointed out that the sorry education received by the wards of the Court was the greatest, and drew up a proposal for its improvement.¹³

The wards, as the pupils at St. Albans and Botesdale Grammar Schools, were to begin their work for the day at 6 a.m., but in place of school prayers¹⁴ they were to attend Divine Service. Then they were to study Latin till 11. Breakfast is not mentioned, but Gray's Inn

¹² Two provisions in Sir Ralph Rowlett's will are too interesting to omit:—
"My capital messuage called Halywell, and garden and park adjoining and lands called Bradford and Pondwick . . . and tenements in Halywell Street and Sopwell Lane unto Sir Robert Catlyn for life, paying to my nephew Rauff Jennyns and his heirs one red rose at the feast of St. John."
(Sir Robert Catlyn was Lord Chief Justice.)

The Tudor attitude to education is indicated by the following bequest:—
"To Nicholas Judd towards his education in virtue and learning £100."—
Herts Genealogist, II, p. 185.

¹³ *Collier in Archæologia*, XXXVI, p. 339.

¹⁴ At Botesdale Free School the following prayer for the founder was said daily at morning Prayers:—

O Almighty, ever living God who of thine omnipotence didst create mankind, and after of thine infinite mercy did redeem him, grant that amongst the rest of Thy creatures, Sir Nicholas Bacon, Knight, Lord Keeper of the Great Seal of England, the founder of the Free School in Botesdale, and the Lady Anne his wife and their offspring may by the assistance of Thy grace continually keep Thy Commandments during their whole abode here, which if it be Thy will we pray Thee make long, and after this life, grant that, that Thou hast in Thy likeness in the said Sir Nicholas or in any of them wrought may through the multitude of Thy mercies exceeding all Thy works and all their wickedness, enjoy the fruit of their Creation and Redemption for ever.

students had bread and beer, so possibly the wards had this when they rose. Dinner was from 11 to 12. Music was studied from 12 to 2, French from 2 to 3, and Latin and Greek between 3 and 5. Evening prayers followed, and then supper. For this meal Gray's Inn students had bread and cheese and cups of beer. After supper, until 8, they were free for "honest pastimes," and ended the day with music from 8 to 9. When they were 16 years of age they were to study law and also to have military discipline. The St. Albans and Botesdale boys, between All Saints' Day and Candlemas were not required to be at school until 7 a.m. Also, having to return home for dinner, they were allowed a two hours' interval instead of only the hour of the Wards. As they were required to possess in both schools a bow, one bowstring, three arrows and a shooting glove and bracer, they probably had some respite from class lessons during their long afternoon from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. On Saturdays and Holy days school ceased at three o'clock. Sir Nicholas required at Botesdale that all scholars should learn perfectly by heart the articles of the Christian faith, the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, and all such things as concern the Christian faith and religion both in the Latin and the English tongues. He arranged that Saturday afternoon should be set apart for this purpose.

The school at Botesdale seems to have come into being about the same time as Sir Nicholas's rules took effect at St. Albans, though he had not completed the purchase of all the lands upon which he laid a perpetual charge of £30 annually for the salaries of the two masters and the repairs of their two houses and the School House. The changed value of money, not foreseen by Sir Nicholas, made it necessary to close his Free School in 1878. The £30 is still paid, but is now used to provide exhibitions for boys in the Public Elementary Schools of the immediate district. He laid another annual charge of £20 on the same lands to provide scholarships for Botesdale Free School boys at Corpus Christi, Cambridge, where he himself had held a scholarship. Books given by Sir Nicholas are still in the St. Albans' School library. Cambridge University Library, too, has books he gave. Archbishop Parker

never let his friends forget how desirable it was to find rare books for the Universities.

In 1576 Parliament ordered all Justices of the Peace in all corporate and market towns to provide a stock of wool, flax and other materials "to set the poor on work." From the will of Sir Nicholas Bacon it is clear that he had helped to fulfil the duty. He provides that the hundred pounds' stock remaining with the Mayor of St. Albans and his brethren's hands for the setting of the poor on work, be continued in their hands so long as they perform the covenants agreed upon between them and him. Otherwise that his wife or heirs to Gorhambury receive and keep the same. John Thomas, the headmaster of the St. Albans School, left a bequest of £10 in 1595 for this purpose,¹⁵ and the manner of his bequest suggests that he had not been altogether satisfied with the way the Corporation set the poor "on work," showing perhaps that Sir Nicholas's death had been a real loss to the town.

Sir Nicholas's five sons and three daughters all grew up efficient members of the commonwealth, but little is known of their actual education. His two sons by his second marriage were sent to Trinity College together as their older brothers had been, Anthony only being sent when Francis was twelve years old. Neither of Lady Anne's children had good health. Anthony suffered from lameness all his life, and constantly needed medical care. He also was troubled at one time by weak sight. Francis, writing from Trinity College to his brother Nicholas on July 3rd, 1574, adds in a post-script, "My brother had written to you if he by reason of sore eyes had not tarried in London."¹⁶ Francis, when he went to Gray's Inn, was obliged to provide his own diet, being unable to digest the ordinary students' food.

Except Francis, all the sons of Sir Nicholas seem to have gone to Gray's Inn, to study law, when they left Cambridge. But when Francis was sixteen his father sent him to France under the care of Sir Amyas and Lady Paulet, that from the safe vantage ground of the

¹⁵ *Herts Genealogist*, Vol. II, p. 185.

¹⁶ A facsimile of this letter is given in *Catalogue No. 380* (price 1s.) of Messrs. Bernard Quaritch, Ltd., 11, Grafton Street, W.1.

English Embassy he could study life from a new angle. Sir Nicholas himself had visited France after leaving Cambridge, before going to Gray's Inn, and probably realised that a creative brain like his youngest son's needed direct contact with life before further study.

Detailed accounts of Queen Elizabeth's visits to Gorhambury have not survived, but a record of the expenditure of nearly £600 on the occasion of her four days' visit in May, 1577, exists among Anthony Bacon's papers in Lambeth Library. Just over £82 was spent on wine, ale and beer. The meat used cost £183 2s. 2d., and included beef, mutton, veal and lamb, capons, pullets, chickens, geese, herons, bitterns, ducklings, mallards, teals, pigeons, godwits, dotterells, pheasants, partridges, quails, maychicks, larks, curlews and knotts. Bacon, neats' and sheep's tongues, calves' feet, hare and rabbits, butter, eggs, fruit, cream and milk cost £28 12s. 11d., of this £1 13s. 9d. being spent on fruit. Herbs, flowers and artichokes cost £6 15s. 10d., and a good deal over £50 was spent on spices, flour and confectionery. The fish provided cost £36 18s. 6d.¹⁷ The wages of the cooks from London amounted to £12, and the loss of pewter and napery cost £8 16s. There were Revels, and the players were given £20. Francis Bacon was with the English Ambassador in France, or he might have presented a masque, as he so often did later when at Gray's Inn.

This heavy expense may partly account for the fact that at his death, two years later, Sir Nicholas, though he had accumulated money for the purpose, had not yet completed the purchase of an estate for Francis, his youngest son. Gorhambury had possibly been settled on his wife with remainder to Anthony, and the rest of his possessions had been used to provide marriage portions for his three daughters and sons by his first marriage. But Francis, at eighteen, when he was sum-

¹⁷ Among the papers belonging to the Corporation of St. Albans there is one preserving the details of a Sessions Dinner on December 16th, 1579, a few months after the death of Sir Nicholas Bacon. The total amount is just short of £6. The dishes served were veal, beef, legs of mutton, 2 geese, 2 pigs, 2 fat rabbits, 4 capons, partridges, woodcocks, larks, chinepyes, venison pyes, white broth made with eggs, warden pyes, apple tarts. Claret and sack cost 6s., other wine, ale and beer 7s. 7d. Under cooks and turnspits were paid 16d.—Fifth Report of the Royal Commission on Historical MSS., p. 568.

teals, pigeons, godwits, dotterells, pheasants, partridges,

moned home from France on his father's death, received only a portion of the sum his father intended for him, and needed help from his mother and brother till he could carve out a career for himself. Fortunately he and Anthony were the most devoted friends all their lives. Some unpleasantness was caused when Nathaniel Bacon, of Stiffkey, challenged Anthony's right to certain lands expressly left to him, but Lord Burghley, whom Sir Nicholas had appointed as overseer of his will, awarded the lands to Anthony.

Sir Nicholas was buried in the tomb he had prepared at St. Paul's. He had laid an annual charge on his Stiffkey lands to pay for maintaining it in "decent order and cleanliness," as well as a sum to provide for two sermons to be preached there annually. One bequest in his will is specially interesting. "And because I geve no blackes to the riche that have noe neede therefore I geve to the poore¹⁸ that have neede fyve hundredthe marks to be distributed as by a schedule subscribed wythe my hand dothe appear. I will notwithstanding blackes be geven to my householde folkes both at London and Gorhamburie and to all my children, their husbands and wiffes." He arranged that his household should not be dispersed until a month after his death, appropriating money to defray the cost.¹⁹ He seems to have been anxious about Anthony and Francis, for he writes: "I desier my said wief for all the loves that have benne betwene us, to see to the well being of my twoo sonnes Anthonie and Frauncis that are nowe left poore orphans without a father."

This injunction Lady Bacon so took to heart that when her sons had long been members of Parliament she remonstrated against their keeping late hours or

¹⁸ Among the papers of the Marquess Townshend a receipt was preserved giving the acquittance of the poorest prisoners in the common gaol in the King's Bench, "who this 6th March 1579 received the som of foure pounds, as the legacye of the ryght honourable Sr. Nicholas Bacon Knyght deceasyd, by the hands of Hugh Morgan grocer and Thomas Awdeley Skynner."—Historical MSS. Report, 1887. Marquess Townshend, p. 7.

¹⁹ Lord Burleigh shows his consideration for others in his will. He expressly mentions that those tenants of his houses in Westminster who have laid out much in repairs are to have the houses for life and three years after at the accustomed rent. He limits the expenses of his funeral to £1,000, of which one tenth was to be given to the poor. If his body were carried to Stamford, then forty shillings was to be given to the poor of every parish church where his body remained for the night.—*Life of William Cecil, Lord Burghley*, by A. Collins. 1732. pp. 95 and 85.

living in the proximity of a play house. But she never failed to send them of her best; the early strawberries, poultry, game and home-brewed ale: and Francis never hesitated to ask for the loan or gift of furniture for his rooms.

A year before his death Sir Nicholas had visited Cambridge, and finding that the chapel of his college, Corpus Christi, was far too small for the increasing number of students he promised a donation of £200 towards the cost of a new one, and help in obtaining other gifts. His advice, too, was sought as to the planning of it. The Queen contributed thirty loads of timber from a dissolved monastery at Barton. Sir Francis Drake also sent a contribution. Lady Bacon's contribution after the death of Sir Nicholas was used to build the entrance portico, an inscription being placed on it in his honour.²⁰ A larger chapel replaced it in the eighteenth century.

The houses Sir Nicholas Bacon had built have either been transformed or destroyed, but conspicuous in the collection of medieval silver in the British Museum is one of the three silver-gilt cups he had made out of the fragments of the Great Seal of Philip and Mary, broken up, according to precedent, when Elizabeth's first Great Seal came into use. The cups are eleven inches high. The lid is surmounted by a boar, the Bacon crest, and the Bacon motto, "Mediocria Firma," is engraved on it. The bowl has an inscription explaining its origin: "made of the Greate Seale of England, and left by Syr Nycholas Bacon, Knygt, Lorde Keeper, as an heyrelome to his howse of, 1574." The coat of arms granted to him in 1568 is also engraved on the bowl. The cup in the British Museum is the one left to his house of Redgrave and was presented by the widow of the Rt. Hon. Edmond Wodehouse, a descendant of the Lord Keeper's eldest son, Sir Nicholas Bacon, premier baronet of England. The others were left to the Lord Keeper's houses of "Stewkey" (Stiffkey) and Gorhambury.

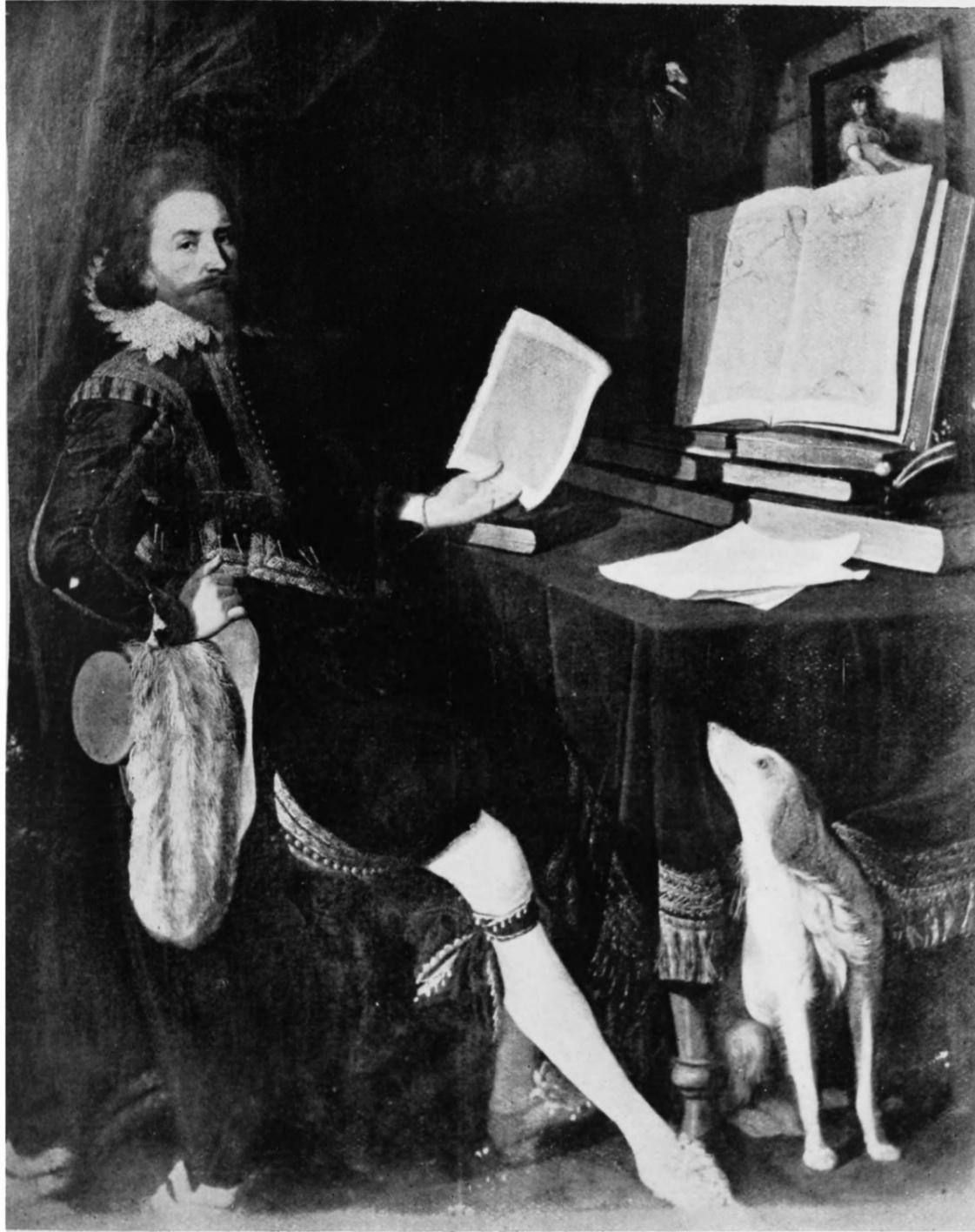
Lady Bacon survived her husband thirty years, and

²⁰ Much information as to Sir Nicholas Bacon is given in the *History of the College of Corpus Christi*, by Robert Masters, especially in the edition published in 1753.



Copyright reserved.

SIR THOMAS MEAUTYS, SECRETARY TO SIR FRANCIS BACON.
(From the painting at Gorhambury.)



Copyright reserved.
SIR NATHANIEL BACON, K.B., OF CULFORD HALL, SUFFOLK, NEPHEW OF SIR
FRANCIS BACON, FATHER OF ANNE, SECOND WIFE OF SIR HARBOTTLE GRIMSTON.
(From a painting by himself at Gorhambury.)

life dealt hardly with her. Her elder son, Anthony, went abroad after his father's death, and his long residence in France filled her with dread lest he should forsake the Protestant faith she held so dear. Added to this, financial anxiety must have been constant, for Anthony, in his desire to serve England abroad, found it necessary often to raise money on his own estate, and when he returned home found it essential to continue doing so if he was to give his younger brother, Francis, the possibility of gaining the public position that brother felt needful to win honour for his new methods of pursuing knowledge. From a lawsuit²¹ it is known that Lady Bacon ceased to use the "force" Sir Nicholas had made to provide Gorhambury with water and placed a mill on the spot, showing she made efforts to increase her income. But in 1588, when the mayor of St. Albans bought two acres of wood from her for the poor for £10 she abated £3 of the cost.²²

But it is to be feared that the shock of her son Anthony's death in 1601, after the strain of the trial and execution of the Earl of Essex, whom both her sons had served, ruined her health. Francis, in a petition to Queen Elizabeth that year, gives as one reason for his request that "his mother's health was very worn," and from that time there is no allusion to her until 1610, when he wrote to his friend Sir Michael Hicks, telling him that his Mother's funeral was to be on Thursday forenoon, August 3rd. He added, "Feast, I make none. But if I mought have your company for two or three days at my house I should pass over this mournful occasion with more comfort."

Anthony Bacon, after his return to England in 1592, usually lived in London: for some time sharing chambers at Gray's Inn with his brother, though later he had his own house for a time. He never seems to have lived at Gorhambury as its master. He was a man of unusual ability, who had a wide knowledge of foreign affairs, and until he gave his allegiance to the Earl of Essex had often aided his uncle, Lord Burleigh, by sending him early news of events of importance for the conduct of foreign policy.

²¹ *Transactions*, 1892, pp. 14, 15.

²² *Corporation Records of St. Albans*, by A. E. Gibbs, p. 28.

At the time of Anthony Bacon's death, his brother Francis was heavily in debt, and Anthony's affairs were also much embarrassed owing to the willing financial help he had given his brother. Thus Gorhambury continued to suffer from an enforced neglect for some years longer. The Queen directed her Escheator in Hertfordshire to give Sir Francis Bacon possession of the Manor of Gorhambury and other hereditaments in November, 1602, but it was only in 1608, the year after he became Solicitor-General, that entries are found in a notebook of that year showing that he was planning many improvements there. Details are found for the water garden he planned to make at Pondyards, where later he built Verulam House when Lord Chancellor, as a retreat in which he could conduct urgent affairs. Aubrey, in his *Brief Lives*, gives an interesting account of the water gardens and the grounds of Gorhambury as they were in the days when Anne, Lady Grimston, the great niece of Sir Francis, was mistress there.

By 1608 Sir Francis Bacon had won renown in many spheres. His first essays had appeared in 1597. He had sat in every Parliament since 1584, and when he spoke his eloquence was such that men only feared lest he should cease. He was in request for all Parliamentary Committees, and he had incurred Queen Elizabeth's anger, when Knight of the Shire for Middlesex, by his successful opposition to an attempt to diminish the control of the House of Commons concerning matters of finance. She banished him from Court and refused to accede to the Earl of Essex's request that he should be appointed Attorney-General or Solicitor-General. But later she was willing to have the service of his pen. As his father, he served as Treasurer of Gray's Inn in a time of development, his care being the laying out of the new gardens made possible when adjacent land was acquired. Many, however, saw cause to regret deeply that he found it possible to act as Queen's Counsel in the trial of his former patron, the Earl of Essex, to whom his brother Anthony was devotedly attached. But he was only able to follow the purpose he had most at heart in his leisure hours. Passing to the University from the atmosphere created in his home by a father renowned for his wit and

wisdom, and a mother celebrated for her virtue and learning, he became a critic of the course of study at Cambridge. He was convinced that the study of Aristotle, as pursued there, was not the best preparation for the discovery of truth, and determined to devote his life to searching for a better. The loss of his father making it necessary for him to work out a career for himself, he could only devote his leisure to this end, and he was not able to publish the *Advancement of Learning*, the first part of his scheme of *The Great Instauration*, until 1605.

He was knighted by James I in 1603, and the next year was granted a permanent salaried post which he had so vainly striven to obtain in Elizabeth's reign as a furtherance to his intellectual work. Two years later he married Alice Barnham, the eldest daughter and co-heir of a wealthy alderman and step-daughter of Sir John Pakenham, well known at Court. Little is known of her save that at the end of his life Bacon revoked the addition he had made to "his loving wife's" jointure for "just and great reasons." Less than a month after his death, she married a former member of his household, Mr. John Underhill, who three months later was knighted by Charles I at Oatlands; but some years before her death a deed of separation was drawn up between them. She died at Eyworth, in Bedfordshire, in 1650. Her sister Dorothy, Lady Constable, to whose husband Sir Francis Bacon dedicated one edition of his essays, and to whom he left his books, is also buried in the Parish Church of Eyworth. Her mother,²³ described by a contemporary as "the little violent lady," whose fourth husband was the Earl of Kellie, is described in the letters of administration of her estate as "of Eyworth."

From the time Sir Francis Bacon became Solicitor-General he was constantly consulted by the King, but he failed to persuade James I of the value of his political ideas, which, if acted upon, might have saved England the sufferings of the Civil War. He became Attorney-General in 1613, a Privy Councillor in 1616, and then, as his father, was appointed Lord Keeper of the Great

²³ There is a portrait of Lady Kellie, painted by Van Somer in the Collection of Lord Saumarez.

Seal. James raised him to the peerage the following year as Baron Verulam,²⁴ and also gave him the title of Lord Chancellor.²⁵ In this office Sir Francis kept great state, which may partly be accounted for by the fact that he acted as Viceroy during the absence in Scotland of James I during his first year of office. Aubrey writes: "When his lordship was at his country house at Gorbambury, St. Albans seemed as if the Court were there so nobly did he live." But whatever his income, he seems to have exceeded it, the members of his household having no effective check imposed on their expenditure. He was generous to a fault. Lloyd, in his *State Worthies*, relates that once when with the King on a Progress to Newmarket, he gave £10 to one that brought him fruit. King James remarked: "My Lord, my Lord, this is the way to Beggars' Bush," with only too much truth. As Chancellor he was able to gratify his wish to live in York House, his birthplace, obtaining a lease for it from the Archbishop of York, father of his friend Mr. Toby Matthews, and when disaster befel, he only parted with the lease to the Duke of Buckingham when it became clear that otherwise the ban on his coming within twelve miles of the Court would continue.

In 1620, though unlike some of his predecessors he attended afternoons as well as mornings at the Court of Chancery, Sir Francis was able to complete a further instalment of *The Great Instauration*:—the *Novum Organum*, a landmark in the development of modern philosophy. Of this Dr. Rawley, his chaplain, relates: "I myself have seen at the least twelve copies revised year by year, one after another and every year altered and amended." His *Essays and Wisdom of the Ancients* had been translated by Mr. Toby Matthews into Italian, and a French version of the *Essays* had also appeared. Thus his name was honoured through much of Europe. In the January of 1621 the King

²⁴ Aubrey writes: "At Verulam is to be seen in some few places some remains of the wall. This magnanimous Lord Chancellor had a great mind to have it made a citie again, and he had designed it to be built with great uniformity: but fortune denied it him."

²⁵ Which two last places (Lord Keeper and Lord Chancellor) though they be the same authority and power yet they differ in patent, height and favour of the Prince: since whose time (Lord St. Alban's) none of his successors until the present honourable lord (in 1661) did ever bear the title.—Dr. Rawley's *Life of Bacon*, 1657.

bestowed the rank of Viscount St. Alban upon him.

Parliament met shortly afterwards, determined to check the growing prerogative of the Crown. Having attacked the chief holders of monopolies, they impeached the Lord Chancellor, who had systematically upheld the prerogative of the Crown, on a charge of taking bribes. Bacon could not deny that he had received gifts during the course of trials, but claimed that they had never influenced his judgments. But he pleaded guilty. The House of Lords sentenced him to a fine of £40,000, to imprisonment in the Tower during the King's pleasure, and declared him incapable of holding any office or sitting in Parliament, or coming within the verge of the Court, but did not deprive him of his peerage. The King remitted the fine and released him after a brief imprisonment of two or three days, but he never again held office or sat in Parliament, though he was summoned to that of 1625 by Charles I.

Thus Bacon returned to Gorhambury under the shadow of a great disgrace. Dr. Rawley has left it on record that Bacon said:—"I was the justest judge that was in England these fifty years, but it was the justest censure in Parliament that was these two hundred years." Mr. Toby Matthews and his secretary, Mr. Thomas Meautys, were conspicuous for the help they gave him in these years. He never relinquished his search for truth, and until the end of his life continued to study and write. Some months after his retirement to Gorhambury he wrote to Dr. Lancelot Andrewes, the Bishop of Winchester: "So now being no more able to do my country service it remaineth unto me to do it honour, which I have endeavoured to do in my work of the *Reign of King Henry the Seventh.*" The *Essays* grew in number. Also he superintended the translation of several of his works into Latin, and is thought to have had the help in this of George Herbert, then Public Orator in the University of Cambridge, Ben Jonson and Thomas Hobbes. Aubrey tells how, when "his lordship" meditated, as was his frequent custom, in the Gorhambury gardens, he was attended by a secretary to set down his notions, and that Mr. Thomas Hobbes had told him how when he was at Gorhambury to translate some of the essays, he often performed this service.

The end came in 1626, when Francis Bacon, Lord St. Alban, died from the effects of a chill received during a scientific experiment near Highgate Hill. He died on Easter Day, in the house of the Earl of Arundel, then imprisoned in the Tower. Whatever judgment is passed on his political career, it cannot be denied that his intellectual work did England service and was the starting point for further development not only in philosophy but also in science, as the founding of the Royal Society in 1662 was largely due to the stimulating effect of his works. Many claim for him even greater services than these.

Sir Francis was buried in St. Michael's Church as he directed in his will:—"For my burial I desire it may be at St. Michael's, near St. Alban's, there was my Mother buried, and it is the parish church of my mansion house of Gorhambury and it is the only Christian church within the walls of old Verulam. I would have the charge of my funeral not to exceed three hundred pounds at most." St. Michael's has seen many pilgrims, who have come to do Sir Francis honour by visiting the marble tomb erected to his memory "by the care and gratitude of Sir Thomas Meautys, Knight, formerly his lordship's Secretary, afterwards clerk of the King's Honourable Privy Council under two Kings."²⁶

Gorhambury had been transferred by Sir Francis to trustees for the benefit of his secretary, Thomas Meautys, who had advanced him a considerable sum to meet a pressing need. But it must have been many years before Meautys derived any benefit from its possession: for Sir Francis died heavily in debt, and until 1650 an annual payment of £520 was due to his widow, Lady St. Alban. In addition to the official tie there was a double connection between the families of the Bacons and the Meautys. Before 1588, Philippe Cooke, cousin to Sir Francis, married Hercules Meautys. Their daughter, Jane, was the cousin of Thomas Meautys' father. This tie became closer in 1614, when Jane, then the widow of Sir William Cornwallis, married Nathaniel Bacon, the youngest son of

²⁶ Dr. Rawley's *Life of Bacon*.

Sir Nicholas Bacon, of Redgrave, premier baronet of England, eldest half-brother of Sir Francis. A warm friendship existed between Thomas Meautys and his cousin Jane, Lady Bacon, and many of his letters to her have been published in *The Private Correspondence of Jane, Lady Cornwallis, 1613-1644*. That of Feb. 19, 1630, contains an indication of the future in its postscript:—"Madam, I gladly kissed the outside as well as the inside of your letter, as supposing the superscription to be my cosin Anne's handwriting"; for he married his "cosin Anne," then only fifteen, some ten years later.

Jane, Lady Bacon, after her marriage with Nathaniel Bacon, except for occasional visits to her relatives in London, lived chiefly in Suffolk, either at Brome Hall, left to her by her first husband, or at Culford Hall, near Bury St. Edmunds, given by Sir Nicholas Bacon to his son on his marriage. Her correspondence shows that she had been at Court, for the Lady Elizabeth, after her marriage with the Elector Palatine, never failed to send her affectionate messages when occasion arose:—"That the old love between us should not be forgotten." News of the Court came to her in the frequent letters of Lucy, Countess of Bedford, a Woman of the Bedchamber to the Queen. Her husband's ill-health prevented her from obeying the summons to attend the funeral of the Queen in May, 1619. Unfortunately her own letters have not survived, but she gave kindly and substantial aid to all her friends in times of stress. Sir Nathaniel's letters to her give delightful glimpses of their home. He writes to her in London, telling how her house and garden have been prepared to give her a pleasing welcome, together with fourteen young pheasants, which "peeping do much desire their mistress's presence." In the next letter he writes of the children. "Nick hath well recovered his ague; and Mrs. Mop is a much fyner girl than ever, and more familiar with me, and I hope that before strawberyes go out I shall win her hart for ever." Visiting London later in the same year, the postscript to his letter is:—"Tell Nan, I have bought her a fine new gowne, wherfore I shall expect a great forwardness in her book at my return." The day after the Coronation of

Charles I, when Sir Nathaniel had been created a Knight of the Bath, he writes of his younger daughter, "For little Jane in particular, I should have been glad to have understood her new language," and later, "Kiss little Jane for me."

From the Countess of Bedford's letters it is known that Sir Nathaniel Bacon had a reputation as a discerning judge of the artistic value of paintings. His father is said to have had several works of Holbein at Redgrave, and this is very possible, as Sir Nathaniel's mother was the daughter of Edmund Butts.²⁷ Peacham, in his *History of Limning*, mentions Sir Nathaniel as notable among English artists. A palette and brushes are conspicuous among the ornamentation of the memorial tablet that his wife placed to his memory in the church at Culford, showing her desire to perpetuate the memory of his skill. There are three of his paintings at Gorhambury, gifts, or a bequest, probably to Anne, Lady Grimston, from her mother or brother.²⁸ Sir Nathaniel died of a decline in 1627 in his forty-second year. His daughter Anne was then twelve and his son Nicholas ten. Little Jane died three months after her father.

In 1638, Sir Thomas Meautys was able to let Gorhambury to George Ratcliffe, sixth Earl of Sussex, then an old man in ill health. The fifth earl was a brother-in-law of Lady Bacon of Culford, and she may have helped to bring this about. Some two years later her daughter, Anne, married Sir Thomas Meautys, knighted by Charles I in 1641. Sir Harry Lee, of Ditchley, the first husband of Lady Sussex, was an intimate friend of the Verneys of Claydon, and after his death, Sir Edmund Verney acted as Lady Lee's trustee, and for years she seems to have taken no step of importance without consulting one of the Verneys. There are many quotations from the letters that she wrote while at Gorhambury in the Verney Memoirs, which tell something of its history in the beginning of the Civil War. Lady Sussex evidently appreciated Gorhambury, for she was much perturbed in 1639 when her sister wrote

²⁷ A well-known reproduction of Holbein's Drawings is of a Mistress Butts.

²⁸ Lady Bacon of Culford died in May, 1659. Her son, Nicholas, died in 1660, when Lady Grimston became her father's heir.



Copyright reserved.
ANNE, DAUGHTER OF SIR NATHANIEL BACON, K.B., OF CULFORD, WIFE OF SIR
THOMAS MEAUTYS AND SECOND WIFE OF SIR HARBOTTLE GRIMSTON.
(From the painting at Gorhambury.)

to her that Mr. Meautys hoped to sell it. He was anxious to resume possession of Gorhambury to live there with his wife, as, like Sir Francis Bacon, he felt "there, is sweet air as any is." Lady Sussex, unwilling to leave, invited Sir Thomas and Lady Meautys to stay with her as long as they should wish, and thus succeeded in keeping her husband's tenancy of it.

Probably this was fortunate for Gorhambury, for Lady Sussex sympathised with the Parliamentary Party when the Civil War broke out, whereas Sir Thomas was a staunch Royalist, as were his mother's relatives, the Coningsbys of North Mimms. Thus the Earl of Essex granted a letter of protection against plundering to Lord Sussex when he halted at St. Albans on his return from the battle of Edgehill in 1642. Lady Sussex prepared as well as she could for all contingencies. Though she disliked eating off pewter, she put her plate away and gave out that it was sold. She then asked Sir Ralph Verney to get somebody to buy six "caribens" for her and some twenty pounds of powder, or more if he thinks it desirable, that she may be able to arm her servants. She next blocked up most of the doors at Gorhambury with wood. The valuable hangings and stuffs she had brought with her were put in one of the turrets over her bedroom and bricked up. For a time she housed two loads of "stuff" belonging to Sir Ralph as he felt Gorhambury safer than his home. The "Protection" she had did save her from her horses being commandeered. She suffered no attack, but her friends after the war began suggested that she might find a safer place than Gorhambury. She felt a move would be too dangerous for her husband's health and stayed. Lord Sussex died in July, 1643, and though it cost her nearly £400 she determined to bury him among his own kin at Boreham, in Essex. She needed a pass for her company—two coaches with six horses and six that drew the hearse, and six or eight-and twenty men on horseback besides footmen. She stayed at Gorhambury until 1646, when she left to marry the Earl of Warwick. Her daughter writes to Lady Verney lamenting:—"So pore Gorhambury will be left, which troubles me much."

Sir Thomas Meautys' only child, Jane, was born in 1641, about a year before the Civil War broke out. He fought for the King, as did his wife's half-brother, Sir Frederick Cornwallis.²⁹ Whether his wife and child were with him or with her mother at Culford is not known. In 1646, the year the fighting practically ceased, Lady Bacon of Culford seems to have advanced money on the security of the Gorhambury estate to her son-in-law.³⁰ He died in 1649, and was buried in the chancel of St. Michael's Church. Thus his last years of life may have been spent at Gorhambury. His daughter, Jane, died three years later than her father. She was buried in the church at Culford. The ownership of Gorhambury then passed to her father's eldest brother, Henry Meautys. But Gorhambury was evidently dear to Lady Meautys, for in 1652 her second husband, Sir Harbottle Grimston, of Bradfield, Essex, later Master of the Rolls, bought the estate from his wife's brother-in-law. Their only child, Anne Grimston, died a few years later. Thus Lady Grimston, descended from Jane Fernley, the first wife of Sir Nicholas Bacon, Lord Keeper, and of kin to his second wife, Anne Cooke, sunny tempered as the Bacons, and devoutly religious as the Cookes, was the first and last Bacon to be mistress of Gorhambury.³¹

²⁹ Nicholas Bacon of Culford is described on a slab in Culford Chancel as "loyall to his Prince, a lover of his country, and a great sufferer for both."

³⁰ It is recorded on Lady Bacon's monument at Culford that by prudence and good management she rescued the two ancient and distinguished families, with which she was connected, from absolute ruin, in times of the greatest difficulty.

³¹ Lady Grimston was buried at St. Michael's, September 20th, 1680. Dr. Burnet, Bishop of Salisbury, who lived "ten years under the protection of Sir Harbottle Grimston," gives an interesting account of both Sir Harbottle and Lady Grimston in his *History of My Own Time*.

I am deeply indebted to the Earl and Countess of Verulam for the loan of many papers and books and much other help bearing on the history of Gorhambury. They have kindly also allowed the reproduction of busts

and pictures at Gorhambury House of several of those who between 1561 and 1652 did it honour.

The Rev. E. Farrer, F.S.A., a former Governor of the Free School at Botesdale, has also given me unstinted help, allowing me the use of all his articles in the press in Norfolk and Suffolk on the history of Botesdale School and the Bacons of Redgrave, in addition to other of his researches into the history of the Bacons.

I have also gained much help from Miss Sturt's *Francis Bacon: A Biography*.