

White Kennett
The life of Mr. Somner
Oxford
1693

A TREATISE
Of the ROMAN
Ports and Forts
in KENT.
BY
WILLIAM SOMNER.

Publish'd by JAMES BROME, M. A. Rector of
CHERITON, and Chaplain to the CINQUE-
PORTS.

To which is prefixt the Life of Mr. SOMNER.

<vignette – the Sheldonian Theatre>

OXFORD,
Printed at the THEATER, 1693.

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THE
LIFE
OF
Mr. SOMNER.

To the Revd. Mr. JAMES BROME.

Sir,

I have receiv'd the Transcript you
sent me of Mr. Somner's discourse
of the Roman Ports and Forts in
Kent: and I agree with you in the opi=
nion, that the publication of it would
do honour to our County, and service
to the learned world. And since you
have obtained leave of that Venerable
Body, to whom the Original belongs;
I am willing to assist in the Edition.
You judge right, that the life of the
Author is much wanting; and that
some notes should be affixt to this
Treatise, to explain what otherwise
might stop the Reader. From which
task I wish you had not excus'd your
self by a retir'd life, and want of ac=
cess to books, and other notices of

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this kind. But since you devolve those
cares on me, I will take up one half
of the burthen; and commit the other
to our Friend Mr. Edmund Gibson of
Queens College, a Person well verst in the
subject of Antiquities, and therefore
most fit to illustrate a discourse of this
nature with such cursory remarks, as
may adorn and improve the work. As
to the Author's Life, since you have

furnisht me with so many faithful materials; I am content to tell the world, how great a Man lyes buried, and how much his memory deserves to be reviv'd.

In doing this, I shall treat him not as a Courtier or a Patron, whose reputation must be rais'd by lines of flattery, and artificial disguise; but as an Historian and Antiquary, who is best represented in the same truth and plainness, with which he liv'd and wrote. There is this religion due to the ashes of an honest man, to let the Memoirs of him be simple and unaffected, to lay by all unnecessary shades and colours, and only draw him like himself.

William Somner, son of William Somner and Ann his wife, was born on the 30. day of March 1606. within the Parish of St.

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Margaret's in the City of Canterbury. A fit birth-place for an Antiquary; 'this being one of the most ancient Cities in England' /1. And like a true Patriot, he prov'd his natural affection, and repaid his nativity by giving it a new birth. He restor'd the perisht ruines, and brought back all its pristine glories. 'For his thoughts and affections having ever much inclin'd him to the search and study of Antiquities, he did more particularly, as bound in duty and thankfulness, apply himself to the Antiquities of Canterbury. He hoped the better acceptance of the work from the Author's thankful intentions towards the place of his birth; judging this a sufficient motive why he should of all other places desire to know the Antiquities and former state thereof' /2.

He was so well pleas'd with his lot of breathing first in this fair ground, that neither mind nor body could be mov'd to any distance from it: he took pleasure to call it 'the place of his Birth, Education, and abode' /3. Like the good old Citizen of Verona, within the walls, or in sight of them, he liv'd, grew up, and died.

1 Pref. Antiq. Canterb. 4to. 1640. 2. ib. 3. ib.

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Fashions he despis'd abroad, and learning he would have at home. So that here in studious content, he took up his cradle, his mansion, and his grave.

He was descended of an honest and sufficient family /1. His father was Registry of the Court of Canterbury under Sir

Nathanael Brent Commissary. This name had been eminent in other ages, and in other Counties. John Somenour of Multon near Croyland was a Commoner of some figure in the reign of Henry the fifth /2. There was a publick Hall or Inn with= in this University, that was called from the first owner of it Hospitium Somneri, or, 'Somenorshyn' /3. And there is now a gentile branch of this ancient name in the County of Bucks. But let me ob= serve this for the honour of our mo= dest Author; that tho' the knowledge of Pedigrees was one of his proper ta= lents, yet in all his works he gives no one hint of his own Parentage or name.

When his forward years made him ca= pable of literature, he was committed to the Free School of that City, then go=

1 Casaub. de Ling. Saxon. p. 141. 2. Hist. Croyland. contin. p. 502. 3. Hist* & Antiq* Oxon. p. 158. b.

*?

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vern'd by Mr. Ludd, which he after grate= fully remembers as the place of his Educa= tion /1. What his improvements here were, I know none living who can attest, and it shall not be my vanity to conjecture. Tho perhaps he here imbib'd the inclinations to Antiquity from the fresh memory of the late Master John Twine LL. B. who dying 1581. had been very inquisitive into former ages, had left a public monument of such knowledge /2, and had made particular collections of the An= tiquities of this City /3: whose fame in this part of learning might well incite an emulous youth, and raise that spi= rit, which carried him at last beyond this great example. However, here was our Author initiated in the elements of Rome and Greece, among many rival wits, of whom let me mention only Peter Gunning son of a Clergyman born at How in Kent, An. 1613. and 'bred at this School to the age of fifteen, when being remarkably ripe for the Uni= versity, he was sent to Clare-Hall in Cam= bridge' /4, and left his school-fellow behind. Their acquaintance here con=

1 Antiq. Canterb. Pref. 2. De rebus Albionis, &c. Lond. 1590. 8vo. 3. Somner Antiq. Cant. Pref. 4. Wood Athen. Oxon. Tom. 2. pag. 577.

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tracted, settled after into a sacred friend= ship, and there hapned good oppor= tunities to confirm it, by Mr. Gunning's frequent visits to this City, and by his Preferment to a Prebend in this Church, An. 1660. But let the School be proud

of this honour, that at the same time it instructed two of the greatest Men of their age and nation, one of the best of Divines, and one of the best of Antiquaries.

When our young Scholar had made such progress in years, and in his studies, as qualified him for admission to either of the two greater Schools of Learning; then, either by the persuasion of his friends, who in tenderness would keep him near themselves, or by his own inclination to deal with ancient Records, he was plac't as Clerk to his Father in the Ecclesiastical Courts of that Diocese. And when the usual time of apprehending was expir'd, he was soon preferr'd to a creditable office in those Courts by that true Judge of men, Arch-bishop Laud, to whom he after dedicated his first labours for the public, and gratefully declares, that 'the chief inducement whereby he was animated to appear in that kind, was his

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Grace's interest in the Author, as subsisting in his place and profession, under God, chiefly by his Grace's favour and goodness' /1. What made that great Patron of letters to prefer him, was no doubt a sense of his happy Genius, comprehensive of past ages. For that wise disposer of stations in the Church, made it his care and his glory to select such persons, whose abilities might best suit their respective employs. And being therefore to entrust the many antient Records of his Metropolitan Church, < . . . > he would provide a Man of that spirit, who should with integrity preserve them, and with industry apply them to the service of the Public; as seems most justly acknowledged by our Author, when he commemorates 'his Grace's extraordinary care and cost for the collection of Antiquities of all sorts from all parts, crowned by singular piety and nobleness in disposing them to the good and service of the Publick' /1. Believe me (friend) however some narrow envious souls would detract from the merits of this glorious Prelate, and represent him so, as if even his memory were to be martyr'd: yet no one Governour of the Church ever

1. Antiq. Cant. Ep. Ded.

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did greater things, or promoted greater men. Where shall we find that spirit to serve the Public? where that noble

zeal for Books and Scholars? Forgive me these expressions. We of this place had in him the most effectual Patron of our studies. He endow'd us with many admirable Manuscripts, and encourag'd those that would search them. Not that we now want an accession of such treasure to our Bodley Archives. You will be pleas'd, I know, to hear that in one year elaps'd, we have expended sixteen hundred pounds in the truest riches of the East, in the purchase of such Manuscripts as had been imported from those parts by two learned and judicious Men. Yet of these, the greatest part were in effect owing to the same Prelate; who supported the travels of Dr. Pocock, and enabled him to make that Return we now enjoy.

But I hast to Mr. Somner, who prosecuted the duties of his office with prudence and integrity. 'An office' (as he calls it) 'laudable, and enough honourable' /1. And when he had 'any hours reliev'd from the business of his calling' /2, those he

1. Pref. Dict. Saxon. 2. *ibid*.

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devoted to his beloved search into the mysteries of time: to which by the nature of his profession, he seem'd the more determin'd; he himself observing, 'that to the studie of Antiquities his particular calling did in some manner lead him' /1. He lov'd much, and much frequented the Cathedral service; where after his devotions were paid, he had a new zeal for the honour of the House, walking often in the Nave, and in the more recluse parts, not in that idle and inadvertent posture, nor with that common and trivial discourse, with which those open Temples are vulgarly profan'd: but with a curious and observant eye, to distinguish the age of the buildings, to sift the ashes of the dead; and, in a word, to eternize the memory of things and Men. His visits within the City were to find out the Ancestors, rather than the present inhabitants; and to know the genealogie of houses, and walls, and dust. When he had leisure to refresh himself in the Suburbs and the fields, it was not meerly for digestion, and for air; but to survey the British bricks /2, the Roman ways /3,

1. *Antiq. Cant. Pref.* 2. *Antiq. Cant. pag. 6.* 3. *ib. p. 22.*

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the Danish hills and works </1>, the Saxon Monasteries /2 and the Norman Churches /3.

At the digging up foundations, and other descents into the bowels of the earth, he came often to survey the Workmen; and to purchase from them the treasure of Coins, Medals, and other buried reliques, of which he informs us, 'that many were found in almost all parts of the City, some of which came to his hands' /4. Whenever he relaxt his mind to any other recreation, it was to that of shooting with the long bow, which no doubt he lov'd as much for the antiquity, as for the health and pleasure of that manly sport. He forgets not 'to give a worthy commendation of it', to confess himself 'grounded in a good opinion of Archery; and not unwilling to vindicate the undervaluing of it with other Men. He recommends to the Reader a judicious Elogie on this England's antient glory, by Mr. John Bingham in his Notes upon Ælian's Tacticks, which because the Book was dear and scarce, he presents a true copy of that whole passage' /5.

1. lb. pag. 144. 2. lb. pag. 46. 3. lb. pag. 156. &c. 4. lb. pag. 3. 5. Append. & Antiq. Canterb. pag. 476.

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This was his diversion: but his more constant delight was in classic Historians, in old Manuscripts, Leiger-books, Rolls and Records. Which made him so quickly known to be a man of use and service to his Country, that upon the great questions in descent of families, tenure of estates, dedication of Churches, right of tithes, and all the history of use and custom, he was consulted as a Druid or a Bard. While appeal to his judgment and deference to it satisfied contending parties, and stopt litigious suits. This honour and trouble done to him he modestly owns in the Epilogue to his Countrymen, where he mentions 'the recourse which some of them had to him for satisfaction and information, rejoycing to give content to them and others' /1. And truly I know no one part of humane learning, that can render any Man a more agreeable Companion, and a more beneficial friend, than this knowledge of places, times, and people. Whoever is thus accomplisht, can never want information to strangers, instruction to neighbours, and a turn of diversion and profit to all society. If he have prudence and good nature, he may be

1 lb. pag. 510.

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as Mr. Somner was, the Oracle of his

Country.

But the soul of our Author thought it too narrow a Province to resolve the doubts of private Men, and therefore would satisfie the whole inquisitive world. Hence when he had digested his elaborate collections 'made for the honour of that ancient Metropolis, and his good Affection to Antiquities', he dedicates them in a humble unaffected stile to the Arch-bishop of Canterbury, had them licens'd by his Chaplain Guil. Bray, Octob. 23. 1639. *and the next year publisht under this title. 'The Antiquities of Canterbury, or a survey of that ancient City, with the Suburbs and Cathedral, containing principally matters of Antiquity in them all, &c. Sought out and publisht by the industry and good will of William Somner', London 1640. 4/o. In his Preface with wit and learning he celebrates the 'knowledge of ancient things', confesses his 'own thoughts and affections to lie that way', and owns the 'encouragement of worthy Friends', of whom he names Dr. Casaubon, one of the Prebendaries of the Church, and Thomas Denne Esq;.

*sic

This accurate performance is the more laudable, because he could find no

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way, but what he made. There had indeed been two discourses of the like nature, 'Spot's History of Canterbury', mention'd by Bale, and 'Collections of the Antiquities of Canterbury', by John Twine, to which he refers in his 'Comment. de rebus Albionis'; but both these were lost to the use of our Author, /1 and we do not hear they are yet recovered. So as he had no one writer to transcribe or imitate, but all the labour and glory were his own. And indeed this difficult honour is the reward of true Antiquaries; they tread in steps unknown, and bring to light the hidden things of past ages. While most other Authors write over again in new words: and do not discover, but only represent.

In this useful book, he forgets not to justify his own profession. He enquires into the institution of Notaries /2: proves Ecclesiastical Courts to be Courts of Record, &c /3. He often shews his duty and zeal to his Mother, the Church of England; defends her discipline, and justifies her constitution in his learned remarks on Church government /4, on Archbishops /5, on privilege of the

1 Pref. to Antiq. Cant. 2. ib. p. 287. 3. ib. p. 288. 4. ib. p. 225. 5. ib. p. 223.

Clergy /1, on dedication of holy places /2, mischief of Improprations /3, and such other subjects, on which, by the best of arguments, reason and authority, he vindicates the establishment which then began to shake. And truly this justice must be done to Antiquities and the Church of England. None have been perfect Masters of the one, but what have been true Sons and servants to the other. It was eminently so in those great names, Camden, Spelman, Twisden, Marsham, Dugdale. And might I mention the living, I know many who by improvement in these studies, have in the same way settled their judgment, and improv'd their zeal. For indeed there is a natural reason for this effect: a good cause must appear best to those who look farthest back upon it. Our Church cannot have more genuine Sons than those, who by research into the primitive state of things, can refute the impudence of those abroad, who pretend to Antiquity; and can expose the ignorance of those at home, who affect Innovation. These Men can 'stand in the ways, and see the old paths', and are fit

1. lb. p. 250. 2. ib. p. 510. 3. ib. p. 58.

guides to those who are 'but of yesterday, and know nothing'.

But of one providence which attended this work, I must remind you. It was done in such a juncture as preserv'd the memorial of many Epitaphs, Inscriptions, and proper observations which otherwise had soon been lost to all succeeding ages. For immediately began that Rebellion and Sacrilege, which plundered and defac't most of the Cathedral Churches; and among other sad examples of popular phanatic fury, by the instigation of Richard Culmer call'd in contempt Blew Dick (the same I think, who procur'd an Order from the House of Lords to Arch-bishop Laud in the Tower Feb. 4. 1642. to have the Rectory of Chartham conferr'd on him, void by the death of Dr. Isaac Bargrave Dean of Canterbury, to which his Majesty by Letters, recommended that Loyal sufferer Mr. John Reading /1) this stately Cathedral was storm'd and pillag'd, the beautified windows were broke, the Tombs of Princes and Prelates were ravag'd, and every graceful ornament despoil'd. So that had not Mr. Somner took a faithful transcript

before the originals were thus eras'd, all had been lost in ignorance and oblivion. The like providence has often watcht over and preserv'd many monuments of Antiquity, just before the fatal ruine of them. The days of desolation were coming on, when that excellent Antiquary, Mr. John Leland obtain'd a commission from Henry 8. An. Dom. 1533. to authorise him to have access to all the Libraries of Cathedrals, Abbies, Priories, and all other places wherein Records and ancient writings were repos'd, for collecting and transcribing whatever pertain'd to the history of the Nation /1. By virtue of this power he transmitted the knowledge of many Manuscripts, and other evidences which might have been *disperst by the dissolutions which followed in the years 1536. and 1537. Thus the indefatigable Mr. Roger Dodsworth, just before the late destructive wars, transcrib'd most of the Charters and other Manuscripts, then lying in St. Marie's tower in York, which tower was soon after blown up, and all those sacred remains were mingled with the common dust and ashes. Thus again

*sic

1. Woods Athen. Oxon. vol. 1. p. 67.

the worthy Mr. William Dugdale, (after honour'd and preferr'd for his perfection in these studies) search'd over all the Manuscript Books, original Charters, old Rolls, and other evidences relating to the Cathedral of St. Paul in London, copied out the monumental Inscriptions, and procur'd Sculptures of the whole Fabric, and all the parts of it, about the year 1656. when that Mother Church was converted into a stable, and ten years after to a heap of rubbish. So that had not that Antiquary drawn the image, as it were, before the loss of the original, all had been forgot, but what tradition had most imperfectly convey'd to us. Thus are Antiquaries, if not inspir'd, yet guided by the counsel of Providence, to remit to posterity the memorial of things past, before their final period. It was thus our Author recorded that flourishing 'beauty of holiness' in that critical season; which had it been omitted, the Church had soon been lost within it's own walls.

I cannot forbear to recommend to you that ingenious Poem, which on this occasion was wrote by Mr. Charles Fotherby,

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Grandson of a worthy Dean of that Church. It is inscrib'd

In direptionem Metropolitanæ Ecclesiæ Christi Cantuariensis, ad fidissimum & antiquæ probitatis virum, deq; Clero Anglicano optime meritum, Gulielmum Somnerum.

Heu lapidum veneranda strues! sic corruis! Ædes
Sacrilegæ has audent sic temerare manus?
Quæq; fenestrarum fracta est sacra pagina! vultus
Amplius & vitreos nec pia turba stupet.
Cæruleo quoties me pictus dæmon amictu
Terruit? Huic rabies Culmeriana favet.

Hinc quantum nostro Somnero Ecclesia debet!
Hic raptas nulla lege recenset opes.
Hic priscum templi ruituri instaurat honorem,
Integra sunt scriptis & monumenta suis.
Pro veris hic molitur chartacea templa,
Et solidum marmor picta columna refert.
Vel templum pinxisse pium est. Exempla nepotes
Quæ seri plorent, quæq; imitentur, habent.
Urbs satis antiqua hæc non te, Somnere, silebit,
Ingrata ob librum ni velit esse tuum.
Nomine tu portas urbis signasque plateas,
Per te distinctas novimus ire vias.

This is but a part; I refer you to the whole Poem, as inserted in the 'Monasticon' /1, out of pure respect to Mr.

1 Monast. Ang. Tom. 1. inter p. 18. & 19.

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Somner. There were not wanting other pens to celebrate this first performance of our Author. It has a just character given by a proper judge, the learned Dr. Meric Casaubon, 'a pious and laborious work, and highly useful, not only to those who desir'd to know the state of that once flourishing City, but to all that were curious in the ancient English history' /1. The best Topographer since Camden, when he comes to the Roman station at Canterbury, does 'for its modern splendor and glory, refer us to courteous Mr. Somner's description of it /2, a very rational Gentleman', &c. Mr. Kilburne in his survey of Kent does 'only briefly touch upon the City of Canterbury', because Mr. William Somner had so 'elaborately, judiciously and fully wrote of the same, that there was left but little (if any thing observable) which he had not there set down' /3. And Mr. Philpot who had reason to envy him, breaks into this acknowledgement: 'Canterbury hath so exactly in all the parts and limbs of

it been describ'd and survey'd by Mr. Somner, that I should exceedingly eclipse the labours of so industrious a Pen, if I should

1 Casaub. de ling. Saxon. p. 141. 2 Burton on Anton. Iti<n.> p. 175, 176. 3 Survey of Kent 4to. p. 300.

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go about to pourtray that in any contracted landskip, which hath been before represented to the publick, pencilled out in so large and exquisite a volume' /1.

As this was the most ancient royal City, and the first Episcopal Church of the Saxon Christians: so had they both, a new precedence in this honour: they were the first whose Antiquities were publisht to the world. And how few have been since conform'd to their example? 'The history of St. Paul's Cathedral in London from its foundation', &c. is an absolute performance /2. And 'the history of the Church of Peterburg' will be it's everlasting monument /3. But beside these two, I know of none but mean attempts. 'The historical account of the original, increase, and present state of St. Peter's, or the Abby Church of Westminster', is little more than a bundle of Epitaphs and Inscriptions /4. 'The remarkable Antiquities of the City of Exeter' /5, are a dry collection, full of mistakes. 'The history of the Bishops and Bishoprick of Winchester,

1 Villare Cantian. p. 93. 2. Will. Dugd. history of St. Paul's London, 1658. fol. 3. History of the Church of Peterb. by Symon Gunton, publisht by Symon Patrick D. D. Lond. 1686. fol. 4 Monument. Westmon. by Henry Keep, Lond. 1683. 8vo. 5. By Richard Izaac Esq; Lond. 1681. 8vo.

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ster, with a description of that City' /1, I presume to be an imperfect work, and therefore not publisht. 'The brief account of the Monuments of the Cathedral of Norwich' /2 was wrote for private use, and seems more to fear, than to deserve an Edition /3. 'The antient rites and Monuments of the Monastical and Cathedral Church of Durham' /4, is an ignorant and pitiful Legend. 'The history of St. Cuthbert with the Antiquities of the' (same) 'Church of Durham', was drawn by a much better hand /5, but the Edition of it that has crept abroad is false and spurious /6. We expect the Author's own exact and neat original to be publisht, with fit notes and illustrations, by an ingenious person of singular industry, and great progress in these studies /7. I hear of some others, who are now designing the Antiquities of York, Worcester, and Carlisle: all of character and abilities for such

performance. How happily would it spread the glory of the English Church and Nation, if among Divines addicted

1 By John Trussel, MS. Athen. Oxon. Tom. 1. p. 380. 2. By Sir Tho. Brown. 3. Tenison's Preface to Brown's Miscellan. 4 Publisht by J. Davis of Kidwelly, London 1672. 12/o. 5. By Robert Hegge Fellow of C.C.C. Oxon. 6. London 1663. 8vo. 7. T. Tanner of Queens Coll. Oxon.

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to these studies, some one were prefer'd to a dignity in every Collegiate Church, on condition to employ his talent in the History and Antiquities of that Body, of which he was a grateful and an useful Member?

Thus far Mr. Somner had searcht only into the Latin writers, and such National Records, as had been penn'd since the Norman conquest. But there is a sacred ambition in the spirit of Learning, that will not let a man rest without new conquests, and enlarg'd dominions. Especially in Antiquities, every acquist heightens the desire, and the wishes are those of the Eastern Monarch, to have more than one old world to bring into subjection. This generous emulation invited our Author to proceed, and attain the British and the Saxon tongues. To acquire the first, there were rules of Grammar, explication of words, and other sufficient Memoirs, beside the living Dialect, to guide a man of industry and resolution. But the Saxon language was extinct, and the monuments of it so few and so latent, that it requir'd infinite courage and patience, to attempt and prosecute the knowledge of

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it. To this trial he was encourag'd by the advice of his constant friend Dr. Meric Casaubon, who gives this account of it: 'that while he was lamenting the obscure remains of that tongue, it happily fell out, that he grew acquainted with Mr. Somner, born of a creditable family, one of primitive probity and simplicity. Being extremely taken with his sagacious wit, and observing his wonderful industry in searching for the Antiquities of his Country; and much approving his sharp and solid judgment, temper'd with the greatest modesty; he began earnestly to perswade and excite him to the study of the Saxon tongue, as a labour worthy his patient and ingenious spirit, promising his own assistance if he were able to give any, and to furnish him with any materials, that might aid and pro=

mote those studies' /1. Mr. Somner, whose humility of mind made him obsequious to the counsel of his friends, and tractable to any motion of doing good, complied with the advice of that Reverend Person, confirm'd by his own judicious thoughts, being sensible of the truth of what Sir Henry Spelman had found by his own experience, 'that the knowledge of the Saxon language was so far

1 Tractat. de Ling. Saxon. p. 140.

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necessary, as without it the Antiquities of England be either not discover'd, or at least imperfectly known' /1.

When Mr. Somner began this task, give me leave to represent the difficulties he labour'd under. When the Saxons had made the Britains strangers in their own land, then the language which the Conquerors brought with them, soon grew into contempt among themselves. Even so early as the year 652. 'Many out of this Island were sent to the Monasteries of France for Education, and to bring back the manners and language of those parts' /2. In the reign of Edward the Confessor, 'by the great resort of Normans to his Court, the whole Island began to lose their English rites, and to imitate the manners of the Franks; especially it was esteem'd a piece of breeding for all the lesser sort to speak the Gallic Idiom, and to despise the language and customs of their own Country' /3. This inglorious affectation is confess'd by an Historian who liv'd in that age. It lookt like an omen of being to be shortly conquer'd by that nation, of whose tongue and fashions they were

1. Somneri Diction. Saxon. Ep. Ded. 2. Mon. Angl. Tom. 1. p. 89. 3. Histor. Ingulphi p. 62. sub an. 1043.

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so industriously fond. The event was so. Three and twenty years after came in the Norman Lords, who threatned an extirpation to that language of which the Natives began to be ashamed. For these new Masters 'hated the English, and so much abhor'd their Idiom, that the Laws were all administred in the French tongue, the very children in Schools were kept from learning to read their Mother language, and were instructed only in the Norman; the English manner of writing was omitted' /1. The ignominious marks of a conquered people. The same Author from his own experience does again lament, that 'the Saxon hand which had been us'd in all writings grew into disgrace, and the

French hand, because it was more legible and more pleasing to the eyes, did every where obtain' /2, so as in the very next reign, 'the Saxon letters were so obsolete and so unknown, that but few of the elder people were able to read them' /3. Nay in the year 1095. Wulstan Bishop of Worcester was de= pos'd, when scarce any other thing was objected against him, but that 'he was an old English Idiot, who did not under= stand the French tongue' /4. It is true, the

1. lb. p. 71. sub an. 1066. 2. ib. p. 85. 3. ib. p. 98. sub an. 1091. 4. Mat. Par. sub an.

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next successor Henry the first, gave a Charter to William Arch-bishop of Can= terbury, confirming to him the possessi= ons of his See, in the Saxon language and characters /1. This was but a single instance, and perhaps done to oblige his Queen of the Saxon line, and to in= gratiate himself with the English sub= jects, who might hope by this marriage they had a better title in him. And therefore it is a mistake in the learned Mabillon /2, and some other Authors, who assert the Saxon way of writing was lost from the very time of the Nor= man Conquest. It was with the Saxon characters as with signs of the Cross in public Deeds, which were for the most part chang'd into the Norman way of seals and subscriptions, yet some Char= ters were with the old form of Crosses. The Saxon Dialect obtain'd no doubt in Country Vills, with some borrowed variation from the French, and some re= mains of it did intermix with the Court language. But the Barons and Knights who were most of them Norman, were so afraid of their children's talking the old English, that in the reign of Henry

1. H. Wharton Auctar. Histor. Dogmat. p. 388. 2. De re diplomat. p. 52.

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the second, 'They sent them over into France for education, to wear off the barbarousness of the native tongue' /1. At the beginning of the reign of Edward the third, Robert Holcot a Dominican, confesses, 'there was no institution of children in the old English, but they first learn'd the French, and from the French the Latin tongue, which he ob= serves to have been a practice introduc'd by William the Conqueror, and to have ever since obtain'd' /2. Tho from the first de= cline of the Barons, and advance of the Commons who were more of English blood, the Country language grew

more into request; till at last the Com=
mons in Parliament at Westminster the 36.
of Edw. the third, shewed so much of the
English spirit, as to represent to the
King 'the great mischiefs which would happen
to divers of the Realm, if that the Laws
were pleaded, shewed, and judged in the
French tongue, which is much unknown in
the said Realm', &c. Upon which 'it was
ordain'd and stablished, that all Plees, &c.
should be pleaded, shewed and defended,
answered, debated, and judged in the En=
glish tongue', &c /3. Yet this law did by no

1 Gervas. Tilbur. de otiis Imper. MS. in Bib. Bod. 2. Rob.
Holcot Lect. 2. super sapient. 3. Pulton Stat. 36. Edward 3:
p. 119.

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means restore the Saxon, either in the
Alphabet or in the prime Dialect: It
only redeemed the kingdom from an
old token of subjection, and did ho=
nour to the then compound language,
much vitiated by imported words and
phrases. And still there seem'd a dash
of the Norman spirit, which by the same
law provided 'that all such Pleas should
be entred and enroll'd in the Latin'.

If there were any conveyance of the
true Saxon tongue, it was in the Mona=
steries; but in those only which were
founded before the Norman Conquest;
for in such, interest did oblige them to
understand the language of their ori=
ginal Charters. It was for this reason,
that in the Abby of Croyland, 'a Tutor
was appointed to teach Saxon to some of the
younger brethren, that in their old age they
might be more fit to alledge the Records of
their Monastery against their adversaries' /1.
And it was no doubt for the like rea=
son, that in the Abby of Tavistoke, which
had a Saxon Founder about 691. 'there
were solemn Lectures in the Saxon tongue,
even to the time of our Fathers, that the
knowledge of that language might not fail,
as it has since well nigh done' /2.

1. Ingulphi Histor. p. 98. 2. Camden Britan. in Danmon.

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So that had Mr. Somner liv'd before,
or in the age of reformation, the way
of attainment had been less difficult.
Or had he been reserv'd to these lower
times, he had met with more of help
and conduct. For we have since had a
good part of the Scriptures more cor=
rectly publisht, with excellent notes /1.
We have had histories most correct /2.
But what above all facilitates the pro=
gress and perfection of learners; We

have had methodical and accurate 'Institutions of Grammar' by the Learned Dr. George Hicks, incomparably skill'd in the Antiquities of our Church and Nation. So that now to be ignorant of that tongue is not the misfortune of a Scholar, but his fault. Common industry, and an easie application serves.

But Mr. Somner had a much harder province: he was in a manner to invent the language, as well as to restore it. For upon his first essays that way, he had but two poor Manuscripts, and one of them on so obscure a subject, as might have exercis'd a Critic, sooner than instructed a Novice. But he had an active soul that would feel no im-

1. Evangel. Goth. & Saxon. 1665. 2. Chron. Saxon. ab Edm. Gibson, Oxon.

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pediment. This made him his own guide, to be not only the discoverer of a new world, but the Master of it. His success in these studies he himself congratulated in his own modest way: 'When by the advice and perswasion of Dr. Meric Casaubon, I began to apply my mind to the Saxon tongue, in no long space of time I seem'd to reap some tolerable fruits of my endeavors, which did abundantly compensate my labors', &c /1. And that first moving friend does applaud the event of his counsel in these words. 'To be short, when he had approved my advice, he prosecuted the business with that pertinacious industry, and such equal happiness of wit, that within few years he may be compar'd (to speak modestly) with the most eminent in that knowledge' /2. Nor did he only surpass most of his Predecessors, but exceeded some that followed after: and is numbred among the few complete Critics by the best of Judges; who has rightly observ'd, that 'since the *erection of Monasteries, where Saxon Books lay unknown to those that kept them, unto our own times, onely two forreigners, and about twenty Natives, had by their own industry

*<read 'eversion'>

1. Diction. Saxon. Præf. 2. Casaub. de Ling. Saxon. p. 140.

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attain'd the faculty of this tongue. Of which small number few arriv'd to an accurate and critical knowledge; Joceline, Somner, Mareshall and Junius, publisht all their Saxon purely and correctly: but from almost all others, it came with fault and imperfection; namely from those greatest men J. Selden, and Sir Henry Spelman, and even from the very Professor, Mr. A. Whee-

lock' /1. I would not cite the approbation of lesser Writers after the testimony of so great a man. I would only add that his very enemies (if he had any) admir'd this accomplishment in him. He who was the only man that oppos'd any thing our Author wrote, does him this justice. 'His labours', says he, 'as they are pleasant to such who are delighted in the knowledge and observation of the manners and language of our forefathers; so have they been and ever will be, very profitable to all that are studious and inquisitive into Antiquity. For his success in the restauration of that our ancient speech, which had been almost lost, and in a manner so long buried in oblivion, is very eminently known and admir'd, and shall by me be always gratefully acknowledg'd' /2.

1. Hiccesii Gram. Saxon. Præf. 2. Silas Taylor history of Gavelkind. Pref. 4to. 1663.

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Mr. Somner by his absolute faculty in the Saxon tongue, was now enabled to make the more intimate search into all remote Antiquities. His next merit was on this occasion: his honour'd friend and Countryman Sir Roger Twisden had publisht the laws of Henry the first, An. 1644. fol. to which was prefixt an old Glossary, which Mr. Somner observ'd 'to be faulty in very many places' /1. On this Edition 'he wrote notes and observations large and learn'd, with a very useful Glossary' /2. To which he himself refers in his other Glossary on the ten Historians, on the words 'Gravatio', 'Mancusa', &c. of which he had treated more largely in his former, not then, nor alas yet publisht. If those papers are in your hands, you have an opportunity to serve and oblige the world.

From his time of engaging in the memorials of Canterbury, he laid the foundation of a larger design, to collect all the remains of the state of the whole County, for a just and perfect History of the Antiquities of Kent. This projected labour he owns to have taken on him, in the kind 'Epilogue to his Country=

1. Somneri Glossarium ad X. Script. passim. 2. Casaub. de Ling. Sax. p. 141.

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men'. 'If by your good acceptance of these my labours for the City, I may receive encouragement to proceed in my endeavours; it is in my thoughts, by God's assistance, in convenient time, to do somewhat in like kind for you in the Country' /1. And to confirm

the truth and honesty of these intentions, 'An account of what Saints had the dedication of Parochial Churches within that Diocess he leaves with them in pawn, and as a pledge of those his future endeavours, for their farther content hereafter, if God permit'. He omitted no time, and spar'd no pains, to prepare this work without, and to make it fit in the field, that he might afterwards build the house: a house that was not to be built in a day, but the foundations to be dug deep, and the materials to be *fectht from afar, with great contrivance, great patience, and great expence. But he made a gradual progress, and in the Preface to his 'Tract of Gavelkind', which he wrote twelve years before the publication, i. e. An. 1648. He confesses 'it was now full eighteen' (I think it should be 'eight') 'years, since by solemn promise he became indebted to his *Coutrymen, upon their good acceptance of certain of his labours in behalf of

*sic

*sic

1. Antiq. Canterb. Append. p. 105.

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their City, to proceed to the same or some other such like undertaking for the County: a thing which as he then really intended, so had he not since wanted that encouragement for it from the better sort, which he could expect. But' (says he) 'being soon after (proh dolor!) overtaken by that impetuous storm of civil war, not yet quite blown over; I was necessitated to betake my self to other thoughts'. This was a just excuse, and he had the same reason to beg their longer patience. For he resolv'd the conception should be an Elephant before its birth, therefore he was still encreasing his plentiful store, and still digesting and disposing the order of it. In the mean time, 'he hop'd not only to be excus'd of his Countrymen for (what had not else been hitherto delay'd) his County-undertaking, but also to obtain of them yet farther respite, in hope of a better opportunity to discharge that debt'. In the year 1659. the time of publishing his 'Saxon Dictionary'; he again renew'd his promise, that 'when that work was finisht, he would adorn and complete the Antiquities of Kent' /1. In the following year 1660. he was so taken up with the joys of a returning

1. Saxon. Diction. sub voce 'Abbandune'.

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Church and King; and so particularly involv'd in the cares of retrieving the scatter'd Records, and raising the Memoirs of the dead: above all so im=

merst in providing that all might justly refund their stolen portion of Churchlands, and in stating the accounts of Fines, Leases, and other emoluments of the Dean and Chapter, who trusted all to his entire integrity and art: that he could not possibly attend to the finishing that long promis'd work. Tho' the generous design was still breathing, and expir'd only with himself.

But let not the world lament it's being depriv'd of those labours. For the 'Discourse' here given 'of the Roman Ports and Forts in Kent', was no doubt an apartment of that spacious Fabric, and was to have been joyn'd to the rest of that Model. As is evident by this: in his 'Saxon Dictionary' on the names of 'Raculf' Reculver, 'Limene muð', mouth of the river or haven of Limne, 'Lunden-wic' or Sandwich, &c. he promises a better and more large account in his 'Kentish Antiquities'; all which are largely *dicuss'd in this Tract, which must argue it a part of the same work, to which he

*sic

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then refer'd. Besides, among all the intimations of his other performances, he never cites this by the title, under which he left it, 'Roman Ports', &c. which proves it was included under the general design of the 'Antiquities of Kent'. There be some other loose papers on that subject, which are now, Sir, in your hands, and I know your spirit for the public interest, will embrace any fair opportunity 'to do good and to communicate'. I doubt he set his last hand to that part of the argument only which you now publish, which really is a learned and judicious discourse; there runs thro' the whole such a vein of reason, and such a force of authority, as is not easie to find in any Authors, that write for a party, or for any thing but truth. He is singularly happy in fixing Limene or the mouth of the river Limene, or Rother, at Romney, since turn'd another way: which is much confirm'd by some old Manuscript Annals that I have lately seen /1. And in placing the 'Lapis Tituli' of Nennius not at Stonar, but at Folkstone, wherein he has the honour to be followed by a most learned Pre=

1. Annales Saxonum MS. sub an. 892.

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late /1. Had he liv'd to supply and methodize the whole, how would he have

corrected the remarks of all that went before, and superseded the endeavours of most that could follow after. For I believe, it is your opinion, Sir, as well as mine, that what Lambard and Camden did before, might admit of emendations, and considerable additions. And what Mr. Kilburn and Mr. Philpot did since, was all modern and superficial. I wonder these two last who were cotemporary with our Author, should seem to have had no recourse to him, nor any knowledge of his more complete design; which could be only owing to their own pride, or want of address to an easie and communicative man. Mr. Philpot did engage to write another discourse of the Ports in Kent, speaking less of the Cinque Ports, because 'he intended to publish a particular Treatise relating solely to their immunities, and their just right to take cognisance of the fishery at Yarmouth' /2. This faith the writer might have kept, for he liv'd to the year 1684. but there is no dependance on a man who could afford to rob his

1. Stillingfleet Orig. Britan. ch. 5. p. 322. 2. Villare Cantianum. p. 14 fol. An. 1664.

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own Father of the credit of that book. For the 'Villare Cantianum, or Kent surveyed and Illustrated' republisht, London, 1659. and 1664. fol. under the name of Thomas Philpot, is said to have been done by John Philpot the Father, born at Folkstone, Somerset Herald at Arms, who died 1645 /1. Let this only be observ'd for the honour of Kent, that while other Counties (and but few of them) have met with single pens to give the History and description of them; ours of Kent has had no less than four Writers to celebrate the glories of it, Lambard, Somner, Kilburn, Philpot. Let me observe farther in respect and duty to my native Town, that what Mr. Somner asserts of Dover, being the place where Julius Cæsar intended and attempted to arrive, is from Astronomical computation, fully demonstrated by the very ingenious Mr. E. Halley, who proves the year, the day, the time of day, and place, the Downs, where he made his first descent /2.

Let not posterity censure Mr. Somner for this abortive design on the 'Antiquities of Kent', nor impute it to sloth=

1. Athen. Oxon. Vol. 1. p. 102. & Vol. 2. p. 719. 2. Philosoph. Transact. for March, &c. 1691.

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fulness, or change of mind, that he did not complete the model he had so long fram'd. It is a common infirmity of those who write nothing, to reflect on the delay of any one expected work. As if it were no more to do, than to talk of being done. Of the fatigues in a great performance, none are sensible but those who are engag'd in them. Thought and reflections, searches and reviews, remarks and collations, method and stile, and ten thousand cares, all multiplied on the men of greater fidelity and caution, retard the Author, and protract his work: especially in matters of Antiquity, to be in haste does make the blinder birth. For those writers cannot at one prospect get a view of their design. Like the new improvements of Perspective, the scene opens wider by longer looking on: that is, the business multiplies on the undertaker's hand, and the burden encreases on the weary Bearer. It is this has made more Antiquaries fail of their proposed attempts, than any other sort of writers. Mr. John Leland the first restorer of English Antiquities after the age of printing, undertook so immense a task, 'that the very thoughts of completing, did (as 'tis

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said) distract him' /1. So as after the publishing some short and trivial essays, he left his four Volumes of collections, fol. his five Volumes of Itinerary, 4to. and some other monuments of industry in Manuscript, for the most part indigested without leisure, or without patience to complete them. The next Antiquary Mr. Robert Talbot, had a great genius and an equal diligence, to gather and preserve the fragments of time: but designing 'Annotations on the Itinerary of Antonine'; and 'a Collection of ancient Charters', &c. he died with his thoughts and his papers in confusion. With what tedious application and gradual advances, did the great Camden conceive and nourish his fam'd 'Britannia'? Had his life and strength endur'd, no doubt he had still been altering and augmenting the glorious work. But he fell, and left unfinished this and some other of his own, and the world's disappointed hopes /2. Mr. Roger Dodsworth fill'd above sixty Volumes with the most elaborate collections; but was still hunting for more, without the content of disposing what he had. And therefore

1. Wood Athen. Oxon. Vol. 1. p. 67. 2. Gul. Camd. Vita a T.

excepting the Charters inserted in the two Volumes of 'Monasticon', which cost him little other pains than finding, and remitting to the press; he left nothing but infinite materials for those who would apply them better. Sir Simonds D'ewes, a great valuer of History and Coins, had laid a scheme for the 'Antiquities and state of Britain', wherein he pretends he would discover errors in every page of Camden /1; but by death he fell from his great and vain attempt. Mr. T. Allen, Mr. B. Twine, Mr. W. Fulman, and many other Antiquaries of this place, had the same ambition to collect, and the same misfortune never to methodize or publish. But beside these instances of general designs, the particular efforts on a History of single Counties, (like Mr. Somner's on Kent) have dropt into the graves of their intended Authors. Mr. Thomas Risdon drew up 'a Survey or Chorographical description of Devonshire'; but had not time to make the Edition of it /2. Sir Simonds D'ewes attempted the 'Topography of Suffolk' /3. Sir Edward Byshe promis'd the

1. Epist. of Arch-bishop Usher. p. 496. 2. Athen. Oxon. Vol. 1. p. 516. 3. R. Dodsworth MS Vol. 38. fol. 39.

'Antiquities of the County of Surry' /1. Sir Matthew Hale made great collections relating to the County of Gloucester, but would not frame them into any disposition for the press /2. Captain Silas Taylor spent some years in picking up various remarks on the County of Hereford, but cast them into no just discourse /3. Mr. Sampson Erdeswick wrote 'a short view of Staffordshire, containing the Antiquities of the said County'; but could carry it no farther than MS. notes /4. And Mr. Randal Catheral, got voluminous collections that respected this County of Oxford /5; but never could cast them into a regular History, and took so little care to reposit his MSS. that to all my enquiries, they are now lost. Not to mention the reported designs of later men, Dr. Nat. Johnston on the west-riding of Yorkshire. John Aubrey Esq; on Wiltshire. Walter Chetwind Esq; on Staffordshire; to whose labours, if still depending, I wish resolution and success.

Forgive me this digression, and think

1 Woods Athen. Oxon. Vol. 2. p. 484. 2. Life of Sir M.

Hale by Dr. Burnet. 3. Athen. Oxon. Vol. 2. p. 465. 4. lb. Vol. 1. p. 275. 5 lb. Vol. 1. p. 731.

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it less impertinent; because it serves to justify the memory of our Author, when so many others have fallen short of the like intentions: and the nature of such attempts is more apt to absorb and discourage the aggressors. In the mean time, we should better accept and esteem this remnant that is sav'd of the 'Antiquities of Kent', and hang up the little plank, as more sacred than the whole ship.

But it is a more just Apology for Mr. Somner, that he did not devote his whole time to this ineffectual labour; but was all along employ'd in some other duties to the public.

He found it necessary, not only to know the places and persons, but the customs and tenures of his Country; of which none so eminent, and so peculiar, as that of Gavelkind. This the Lawyers inform'd him to be the local custom of Kent, whereby if the Antecessor died intestate, all the Heirs male did equally share in the inheritance of lands, which had not been held in capite, nor disgavell'd by special Act of Parliament. But this account would not satisfy so inquisitive a mind as that of Mr. Somner, for his aim was always to

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understand properties and nature, more than names: 'according to that end propounded by himself in all his researches, which was to know things, not so much in their present as primitive state, more in their causes than effects' /1. And to this enquiry he was the more induc'd, that 'he might satisfy his Countrymen, and gain excuse for delay of his County-undertaking. For the more easie purchasing whereof, that they and others might perceive he had not been altogether idle, he pitch'd in his thoughts upon the Kentish custom of Gavelkind, and to some more than vulgar discourse thereof, as a specimen and earnest of his farther intentions for the County'. This discourse he divided into five heads. 1. The 'true Etymologie and derivation of the name', where he refutes the continued fancy of Lambard, Coke, Camden, Verstegan, Cowell, Spelman, Dodderidge, and many other Lawyers and Antiquaries, who would derive it from the Saxon 'gife-eal cyn' 'give to all kindred, or to all alike'. Whereas he proves the name is by no means borrowed from the partible na=

ture of the land; but from 'gafol' or 'gavel'
a tribute or customary rent, and 'gecynde'
nature, sort or kind; implying it to be

1. Treatise of Gavelkind, Pref.

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land not held in fee, as Knights service;
but chargeable with such rents as made
it socage tenure. 2. He enquires into
'the nature of Gavelkind-land in point of
partition', and proves it was neither from
the name, nor bare nature of the land;
but partly from the nature of the land,
and partly from a general custom ex=
tended thro the whole County in such
censual land. 3. He searches into the
Antiquity of Gavelkind-custom (in point
especially of partition) and why more
general in Kent than elsewhere. 4. Whe=
ther Gavelkind be properly a tenure or
custom? where he treats with incom=
parable learning of all feudatory right,
and all menial service. 5. Whether before
the statute of Wills (32, & 34, Henry 8.)
Gavelkind-land in Kent were devisable
or not? which he resolves in the ne=
gative, and answers all arguments of
those who hold the contrary. All these
points are discust with that variety of
knowledge, and that ingenuity of spi=
rit, as will make the Author and the
book valued, while learning and Law
are valued. At the end is an Appendix
of such Muniments, Charters, and other
Escripts, as were quoted in the prece=
dent discourse. This subject led him

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thro a long course of Common Law,
and thro the sense of very many Sta=
tutes: for which he was afraid he 'might
be thought too bold with the men of that
robe, too much meddling with matters of
their peculiar science; but hopes they would
excuse him, being one that honour'd their
profession, and had an intent only in his
way to do them service, and their profession
right, by holding forth to public view some
Antiquities, tending at once to the satisfi=
cation of the one, and illustration of the other'.
What esteem this treatise bears among
men of that honourable facultie, I
might suggest by this familiar hint. I
sought in vain for the book among
many Libraries, till it was lent me by
a worthy friend eminent in that pro=
fession. I hope in a short time a new
Edition may spread it into more hands.
But let me give you a farther history
of it. When Mr. Somner had drawn all
his thoughts and authorities into a just

discourse, he sent his papers to his judicious friend Arch-bishop Usher, who return'd them with this testimony: 'I have perus'd this learned treatise of Gavelkind, and judge it very fit to be published. Ja. Armachanus. Apr. 7. 1647' /1. This

1. Treat. of Gavelkind, Append. p. 216.

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approbation of so great and good a man, was the best License that could be askt, or given to the book. But there were two reasons that hindred the publication. First, the distress and persecution of the writer, which might take from him the appetite and ability of printing. Secondly, the ignorance and affectation of those times, that hated all Antiquity Ecclesiastical and Civil; and doted on a new Gospel, and new Laws: so that till the nation was dispossesed of this spirit, it was not fit to cast the pearl before them. The Author laid it up in his own Archives, and imparted it only to the perusal of some peculiar friends. Dr. M. Casaubon had seen and read it, and in the year 1650. told the world, that his friend 'had wrote a just Treatise in English, upon that most famous and most ancient custom in Kent, call'd Gavelkind', &c /1. The Author himself upon occasion own'd the hidden treasure, and pointed to it once or more in 'his notes to the words of Lipsius', An. 1650 /2. and very often in his 'Glossary', An. 1652 /3. But when Monarchy,

1. Casaub. de Ling. Sax. p. 142. 2. Notæ ad verb. Lips. Append. ad Casaub. de Ling. Sax. p. 16. 3. Gloss. ad X. Script. in vocibus 'Feodum', 'Allodium', &c.

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Episcopacy, and learning were restor'd, then the Author brought forth the things new and old, when the eyes of men were opened. Yet still his own modesty would have longer conceal'd the talent, if the importunity of friends had not prevail'd. For he confesses An. 1660. 'That the Preface and Treatise had been written more than twelve years ago, and had lain by the Author ever since, and they had not now come forth but upon the encouragement of some worthy and judicious friends'. At their request it appear'd abroad with this title. 'A treatise of Gavelkind, both name and thing, shewing the true Etymology and derivation of the one, the nature, antiquity, and original of the other; With sundry emergent observations, both pleasant and profitable to be known of Kentish men and others, especially such as

are studious either of the ancient custom, or the Common Law of this kingdom, by a Wellwisher to both, William Somner'. London, 1660. 4to.

In this elaborate work, the Author is most happy in the Etymology and description of Gavelkind, and Socage, of the Norman's 'Fief de Haubert', and 'Fief de Roturier'; of the Saxon's 'Bocland' and 'Folcland'; of the Feudists 'Allodium' and

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'Feudum', &c. wherein he is singular and dissenting from all precedent writers, with such a vein of modesty, and such a strength of reason and authority, as has yet satisfied all Readers, and silenc'd all Critics. He has farther explain'd all the different tenures In capite; Knights-service; Fee-farm; Frank-almoign; Divine-service; Escuage certain; Burgage; Villenage, &c. with all lands denominat= ed from their service, as Work-land; Boc-land; Aver-land; Drof-land; Swilling-land; Mol-land; Ber-land; Ware-land; Terra-susanna; For-land; Bord-land; Scrud-land; Over-land; Mondy-land, &c. Where= in he supplies and corrects Littleton, and his oraculous Commentator: He fills up the defects of Spelman, and prevents the industry of Glossographers, that should follow after. And therefore the diligent Du-Fresne, in explication of most of these terms, barely translates the English of this book, and faithfully re= fers to it /1.

By this one performance he has in= deed shew'd himself an absolute Civi= lian, and a complete Common Lawyer; stating all tenures and methods of con=

1 Du-Fresne Gloss. Lat. in vocibus 'Gavelkind', 'Gavel= man', &c.

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veyance with exquisite judgment; and examining the Writ 'de rationabili parte bonorum', with that nice hand, as prov'd him Master of more than he profest. And in many of these disputes he could have been a more final Arbiter; but that his habitual modesty restrain'd him; So that when 'many other points of Common Law did offer themselves to his discourse, yet being out of his profession, he would not wade or engage any farther in the argument; lest he should be censur'd of a mind to thrust his sickle into another man's harvest' /1.

To obtain this knowledge in the Laws of his Country, he had trac'd all the streams of justice to their fountain

head; he had searcht back into all the Institutions of the Norman and the Sax= on ages. And having first diligently en= quir'd into the Laws of Henry the first, and adorn'd them with Notes, and a Glossary, as was before observ'd; he went back farther, and reviewed all the po= licy of the Saxon Kings; a copy of whose Laws had been first gathered up by Mr. *Alexander Nowell, (whom Mr. Camden /2 calls the 'Reviver of the Saxon

*<read 'Laurence'>

1. Treatise of Gavelkind, p. 170<.>
2. Britan. in Danmoniis.

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language') in the year 1567. who going then beyond the seas committed them to his pupil in those studies, Mr. William Lambard, desiring him to translate them into Latin, and to make them public /1. Which was done the following year under the title of 'ARCHAIONOMIA, sive de priscis Anglorum Legibus', &c. Londini, 1568. 4to. reprinted fol. at Cambridge, 1644. In the perusal of this work, our judicious Author found, 'that in the latin version there was a polite and elaborate stile, too much affected, that gave little or no help to the Reader in understanding the original Saxon' /2. Which opinion was after con= firm'd by that stupendous Master of the Northern tongues, Fr. Junius, who speak= ing of Mr. Lambard's 'publishing the Laws of the English Saxon Kings, translated by himself, tells us that he better approves the an= cient version by Jo. Brompton, and advises all that love the genuine Monuments of Anti= quity, rather to embrace the old interpre= tation of a rough and impolite age, than rashly adhere to the modern and more re= fin'd Translators' /3. The same censure was continued by the 'Annotators on the

1. Lambardi Epistola ad Archaionom.
2. Somneri Præfat. ad Saxon. Dict.
3. Junii Catal. Lib. ad Evang. Goth.

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Life of Alfred' /1, and by the last Editor of the Saxon Chronicle /2. Upon this prin= ciple Mr. Somner did believe, that such an elegant and paraphrastic way of ren= dring old Records, was too much like paint on the face of a wrinkled ma= tron, or a cap and feather upon gray hairs. He resolv'd to take off the dis= guise, and represent the true venerable aspect; 'by a new version plain and nigh to literal, for the benefit of all who were studious of the Saxon tongue; to which he added some Laws that were omitted in that collection by Mr. Lambard' /3. And designing farther; that such Gentlemen who would read only their mother

tongue, might not be ignorant of these fundamental constitutions, he turn'd them all to modern English, and has left the Transcript thus entitled, 'The ancient Saxon Laws translated into English'. Neither of these versions has yet seen the light, tho' most worthy of it. The first of them especially, will be of great use to the next Editor of the Saxon Laws. For Mr. Lambard's collection might be now greatly improv'd, as one, who best knows, assures the

1. Ælfredi vita p. 66. 2. E. Gibson Præf. 3. Casaub. de Ling. Saxon. p. 142.

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world, 'that beside the Laws first published by Lambard, and revis'd by Wheelock, it was probable that many others lie concealed in the Bennet and Cottonian Libraries, which it would be good service to send abroad into the world'. And (says the same great man) 'I have by me a Transcript of the Laws of King Æthelbert, Hlothare, and Edric, from the Textus Roffensis, which Lambard, however diligent in searching out these Laws, had not seen before his Edition of Archaionomia' /1. Let us not despair of a revision and augmentation of this Codex of English Laws. Our Friend who has done so much honour to the Saxon Chronicle, is of abilities, and a genius fit for this other performance.

In the mean time, let me observe, that nothing would more facilitate and perfect the studie of our Common Law, than an application to Antiquities of this kind. It is pity the young Gentlemen of that profession should be content to learn only the present practise of the Courts, and look no farther into the original of judicial methods: which alone can admit them to the depth of reason, and the bottom of

1. Hiccesii Præfat. ad Gram. Saxon.

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a cause. There is indeed little hope of this progress in those new measures, of first learning the practick forms in subservience to Attorneys, and bare bringing of names for a title to the bar. But where men of parts are honour'd with the more liberal education of spending some years in one of the two national Schools of learning, and thence transfer themselves to the Seminaries of the Law, to prosecute the Histories of use and custom: from such we might expect those degrees of knowledge,

that would accomplish the Advocate, the Judge, and the Statesman; such would be truest Patriots of their Country, and would be the more unwilling to have the Laws of England chang'd, when they understood what they were from the beginning. I dare not speak more of my own sence; but I humbly refer to the words of a wise man, who when he has recommended ancient Histories and original Laws, concludes thus. 'This I thought good to say for the sake of our young Gentry, who adorn the Inns of Court, if possibly by my advice they would not spare their pains to attain the Saxon tongue, and run over the many monuments of venerable Antiquity in that lan-

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guage and Character, the peculiar treasure of their nation' /1. Possibly Estates and some titles may have been obtain'd by lighter means; but the good name, and the abilities to serve a Kingdom, have been acquir'd only by these industrious studies. This keeps up the memory of Coke, Dodderidge, Noy, Selden, Hale, and many other oracles, whom no authority nor time can silence.

But I proceed to tell you the next labour of Mr. Somner: which was a dissertation 'de Portu Iccio'. For examining the expedition of Cæsar into Britain, he found by his own account /2, that his first voyage began from a Port of the Morini, from whence was the shortest passage into Britain. And where he took ship the second time, (which by description appears to be the same place) he *expresly call'd 'Portus Iccius'. Men of learning were not agreed in the site of this haven. Mr. Camden and Ortelius thought it to be Witsan. Raimundus Marlian, and Adrian Junius, believ'd it the same with Calais. Jac. Chifletius for the honour of his Master the King of Spain, would have it Mardike in Flanders. But

*sic

1. Hiccesii Præfat. ad Gram. Saxon. 2. Cæs. Comment. l. 4.

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Mr. Somner fixes it at Gessoriacum, now Bologne; wherein he was followed by Sanson, &c. Of later writers, Adrian Valesius /1 concludes it to be Estaples nigh Bologne. The noble Du-Fresne /2 and M. Baudrand /3 restore it to Witsan or Witsant. And Mr. Halley /4 conjectures it was near Calais-clifts, either Ambleteuse on the one side, or Calais on the other. Other Critics may suspend their judgement, till they see this discourse of Mr.

Somner, which deserves to be fairly
publisht. The MS bears this title, 'A dis=
course of Portus Iccius, wherein the late
conceits of Chifletius, in his Topographical
discourse, are examined and refuted: the
judgement of Cluverius concerning the same
Port asserted and embraced, and the true
site thereof more clearly demonstrated, by
William Somner'.

Our Author's skill in the Saxon
tongue, oblig'd him to enquire into
most of the European languages anci=
ent and modern. For there is a con=
nexion in all learning, especially in
the knowledge of tongues, which draws
the student from one link to another,

1. Notitia Galliarum in voc. 'Iccius Portus'. 2. Dissertatio
28. in notis ad vitam L. Ludovici. 3. Lex. Geog. *3. Philosoph. *sic
Transact. March 1691.

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till he has past over the whole chain
of dependance. This made him run
through the old Gallic, Irish, Scotch, and
Danish dialects; especially the Gothic, Scla=
vonian and German. Of his perfection
in the latter, he gave the world a pub=
lic specimen on this occasion. While
his Reverend friend Dr. Meric Casaubon
was employ'd in an essay on the Saxon
tongue, he hapned upon an Epistle of
Justus Lipsius to Henry Schottius, which
contain'd a large catalogue of old Ger=
man words, in use with that nation, about
eight or nine hundred years before.
The Dr. thought many of them had a
great affinity to the Saxon; and there=
fore being then at London, sent down
the Catalogue to Mr. Somner at Canter=
bury, and desir'd his opinion of them.
Who within few days return'd his Ani=
madversions, and shew'd the relation of
the German with the Saxon tongue.
But because they were too long to be
inserted by Dr. Casaubon, in the body of
his discourse; he plac'd them as an Ap=
pendix under this title, 'Gulielmi Somneri
Cantuariensis ad verba vetera Germanica a
V. Cl. Justo Lipsio Epist. Cent. III. ad Bel=
gas Epist. XLIV. collecta, Notæ'. This first
part of Dr. Casaubon's Comment on four

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tongues, Hebrew and Saxon, (the other
two Greek and Latin, the Dr. did not
finish) was publisht at London, 1650. 8vo.
On the mention of it, I will put you in
mind of one mistake of a learn'd man,
Du Fresne Ld. du *Gange, who in the preface
to his admirable 'Latin Glossary', reflects
on those Critics, who would derive the

*sic

modern languages from Greek originals: Joachimus Perionius and Hen. Stephanus for the French; Monosinius for the Italian; Matutius and Aldretus for the Spanish, and Stephen Skynner for the English. When this last must be a lapse of memory: for Dr. Meric Casaubon, who in this Comment on the Saxon tongue, does industriously refer it to the Greek, and gives a long Catalogue of Saxon words so deduc'd. Whereas Dr. Skynner does indeed fetch the Saxon from the Northern dialects, and reflects on Dr. Casaubon for being so fond of that other conceit.

These were the public services done by Mr. Somner, till the year 1650. at which time Dr. Casaubon reports, 'that he would have printed all his useful labours, and would have wrote much more: if that fatal catastrophe had not interpos'd, which brought no less desolation upon letters, than

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upon the Land' /1. And he himself had about three years before declar'd, 'that he had by him some other things in a readiness for the public, which should not, God willing, be much longer retarded, if the times permitted by the continuance of our Countie's peace, peace that Mother of Arts' /2.

His next opportunity of doing public good was this. It was an observation of the learned, that no one nation had so many various Histories of their own affairs, as that of England: wrote by Britains, Saxons, and Normans; but most of them in a manner dissolv'd with the Monasteries, wherein they laid and slept. Some of them had been rais'd from the dust by Joceline, Howard, Parker, Camden, Savile; but many were yet in chains of darkness; which it would be justice and mercy to redeem, and expose to view. The proposal was made by that industrious Bookseller Cornelius Bee, who about 1641. had importun'd Sir Roger Twisden to supply him with materials of this kind for the press /3. That worthy Baronet call'd in the assistance of Arch-bishop Usher and John

1. M. Casaub. de Ling. Saxon. p. 141. 2. Pref. to Treat. of Gavelkind. 3. Twisdenus Lectori X. Script.

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Selden Esq; /1: by whose industry and good affection to learning, ten writers of the English history were transcrib'd from the originals in the Bennet and Cottonian Libraries, and faithfully collated with all different copies, by an

expert Amanuensis Mr. Ralph Jennings. For the more elegant Edition, a new fund of letters was neatly cast, and a provision made of fine paper. To adorn the work, Sir Roger Twisden was to acquaint the Reader with the occasion of the book, and the conveyance of those MSS. from which it was compiled. Mr. Selden was in a larger presence to give account of the ten Historians, and their writings. And Mr. Jennings to subjoyn the various lections. But still the Editors were sensible that to complete the glory of the work, there wanted a Glossary, or explication of the more obscure and obsolete words, which often occur'd in those primitive writers. For this province, they knew none so well qualified as Mr. Somner: to him they commit the office, and he discharg'd it with infinite integrity and honour. So that when in 1652. this best collection of Historians came forth

1. Amanuensis Lectori X. Script.

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under this title, 'Historiæ Anglicanæ scriptores X. &c. ex vetustis Manuscriptis nunc primum in lucem editi', &c. The Appendix was Mr. Somner's labour, thus inscrib'd, 'Glossarium, in quo obscuriora quæq; vocabula, quæ toto hoc opere continentur, copiose explicantur, & ad origines suas pleraq; revocantur, Gulielmo Somnero Cantuariensi Auctore'. Of this performance Sir Roger Twisden gives the Reader this character. 'One word of the Glossary, without which this work had been imperfect and little useful. Understand Reader, it was compil'd for your sake by William Somner, a man of primitive probity and candor, a most sagacious searcher into the Antiquities of his Country, and most expert in the Saxon tongue. If some words are here gloss'd upon, not found in these writers; know, this was not done out of ostentation, or the affected glory to appear learned; but it was granted at the importunate request of his friends, by a man of the greatest modesty and ingenuity; that if such terms occur in other Historians of our nation, and by none that I know of explain'd; you may from hence discover the sense of them: our design being not to give trouble to him, but satisfaction to you; such are Culvertagium, Witerden, Tenmantale, (the

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understanding of which I owe purely to him) and others of that kind'.

This key to recluse and antiquated

words, improv'd whatever of this nature had been done before: it amends and supplies the old 'Gallic Glossary' of Pontanus; the 'signification of words' by Skenæus; the 'explanation of terms' prefixt by Mr. Lambard to his Saxon Laws; the 'Onomasticon' of Clement Reiner, in his 'Apost. Bened. in Anglia'; the 'Glossography' to the works of Chaucer; the 'Etymologicon' of Jo. Ger. Vossius; the 'Glossary' of Dr. Watts, adjoin'd to his noble Edition of Mat. Paris; and above all the excellent Glossary of Sir Henry Spelman, then only publisht to the letter N. Nor has Mr. Somner like the former Glossographers, confin'd himself to the antiquated names of things; but with happy learning has commented on the names of this Island and several parts of it; to which he has affixt such new and apposite derivations, as delight and satisfie all judicious Readers. It is indeed a work of that extent, as may serve for a 'clavis' to all other Historians, and to all Records. Therefore when the learned Sir John Marsham wrote an 'Introduction' to the 'Monasticon Anglicanum, he refers the

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Reader to this Glossary of Mr. Somner's, where a barbarous word creates him any trouble'. And that living Author, (whom I often mention, but cannot enough commend) observes, 'That the Laws of the Saxon Kings may be read with some profit, as turn'd into Latin by Jo. Brompton, if the incomparable Glossary of Mr. Somner be consulted, wherein the more obscure words are fully explain'd' /1. And after calls it, 'a truly golden work, without which, as Sir Roger Twisden writes, the ten Historians had been imperfect, and little useful'.

How complete might this Glossary be made from our Author's several exercises of this nature, which now remain in the Archives of Canterbury? His marginal notes on 'Bracton de Legibus Angliæ'; on the collection of English and Latin Statutes, printed 1556. 8vo. on Mr. Selden's 'Spicilegium ad Eadmerum'; on Verstegan's 'restitution of decayed intelligence': especially from his 'Glossarium rerum & verborum difficilium in Legibus Henrici 1'. And his 'Adversaria in Spelmanni Glossarium', in 'Watsii Glossarium Mat. Par. additum: & in Tractatum Ger. Jo. Vossii de vitio sermonis'. Had the inquisitive du

1. Hiccesii præfat. ad Gram. Saxon.

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Fresne been inform'd of all these papers,

how much would he have augmented his immense work? How much will the knowledge of all our Laws and usages improve, when these mighty materials come at last to be digested by an able and patient hand?

The Author himself intended to publish more of this kind. For in his 'Addenda ad Gloss. X. Script.' he does advertise the Reader, 'that if any other difficult words occur, which he had not there explain'd, (as omissions might be easie in so long a work) and read over as it were extempore, he would be glad to be inform'd of them, and would not fail with thanks to explicate them in the best manner that he could: at least in another Tome of Historians, shortly to be publisht'. Sir Roger Twisden in his Preface gives the world the same encouragement, 'to hope for a second Tome, if this first were well accepted'. But it was not allow'd to Scholars to be so happy. The association of those Editors was dissolv'd by the death of Selden and Usher within few years. Tho possibly the greatest impediment was the ignorance and distraction of the times, that could not enough encourage the great expences of the Book=

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seller Mr. Cornelius Bee, to whom Mr. Somner gives this just character, that 'he was a man who had deserv'd very well of the republic of letters, by publishing, at his own care and cost, many books of better note, wherein he was so industrious, as literally to answer his own name' /1. He had indeed with great charge and pains, collected sufficient copies to have made up a second Tome; which lay dead in the hands of his Executors, till for a considerable sum they were purchas'd from them, by that generous promoter of learning, the right Reverend Father in God John Fell Bishop of Oxford; by whose encouragement some were publisht; and by whose never enough lamented death, others remain in private hands. I have seen the following copies, 1. Willielmus Malmsburiensis de Antiquitate Glastoniensis Ecclesiae ejusq; Abbati= bus. Ex Libro Roberti Cotton, quem ipsi dono dedit Tho. Allen, Aug. 12. 1672. exam. & collat. cum alio Manuscripto libro, quem Richardus Tychburn eques & Baronettus dedit Paulo Robinsono, qui eandem inscripsit Bibliothecae S. Gregorianae, Duaci, Jul. 15. 1651. 2. Invictissimi An= glorum Franciaeq; Regis Henrici quinti, ad

1 Praef. ad Dict. Saxon.

ejus filium Christianissimum Regem Henricum sextum, vita per Titum Livium de Frulovisiis Ferrariensem edita. Ex Libro Cottoniano, collat. cum alio Libro Manuscripto in Bibl. Bened. Cantab. 3. Historia de tempore primævæ inchoationis sedis Episcopalis Wellensis, & ejusdem Episcopis, & de Episcopis in sede Bathoniensi. 4. Fragmentum Annalium Saxonum ab An. 726. ad An. 1055. 5. Fragmentum Annalium de rebus ad Hiberniam spectantibus ab An. 994. ad An. 1177. To most of these copies is a Postscript by the Amnuensis, Mr. Ralph Jennings, wherein he acknowledges the receipt of several sums of money, for his reward in transcribing and collating the said copies, and promises to compare them with the original, when desir'd. What honour to the nation had it been, if these and many other copies had been publisht, in the same Method with the former Volumes. I am sure, we have since had no one Edition of Historians with that exactness, and that grandeur. Nor can we hope for any so correct and so august, till the same measures be taken, of several hands joyning in the same work. For any one undertaker has either not opportunity to discover all

copies, or not leisure to collate them; or not the advantage of attending the press for correction; or not patience to draw up (what is the main benefit of a large book) a full and faithful Index. So that we have lame and inaccurate Editions, for want of the wisdom of our forefathers to assist one another. It is by this mutual help, that the Societies in France give us such absolute Impressions. And could we resume that practise here at home, we should infinitely advance the good of letters, and the glory of Britain. I detract not from the public services of Mr. Fulman, Dr. Gale, and Mr. Wharton, who seem to have done as much, as private men can do.

Mr. Somner's reputation was now so well establisht, that no Monuments of Antiquity could be farther publisht, without his advice and helping hand. Therefore when the noble Sir Henry Spelman had encourag'd Mr. Dugdale to joyn with Mr. Dodsworth, to collect and publish the Charters and Monuments of Religious houses, and had communicated to them his own originals and

transcripts, of the foundations in Norfolk and Suffolk: when Mr. Dugdale in

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Oxford had got many materials from the Bodleian and College Libraries: and in France had gathered from the papers of Du-Chesne, several memorials of our Pories Alien. When Mr. Dodsworth had preserv'd all that related to Yorkshire, and most Northern Counties; when they had both searcht the Tower of London, the Cotton Library, and other Archives; they invited Mr. Somner to assist in that immense labour, who return'd them the Charters of Christchurch, and St. Augustin's in Canterbury, with the ichnography of the Cathedral, the draught of the Monastery, and other Sculptures: furnisht them with the original Charter of King Stephen to the Abby of Feversham, then in his hands; and inform'd them in many other queries relating to the City and County: and then accepted the office impos'd upon him, of bearing a peculiar part of the burden, by translating all the Saxon originals, and all the English transcripts from the Itinerary of Leland, and other Records, into plain and proper Latin: a necessary and useful ornament to those admirable volumes. Which service Sir John Marsham commemo= rates in his learned 'Propylæum'; 'There

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assisted in this work a man of the greatest knowledge in our Antiquities, William Somner of Canterbury, who has rendred into latin all the Saxon, and the English of Leland. To whose Glossary, lately publisht with the English Historians, the Reader is refer'd, if any barbarous word creates him trouble. The same person is now preparing for the press a curious Saxon Dictionary'. The first Volume of this 'Monasticon' was publisht, London, 1655. The book which now stands in the Library of the Church of Canterbury, has inserted after the 'Propylæum' a printed leaf in folio, containing six copies of verses made by Kentish men, in commendation of Mr. Dodsworth, Mr. Dugdale, and Mr. Somner, who are there said to be the joint collectors of that glorious work. The second Volume was deferr'd (as a punishment to the ingrateful world) to the year 1661. A third Volume of Cathedral and Collegiate Churches, with Additaments to the two former, was publisht An. 1673. In these books are promiscuously com=

pris'd the most Authentic, because most genuine and inartificial, History of England. There be materials enough dispersed in several hands to complete a

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fourth Volume. Dr. Hicks recites the title of many Charters, in the Archives of the Church of Worcester, 'of which', he says, 'none are inserted in the Monasticon' /1. I have seen many originals and Transcripts of omitted Charters and Monastic Annals, in the hands of men of curiosity and public spirit; who would contribute their additions to such a work, when ever men of industry and courage dare to undertake it.

Mr. Somner's friends knew, how farther to employ a useful man. They observ'd it impossible to cultivate any language, or recommend it to the industry of learners, without the help of some Dictionary for a standing oracle in obscure and dubious words. This was yet wanting to the Saxon language, and was the reason why so few were masters of it. For men care not to travel without a guide in lands unknown. This was a burden that wanted heart and shoulders equal to it; but they could impose it on none more able than Mr. Somner: on him they lay the mighty task, and adjure him to perform it. Above all, the Counsellor of his studies Dr. M. Casaubon, us'd all his

1. Append. ad Sax. Gram. p. 171.

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interest of friendship to press him to this labour; as he thus informs us: 'When Mr. Somner by several essays on the Saxon tongue, had sufficiently prov'd himself a master of it; I ceas'd not then to importune him, that he would think of compiling a Saxon Dictionary; by which work I did assure him, he would best merit of that language, and would receive infinite thanks from all that were studious of it. But in such unhappy times, what can the Reader promise to himself, or what can I promise for the Author? I leave all to his own discretion' /1. Upon this hint given to the public, many other of Mr. Somner's friends, who knew his course of studies, did themselves hope, and made others expect, to see such a labour done by him. 'Especially when by his Glossary and Version of Saxon Charters, he had farther serv'd the world: from that time he was incited by the daily request and importunity of many persons, to undertake and finish

that work; many of his judicious and affectionate friends, considering his slender fortune, and offering to contribute in the charges of the impression: with assurance that the book would be very acceptable both at home and abroad, especially to all that were

1. M. Casaub. de Ling. Sax. p. 142.

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studious of the Teutonic Antiquities, which language was originally the same with the Saxon' /1. But for a work that requir'd so much time, and so great expence, his friends were to contrive some more competent support and reward: to which Providence (that seldom fails industrious men) ordain'd an opportunity. The great Sir Henry Spelman, while he was at Cambridge with Mr. Jeremy Stephens, to search those Libraries, and collect materials for his designed Volumes of 'British Councils', finding very many Saxon Manuscripts, and very few that understood them; resolv'd to found a Lecture in that language, to restore and improve the study of it. This generous act was soon done by him, and he first conferr'd that office on Mr. Abraham Wheelock, one that had assisted him in some Transcripts of that tongue; and for endowment settled on him and his successors a sufficient yearly stipend, with presentation to the benefice of Midleton, nigh Lin-Regis in Norfolk /2. By the death of Mr. Wheelock An. 1657. the disposal of that Lecture fell to Roger Spelman Esq; son of Sir

1. Præf. ad Lector. Sax. Dict. 2. Abr. Wheelock præf. ad <L>ector. edit<.> Bedæ.

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John, son of the founder, who design'd to bestow it on Mr. Samuel Foster, a learned and worthy Divine. But Arch-bishop Usher, a friend to Antiquities and Mr. Somner, recommended him to the Patron, 'that he would confer on him the pecuniary stipend, to enable him to prosecute a Saxon Dictionary, which would more improve that tongue than bare Academic Lectures' /1. And herein that Prelate was like himself, judicious. For the endowment of public Lectures has often met with this ill success, to make the Readers neglect, and the hearers despise them. Whereas if the same rewards were given, on condition of printing those Lectures, or publishing some other remains of that Art or Science: mens industry would be greater, and the Republic of Letters much

better serv'd. This seem'd the intention of the wise and pious founder Sir Henry Spelman, in establishing this Lecture. The words of his foundation being 'to promote the Saxon tongue, either by reading it publicly, or by the edition of Saxon Manuscripts, and other books' /2. Which last design Mr. Wheelock had

1. Somneri Epist. Ded. ad Saxon. Diction. 2. Wheeloci Præfat. Edit. Bedæ.

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most answered, by publishing 'the Ecclesiastical History of Bede', with the 'Saxon Paraphrase of King Alfred'. 'The Saxon Chronology' with his own latin version, and Mr. Lambard's 'Saxon Laws', with some additions. Cambridge 1644. fol.

This reason of the thing, and this Will of his Grandfather, inclin'd Mr. Spelman to comply with the advice of Bishop Usher, and to present Mr. Somner to the annual salary of that Lecture. Which this man of tenderness and modesty would not accept, without the free consent of Mr. Foster, before nominated to the place: who prefer'd the public before his own interest, and Mr. Somner before himself. Therefore content with the Ecclesiastical benefice, he left the annual portion of mony to Mr. Somner, who receiving this reward, would not omit the duty for it.

He was enough sensible, that to make a Lexicon in any tongue, was one of the hardest and most servile labours. Especially if no foundations were before laid; there to find materials, and to build the whole structure, was more tedious and expensive, than barely to augment, or adorn. On reflection he

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found those difficulties to press upon him: some faint endeavours, and forgotten promises, but no one public performance of this nature.

The first example was given by Ælfric the Grammarian and Arch-bishop, either of Canterbury /1, or rather of York /2, who flourisht about the year 1004. and made two distinct Glossaries on this tongue; one of which F. Junius transcrib'd from a very ancient copy in the Library of Peter Paul Rubenius of Brussels, and communicated to Mr. Somner /3, who publisht it with the Latin Grammar in Saxon, by the same Author. This could be no great assistance to Mr. Somner, because short and imper-

fect, and indeed 'erroneous', and 'a little barbarous', as the Editor himself complains /4: and another expert in these studies does affirm, 'when Ælfric expounds the words in Latin, he is very oft mistaken' /5. There is another Glossary Latin-Saxon, by the same Prelate, (distinct from the former) which he wrote as a Comment on his Grammar; and is found at the end of those copies of the Grammar

1. Cave Histor. Literar. p. 588. 2. Whartoni dissertatio de duobus Ælfricis. 3. Præf<.> ad Sax. Dict. sect. 17. 4. Ib. 5. Skynner Etymol. in voce 'Bleak'.

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which are now in the Cotton Library, and in that of St. John's Oxon: which seems to have escap'd the knowledge of Mr. Somner. This latter may be the same with that Diction. Latin-Saxon: which Dr. Cave recounts among the Manuscripts of Ælfric /1. And therefore a worthy Author is injurious to Dr. Cave, in taxing him with an error, for 're-citing this work among the Manuscripts of Ælfric, when it was publisht by Mr. Somner' /2. No, that work is still in MS. and what was publisht by Mr. Somner is a different Tract, which the Dr. had before mention'd, as printed at Oxon. 1659. One writer should be tender of another writer's reputation, and not impute mistakes, but where he is very certain of them.

There were two other ancient Saxon Glossaries by unknown hands, in the Cotton Library, the one a thin folio, the other a more thick octavo; what help Mr. Somner had from these, he freely owns, by referring to them. Since the Reformation, Mr. Laurence Nowell spent time in drawing up a Saxon vocabulary, which he design'd to complete, and publish. But he dying in 1576. left the im-

1. Histor<.> Literar. p. 588, 590. 2. Auctar. Hist. Dogmat. J<.> Usher<,> p. 377.

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perfect Manuscript, which Mr. Selden procur'd, and lent to Mr. Somner; who seems not to have receiv'd it, till he had in great part digested his own collections; and implies it to be a deficient work. F. Junius after took a transcript of it, the original and copy are both with us. Next to him, Mr. J. Joceline Secretary to Arch-bishop Parker, by advice of that learned Prelate, made some larger collections to the same intent, which were transcrib'd by Sir Symonds D'ewes Baronet, and remitted to Mr.

Somner: who farther mentions a report that John de Laet of Antwerp, a man learned in Saxon letters, had projected a work of this nature; but no performance. After all, Mr. Abraham Wheelock, Spelman-Professor, did promise the world that he would compile a Saxon Dictionary; but he either forgot the promise, or death absolv'd him from it. It has been the infirmity of great men, when their first thoughts have laid the scheme of any work, to take occasion of proclaiming their design; to raise and deceive the expectation of the world. Prudence should temper this vain desire of glory. An imprinted promise is a very sacred thing: and men should

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not engage their faith to the public, unless they are sure to discharge it. How often are men weary of a warm resolution? How oft do second thoughts correct the former: and when the scene is laid, it must be took away? How oft do mens labours encrease upon their hands, till the undertaking prove above their strength? How many accidents of business, sickness, and mortality may intervene? So as what wise man would enter into obligation, when it is such a hazard whether he shall be able to pay?

But this mention of the few Saxon Glossographers, is only to do justice to the memory of Mr. Somner, by inferring what small assistance he had in so large a work. He had not that easy task of adding to things invented, or improving an old book; but was to compose all, and be properly an Author. We have been taught at School to honour the Lexicon of J. Scapula, and yet Vogler has call'd him 'the Epitomator of Henry Stephens' /1: and another eminent writer says, 'he cannot be absolv'd from the crime of Plagiarism and concealment' /2. We ad=

1. Vogleri Introduct. Univers. p. 68. 2. Morhosii Polyhist. p. 83.

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mire the laborious Volumes of J. J. Hoffman: and yet it is observ'd with great indignation, 'that he has arrogated to himself the interpolated and depraved works of other men, suppressing the names of the true Authors' /1. And a great Critic animadverts on him, for transposing the whole Lexicon of Baudrand into the first Tome of his work /2. Nay Baudrand himself is by Sanson accus'd of 'theft

from his own Father, without any dutiful mention of him' /3. Nothing has been more familiar, than to hear Holyoak borrowed most from Rider, and he from Eliot, and so on. But I will give you one instance, which I have more lately observ'd. Tho. Cooper's 'Thesaurus Linguæ Romanæ', &c. first published London, 1565. greatly rais'd the reputation of that writer, and is said to have prefer'd him to his great station in the Church. Yet this mighty work is very little more, than a pure Transcript of the 'Dictionarium Latino Gallicum', by Charles Stephens at Paris, 1553. I have collated them in most parts, and find them literally the same in almost all words, and the

1. Baudrand præf. ad Geog. Au. 1682. 2. Jo. Alb. Fabri decas decadum, num. 78. 3. Gul. Samsonius Disquis. Geog. Epist. Ded. & Præf. 1683.

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direct order of them, and in every classic phrase; with this only difference, that those phrases are rendered in French by Stephens, and in English by Cooper: whose disingenuity is much the greater, because in his preface and Dedication, he mentions the 'Bibliothèque' of Sir Tho. Eliot, and the 'Thesaurus' of Rob. Stephens; but speaks not a word of this other Dictionary of Charles Stephens, which was the copy (I assure you) that he transcrib'd verbatim.

When Mr. Somner had made an immense collection of materials, in order to compile his Dictionary, and had methodiz'd them in two large Volumes, now remaining in the Canterbury Archives; he sent up his papers to Oxford, and the Impression was here made for the Author, Apr. 1659. with an elegant inscription to all Students in the Saxon tongue; a grateful dedication to his Patron Roger Spelman Esq; and a proper useful Preface. The Author and his work recommended by the ingenious verses English and Latin, of John de Bosco; Henry Hugford; Joshua Childrey; and Will. Jacob Physitian; with an Appendix of the Grammar and Glossary of Ælfric. And at the end of all, is a 'Catalogue of

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those worthy persons who contributed to the great charge of the Impression, whose names and example he commends to the present age, and to posterity; for the perpetual honour of Philologers, and as a testimony of the Author's grateful mind'.

Let none be offended, that so excel-

lent a work was forc'd to be thrown upon the public stock, and brought up on common charity. Till the men of curiosity encrease their number, this must be the fate of the best books, that they shall not bear the charges of their own Impression. It is this has stifled the conception of many glorious designs, to see exquisite Volumes thrown back upon an Author's empty hands; while Plays and Pamphlets reward the trifling writers. What else was the reason that most of our old Historians were first printed beyond the seas; but only, that cheaper methods, and quicker sale, made the Editors to gain abroad, what they must have lost at home? What induc'd Sir Walter Raleigh to burn the second part of his admirable History; but only a sordid complaint, that the first five books were a burden to the printer /1? What inclin'd Sir Henry

1. Life of the Author, Pref. Gen. Hist. of the world.

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Spelman so long to suppress the second part of his incomparable 'Glossary', but this only; that when he offer'd the copy of the first part to Bill the Kings Printer, for five pounds in books; that light proposal was rejected, and he was forc'd to make the Impression at his own great charge /1? How could Dr. Brian Walton have carried on those six stupendous volumes of the 'Biblia Polyglotta', An. 1657. if there had not been a public fund, and Treasurer appointed to collect and dispose the contributions of worthy men /2? In a word, it was a credit to this work of Mr. Somner's, that it appear'd so little the interest of the writer, and deserv'd so much the charity of public benefactors. Especially at a time, when the oppressed Royalists were more tempted to write for bread, than for glory; and were drove upon a double necessity, to beg for the support of themselves, and the Edition of their books.

For this indeed is a farther honour to the work, and the Author of it; that it was done in the days of Anarchy and Confusion, of Ignorance and Ty-

1. Editoris Præf. ad Glossarium. 1687. 2. Wood. Athen. Oxon. vol. 2. Fasti.

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ranny; when all the Professors of true Religion and good literature were silenced and opprest. And yet Providence so order'd, that the loyal suffering

party did all that was then done, for the improvement of letters, and the honour of the nation. Those that intruded into the places of power and profit, did nothing but defile the press with lying news, and Fast-Sermons; while the poor ejected Church-men, did works, of which the world was not worthy. I appeal to the 'Monasticon', the 'Decem Scriptores', the 'Polyglot Bible', and the 'Saxon Dictionary'.

I need not tell of the good reception this labour met with among men of judgment; nor how the great progress in the knowledge of this tongue, was owing most to this one work. I would only remind you, that our eminent Linguist Dr. Tho. Mareshall, in the Preface to his 'Saxon Gospels', refers the Reader 'upon all doubtful words, to this complete Dictionary, which Mr. Somner composed with great diligence'. And our first excellent Grammarian does gratefully acknowledge, 'that' he 'collected many critical observations, which lay dispersed in this work' /1.

1. Hiccesii Præf. ad Gram. Sax.

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It is true, this first public essay on the construction of the Saxon tongue, was not so full and absolute, but that it is now capable of additions, and great improvement. For how indeed can any works, but those of creation, be perfect, when they are first produced? Especially in a performance of this nature, that depends on the variety of words, and <...> Author's various acceptation of them: here the prime birth can give no more than infancy: it is age and education must encrease the stature, and mature the strength. Besides, our Author had this peculiar disadvantage, that while the abundant sense of words can be gathered only from a multitude of writers in all different times, and all different professions; he could procure but few books, and those of a short and ignorant age. This Apology I can better represent in the words of an ingenious Etymologist. 'How small a portion of our ancient tongue, like a few planks from a fatal shipwreck, has come into our hands? What a slender stock of words can be drawn out of three or four small Tracts? If of Roman Authors, none had been left to us but the Offices of Tully, and the Histories of Salust and Tacitus. If of the

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Grecian, none but Herodotus, Thucidi-

des, and Zenophon, how could Calpurnius and Stephanus have swell'd their volumes to so great a bulk? If you compare our Somner to those giant Authors, tho' in diligence not inferiour to either of them, you would see there a Hercules and a Cyclops; here a Hylas and a Pigmy' /1. Tho' certainly, if we look back on the first attempts of this kind, in all the ancient and modern tongues, we shall find no one Nomenclature, in it's pure beginning so copious, and so exact, as this of Mr. Somner.

He himself was most conscious, what was wanting to it, and therefore was always improving the stock, and soliciting all Scholars, whom he thought could be beneficial to him. Among others, Mr. George Davenport, a great proficient in that language, sent him many Notes and Observations. I have now before me an original letter of Mr. Somner to Dr. Casaubon, Canterbury. 12. Oct. 1664. of which part runs thus. 'I return many thanks for those papers of Mr. Davenport, which you were pleas'd to impart unto me. I have more than once perused them, and am so well pleas'd with

1. Skinneri Etymol. præf. ad Lectorem.

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them, and instructed by them, that I shall improve them to a good degree; in point of correction to some, enlargement and illustration in other parts of my Lexicon; not without the ingenuous acknowledgement of my Author. Mean time, in order to such a use, I keep them by me', &c. But Mr. Somner liv'd not to execute the good design; nor has any yet resum'd it; tho' materials ly ready gathered. For among the printed Authors, left corrected and illustrated by the hand of Junius, there is this Lexicon of Mr. Somner, with other loose sheets, and the Grammar of Ælfric collated with some Manuscripts. Another of these printed volumes was in possession of Mr. George Davenport, much noted and enlarg'd by the curious owner; and is now in other hands, interleav'd, and much farther improv'd. The want of a new Edition would indeed be superseded, could the world at last enjoy the 'Etymologicon Anglicanum', completed by F. F. Junius in two volumes, and that Author's 'incomparable Lexicon of five Northern languages', which that most worthy Prelate Bishop Fell, took care to have transcrib'd in eleven volumes: and some few years since, we were encourag'd with the hopes of a

speedy publication /1. But chance and change have employ'd mens thoughts another way. Whenever the impression is resolv'd upon, it must pass through many hands, which will never joyn, if they must return empty. It wants and deserves a public spirit, and a public fund.

The last service of our Author was to publish his 'Treatise of Gavelkind', &c. An. 1660. which I have already mention'd; and need only add, that some reflections were made on this discourse by Silas Taylor Gentleman, in his 'History of Gavelkind, with the Etymology thereof', &c. London, 1663. 4to. who, in his Preface, does inform the Reader, that 'he took occasion to publish his notes of this Tenure, from the late printed Treatise of that industrious Gentleman, Mr. William Somner of Canterbury, that he has intermingled those first observations with these Animadversions on his learned discourses: that he entred not on this undertaking to quarrel with him, or with a design to carp at any thing, which he hath laboriously written', &c. This less accurate writer has only attempted to carry the origi-

1. Hiccesii Catal. Lib. append. Gram. Sax. p. 147.

nal of the name and of the custom from the Saxons to the Britains; and to prove it not proper to Kent, but of an ancient use in other parts of the Kingdom, &c. In all material points he confirms the opinion of Mr. Somner, who in other exceptions has made his own defence in 'marginal Notes, on Mr. Silas Taylor's Gavelkind History, correcting his mistakes', &c. And his own printed treatise, when he was after conscious of any omissions, or lighter errors, he supplied and amended with his own hand. Both the books so annotated are now in the Canterbury Archives, and will be of great use to the next Editor of this very excellent 'Treatise of Gavelkind'.

Tho' our Author publisht nothing more in his own name; yet he was a fellow-labourer in many other works. Particularly in the 'second Tome of Councils', of which the first had been published by Sir Henry Spelman London, 1639. who had projected two other volumes. After the Restauration, Arch-bishop Sheldon, and Chancellor Hide, importun'd Mr. Dugdale to perfect a second Tome, who is said to have added as

many Transcripts as now fill 143. of

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the 200. printed sheets; of which he had several communicated to him by his old faithful Correspondent Mr. Somner, from the Registers of Canterbury. It was publisht London, 1664. full of mistakes. Mr. Somner with great pains and accuracy, collated the printed copy with many of the original Records, and in the margin amended the infinite defects. He had before done the same justice to the first Tome; of which he publicly complain'd, that the version of the Saxon was faulty, and occasionally gave a more correct interpretation /1. Both these volumes so emended are now in your Canterbury Archives; and will lend a very great assistance to any learned man, who has spirit to undertake a second Edition of those Monuments of the Church; for which the world will praise him, and may God reward him. I have now done with the works and more public services of Mr. Somner, as an Antiquary and an Author. I would only invite you to look back upon his Loyalty to the King, his affection to the Church, and his integrity to all the world.

His Loyalty was firm and constant,

1. Saxon. Diction. in voce 'Kirtlington'.

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not depending on interest, which might change; but upon a judgement, which could not alter. He adher'd to his Royal Master, and dar'd to suffer with him. A man of his parts and acquaintance, might have chosen his office from the usurping state, and his portion of lands from the dissolved Church. But he would accept of nothing from those who had no right to give; choosing rather to suffer affliction. He could influence his whole family to the same principles. Both his brothers were true and zealous in the same cause. John who was afterwards Wood-Reve to the Arch-bishop of Canterbury, and George a Major in the Militia of Kent; who appearing at the head of a party in the last effort, which was made by the Royalists in that County, 1648. engag'd the rebels at Wye with very unequal force: and tho' he might have safely retir'd, or secur'd his life by asking, he fought on, and fell with honour. Our Author's profession and genius had less adapted him for arms; but he was no

less zealous to assert the rights of the Crown, and the Laws of the land, by all the means which his capacity could use. When no endeavours could stop

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the madness of the people, nor save the effusion of Royal blood; he could no longer contain himself, but broke into a passionate Elegy, 'The insecurity of Princes, considered in an occasional meditation upon the King's late sufferings and Death. Printed in the year, 1648'. 4to. And soon after he published another affectionate Poem, to which is prefixed the Pourtraicture of Charles the first, before his Eikōn Basilikē, and this title, 'The Frontispiece of the King's book opened, with a Poem annexed, The insecurity of Princes', &c. 4to. He waited all opportunities to serve his banished Prince; but it was the fate of the honest Gentry to be disappointed in all attempts, and draw down the greater persecution upon their own heads. Mr. Somner had his share of sufferings from the jealous powers, and, among other hardships, was imprisoned in the Castle of Deal for endeavouring to get hands to petition for a Free Parliament; which he foresaw would restore the Church and King. Within a month or two, this method, blest by providence, gave liberty to him and all the Nation.

If we next consider his zeal and affection to the Church of England, we

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shall find them arising from a sense of conscience, that no threats or flatteries could move. His own primitive spirit, inclin'd him to the Doctrine and discipline of true Antiquity; and made him naturally averse to change and innovation. He helpt to sustain the old foundations, as far as his strength and art could do: and when he found they must be overthrown, he was content to be involv'd in the common ruins. He murmured not, but made a soft complaint, that 'he was overtaken by the impetuous storm, and necessitated to betake himself to other thoughts; chiefly how he might secure himself against the fury, in warding off the danger', &c. Yet his cares were more for the public interest, than for his own fortunes: as Keeper of the Archives, he had been allway faithful in the trust committed to him: But sacrilege and rapine, when they had devour'd the holy things, would have embezzled or destroy'd all the Deeds

and Records, that convey'd and confirm'd them. This was the practice of those blest Reformers. 'At Peterburgh in April 1643. a Regiment of horse under Colonel Cromwell, forc'd open the Church doors, tore in pieces the Common-Prayer

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books, took away the Leiger-book of the Church, broke into the Chapter-house, ransackt the Records, broke the seals, tore the writings, and left the floor cover'd over with torn papers, parchments, and seals' /1. About the same time 'a party under command of the Lord Brooks, storm'd and took the Cathedral Church of Lichfield, broke and shot down all the ornaments of it, and cast into flames all the Registers, Charters, Books, and Vestments' /2. At Worcester Septemb. 24. 1643. 'the Army under command of the Earl of Essex, prophan'd the Cathedral, rifled the Library, with the Records and Evidences of the Church' /3. The like outrages were committed in the Cathedral of Canterbury, Aug. 26. 1642. by the countenance of Colonel Edwyn Sandys, and the madness of Culmer; and much greater spoil had been done to the Muniments and Histories of the Church, if the courage and prudence of Mr. Somner had not diverted the thieves, and conceal'd the treasure. Some he repositied in unsuspected hands, and kept others in his own custody; and redeem'd others from the needy

1. Supplem. to Hist. of Ch. of Peterb. p. 334, 337. 2. H. Whartoni præfat. ad Ang. Sac. Tom. 1. p. 35. 3. Dugd. View of troub. p. 557.

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soldiers, who (like the old woman with Tarquin) would have burnt them, if the price had not been given. Soon after professing, That 'his great care should now be to secure and rescue old Records from that scorn, neglect and contempt cast upon them, in the days of so much novelty' /1. Nor did he only preserve the writings, but other ornaments of the desolated Church. Particularly, when the beautiful Font in the nave of that Cathedral (built by the right Reverend John Warner Bishop of Rochester, late Prebendary of Canterbury, and consecrated by John Lord Bishop of Oxon. 1636.) was pull'd down, and the materials carried away by the rabble, he enquir'd with great diligence for all the scatter'd pieces, bought them up at his own charge, kept them safe till the King's return, and then delivered them to that

worthy Bishop; who reedified his Font, and made it a greater beauty of holiness; giving to Mr. Somner the just honour, to have a daughter of his own first baptized in it.

This Prelate was he, whom the Fanatics of that age condemn'd for a covetous man. His memory needs no vin-

1. Pref. Treat. Gavel-kind.

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dication; but give me leave to mention this certain relation of him. When in the days of usurpation, an honest friend paid a visit to him, and upon his Lordship's importunity, told him freely the censures of the world upon him, as of a close and too thrifty temper: the Bishop produc'd a Roll of distressed Clergy, whom in their ejections he had reliev'd with no less than eight thousand pounds: and enquir'd of the same friend, whether he knew of any other the like objects of charity. Upon which motion the Gentleman soon after by letter, recommended a sequestred Divine, to whom at first address he gave one hundred pounds. Let me go on, and tell you; that by his last Will An. 1666. he left a personal estate to build an Hospital, for the maintenance of twenty Widows, the Relicts of Orthodox and loyal Clergymen, to each an exhibition of twenty pounds annual, and fifty for a Chaplain to attend upon them. He gave one thousand pounds to encrease the Library of Magdalen College Oxon. five hundred pounds to the Library at Rochester: eight hundred to his Cathedral Church, in addition to two hundred, which he had before

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given: one thousand and fifty pounds to the repair of St. Paul's in London: two thousand to the buying in of Impropriations within the Diocess of Rochester: twenty pounds to the Church of St. Clement Danes: twenty to Bromley, and a yearly pension to St. Dionyse Backchurch; and fourscore pounds yearly for the maintenance of four Scholars of the Scotch Nation, in Baliol Coll. Oxon. All this was the charity of one single Prelate, who was depriv'd of his Ecclesiastic revenues, for more years than he enjoy'd them. He was a peculiar friend to Mr. Somner, and the chief contributor to the Impression of his Saxon Dictionary, his name standing in the front of those encouragers of learning /1.

Let us lastly reflect on Mr. Somner's integrity to all the world. This alone can prove Loyalty and Orthodoxy, not to be the affectation of a party, but the conscience of a Christian. Men may profess any faith, or adopt any cause; but it is innocence and honesty alone, that can prove it a belief, and not a pretension. This proof was given by Mr. Somner, who in all his writings had been so plain and sincere, that he

1. Catal. Append. Sax. Dict.

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would not dissemble a truth, nor suggest a false invention. His profession was, That 'he loved truth (the end of all science) for it self; and was altogether unbiased with any by respects, whether of vain-glory, singularity or the like: making it his constant endeavour, that truth alone might triumph over falshood, Antiquity over novelty' /1. How do most Historians betray a partial regard to their Nation, or their party? How many pretenders to Antiquity, have conceal'd the notice of whatever oppos'd their own fancy: and rais'd the apparition of Records, to justify the cause for which they wrote? Especially, how do most describers of their native soil, take pains to flourish and disguise; and (like Sir Henry Wotton's Ambassador) think it even a merit to lie for the honour of their Country? Mr. Somner had a probity and excellence of spirit, that made him abhor all such artifice and guile. Let one short instance serve. There were two specious traditions, that seem'd much to illustrate the credit of our County.

1. That the Kentish-men were the only English who maintain'd their privileges against William the Conqueror, and

1. Pref. to Gavel-kind.

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under the conduct of Stigand Arch-bishop, and Ægelsine Abbot of St. Augustines, march'd with boughs, and made their composition at Swanscomb. 2. That, of all Counties, Kent alone enjoy'd an immunity from the tenure of villenage, a privilege continued to them by the said Conqueror. Tho for the honour of his mother County, he might have been glad to defend these titles; yet having found them false, he scorn'd to appear an Advocate for them: but refutes them 'as Monkish figments, and politically devis'd' /1.

Mr. Somner's whole life was like his

writings, void of prejudice and passion: he had that civility, which Cæsar observ'd to have been peculiar to the inhabitants of Kent /2; and that firm resolution, which made our Country-men claim an ancient privilege, of being plac'd in the front of a battel /3. He was courteous, without design; was wise, *without a trick: and faithful, without a reward. Humble, and compassionate: moderate, and equal: never fretted by his afflictions: nor elated by the favours of Heaven, and good men.

*sic

1. Treat. of Gavelkind. p. 63, &c. 2 Cæsar's Comment. l. 6.
3 Lambards Perambulat. p. 11.

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It was his charity, and purity of heart, that prefer'd him to the Mastership of St. John's Hospital, in the suburbs of Canterbury, An. 1660. In which station he did not subtract from the pietance of the poor, nor use any arts to rob the spittle; but was tender of their persons, and zealous of their rights. By his interest and courage, he recovered some parts of their endowment, of which by the Commissioners on the Stat. 37. of Henry 8. 'it had been fleeced, as other like places, by the sacrilegious pilferies of those ravenous and wretched times' /1. It was for the same plain and open honesty, that at the Restauration, he was appointed Auditor of Christchurch Canterbury, by the Dean and Chapter, to whom he was a Father and friend, more than an honorary servant. He entertain'd them in his own house, till their own were clear'd from the Fanatic intruders, and made convenient for them. He deliver'd back all their preserv'd writings; inform'd them of all their late alienated lands: receiv'd all their Fines, and digested all accounts to universal satisfaction. This settled him such an interest in

1. Antiq. Cant. p. 94.

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that Body, and all the members of it; that no private man had an equal influence and authority: which he never employ'd, but to promote some act of charity and justice. He was frequently entrusted by the Dean and Prebendaries, to supervise the public School, to examine Lads, that should be elected King's Scholar's; and, upon the like trial, to judge who were most fit for removal to the Universities: in which, his enquiries were exact; and his favours were

impartial. His endeavours were to advance the interest and honour of the School, to as high a pitch, as while he was himself a member of it: when his master Mr. John Ludd, 'some years before he died, affirm'd, he had thirty seven Masters of Arts of his own bringing up' /1. Dr. Tho. Turner the worthy Dean, had a most peculiar esteem for him, and paid him the frequent visits of a most familiar friend. All the neighbouring Clergy, whom he knew to be of good principles, and honest conversation, he assisted with his knowledge, his interest, and his free advice. I remember to have often heard my Honour'd Father dwell much upon the fair character of Mr.

1. England described by Edw. Leigh. p. 108.

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Somner, and represent him as a Patron and protector of all the regular Clergy. Of his resolute and incorrupted honesty, there can be no greater argument than this. Among all his temptations, in several offices, to high and arbitrary fees: among the easy advantages to be brib'd: and the just expectances to be rewarded: among the many opportunities of sharing in the Churches treasure: and taking leases of their land: among the most ready and effectual means to raise an estate, and advance a family: He left but a small competence, which if not frugally manag'd, could never have answered the support of his Widow, and the education of his Children.

By his last Will he gave several Legacies to the poor, and a kind remembrance to Mr. Stockar then Minister of St. Ælphege Canterbury. In the beginning of his last illness, he took an opportunity to tell his Wife, that through his whole life, he had never been let blood, nor taken any phisic, which is a just argument, not only of his happy constitution; but of his exact temperance and sobriety. The day of his birth was the day of his death, March 30. 1669. aged 63. years; according to

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the account given by his Wife and Son, who report it from tradition, and some better grounds. But a Certificate from the Register-book of St. Margaret's Canterbury; under the hand *of Mr. Tho. Johnson, represents him to be baptiz'd Novemb. 5th. 1598. by which, his age must reach to seventy years, five months, &c. Which length of days had allmost

*sic

made him (as Queen Christina, said lately of her self and Rome) one of the Antiquities of the City. He was buried Apr. the 2. within the Church of St. Margaret's, where many of his Ancestors lay interr'd. His grave is distinguish'd by no stone, or inscription on it. An omission, that, I presume, was more owing to his own modesty, than any disrespect of his surviving friends. Yet I cannot but admire and lament, that such learned ashes should lye without a letter on them: that he who rais'd the memory of so many great names, should himself sleep in a place forgotten: and after all his labours, to eternize the tombs and epitaphs of others, should have no such decent ceremony paid to his own dust. Sure the time will come, when some grateful monument shall be erected for him, either

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by some one of his family, whom providence shall enable to pay that duty: or by some one generous lover of Antiquities: or by that Capitular body, to whom he did such great service, and such great honour.

He was twice married. His first wife was Mrs. Elisabeth Thurgar, born of a good family in Cambridgeshire, with whom he liv'd in love and peace about thirty years: and had by her four children, three daughters, and one son, all dead. His second wife was Barbara daughter of Mr. John Dawson, a Kentish Gentleman, (a great sufferer in the long Rebellion) by whom he had one daughter, that died unmarried, and three sons, of which two are now living: William Somner M. A. late of Merton Coll. Oxon. now Vicar of Liminge in Kent, our worthy friend: and John, who practises Chirurgery with the good repute in those parts. His last wife is now the mourning Relict of Mr. Henry Hannington, late Vicar of Elham.

His many well selected books, and choice Manuscripts, were purchas'd by the Dean and Chapter, who knew the great value of them, and what a noble addition they would make to the public

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Library of that Church: where they now remain an inestimable treasure. The catalogue of his Manuscripts, I will subjoin to his life, in the same order and words, wherein you have transmitted the account, not doubting your care and exactness in it.

Many of his notes, and looser papers were carried from his study to the Audit-house, within the precincts of Christ-Church; where they were unfortunately burnt, by a fire which hapned in that place soon after his death. By this and other accidents, his letters and many memorials of his life are lost. Had they continued to us, we should have better trac'd his friendship and correspondence, with most of the men of honour and learning in that age. From the obscure hints, that now remain, I shall mention some of them.

First. Arch-bishop Laud, 'by whose favour and goodness, he subsisted in his place and profession' /1; who made great use of him in his Articles and Injunctions, sent to the French and Dutch congregations in those parts, An. 1634. and in many regulations of the Diocese and Cathedral, An. 1636. For which dutiful assistance,

1. Ep. Ded. Antiq. Canterb.

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Mr. Somner was publicly charg'd by those foreigners, as accessory to their troubles /1: and he bore from all Schismatic parties, a greater share of calumny and persecution, for being (in the brethren's language) one of 'Laud's creatures'. The great esteem that Prelate had for him, was not so much for his faithfulness and dexterity in discharge of his office, as for his profound knowledge of Antiquities. For as no one part of learning was unrewarded by that Great Soul: so he had a most particular respect to Historians, and Antiquaries. Sir Henry Spelman does gratefully report him, a great encourager of his Edition of the 'Saxon Councils' /2. Mr. Jer. Stephens, by the Arch-bishop's favour, was made Prebendary of Bigsworth in the Church of Linc. as a reward of assisting Sir Henry Spelman in that labour /3. Fr. Junius, that oracle of the Northern tongues, at his first coming into England, was recommended to the Earl of Arundel, and retain'd in his family by the interest of Dr. Laud, then Bishop of St. Davids /4. John, son of Sir

1. Troubles of the foreign Churches in Kent. 4to. 2. Pref. Council. Tom. 1. 3. Athen. Oxon. Tom. 2. p. 230. 4. F. Jun. de Pictura Veterum, Præf. 4to.

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Henry Spelman, dedicates to the Arch-bishop his 'Latin Saxon Psalter', and celebrates him for 'a Preserver of ancient Manuscripts, and a Patron of the Saxon

tongue' /1. The same excellent Prelate countenanc'd the like studies of Mr. Somner, and made use of his assistance in collecting many of those various Manuscripts, which he sent hither to adorn our Bodley Archives; of which eighty at least are purely on the subject of National Antiquities. And it is probable, our Author was employ'd further in compiling or digesting that 'large book in vellum, fairly written, containing the Records which are in the Tower, and concern the Clergy, ab anno 20. Edw. 1. ad an. 14. Edw. 4.' which book the Arch-bishop 'got done at his own charge, and left it in his study at Lambeth for posterity, June 10. 1643.' This was the prudence and honour of that Governor, to consider useful and beneficial men; and should indeed be the spirit of all Patrons, to respect such as can serve them, and the public. For this dependance, and these favours, Mr. Somner was humbly grateful. 'Of whom', (says he) 'to speak, is not a task for my

1. Ep. Ded. Psalter. Lat. Sax. 4to.

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pen, I leave it to posterity hereafter, and to better abilities, to set forth his constant piety, great wisdom, and spotless justice. Howbeit, what all men take unto themselves a liberty to speak of him, I shall be bold to commemorate, – that never to be forgotten gift of his to the University Library of Oxford, of an innumerable multitude of choice and rare Manuscripts, with his great care and cost, gathered from all parts, not only of this kingdom, but also of the whole world' /1.

Arch-bishop Usher may be justly esteem'd the next friend and Patron of Mr. Somner. How infinite the learning, and how large the goodness of this Prelate, is not to be here observ'd. It is only proper to remark his great zeal in restoring the old Northern Antiquities, buried in the Gothic and Anglo-Saxon tongues. He first mov'd Sir Henry Spelman to found a Saxon Lecture at Cambridge; he made the proposal in Sidney College 1640 /2; he *recommeded Mr. Abr. Wheelock to that office /3; he advis'd him the method of reading the Saxon Gospels /4; he gave him direction and encouragement to publish his Saxon

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1. Antiq. of Cant. p. 274, 275. 2. Abr. Wheeloci Epist. Ded. Bedæ, 1644. 3. ib. 4. ib.

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volume; and inform'd him that the

Doxology in the Lords Prayer, was to be found in the old translation of the Gospels into Gothic /1. He furnisht Fr. Junius with a MS. copy of Cædmon's Paraphrase on Genesis: and promoted the Edition of that work /2: which very ancient Manuscript, the Bishop first communicated to Mr. Somner, for an account and more legible transcript of it /3. On which occasion, his Lordship was so well convinc'd of the abilities of our Author, that he gave a public approbation to his 'Treatise of Gavelkind'; he encourag'd his attempts upon a Saxon Dictionary; he recommended him to Roger Spelman, Esq;., for enjoyment of the salary settled by his Grandfather on a Saxon Lecture /4: and did him all the other true offices of friendship.

Sir Thomas Cotton of Connington Com. Huntin. Baronet, by an hereditary love of Scholars, was a great Benefactor to Mr. Somner, and his studies. He maintain'd an Epistolary correspondence with him; gave him free access to his immense Li-

1. Versio & notæ ad Evang. Pers. 1652. 2. Somneri præf. Sax. Dict. 3. ib. 4. Somneri Epist. Ded. Sax. Dict.

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brary; lent him Glossaries, and other remains of ancient letters /1; entertain'd him in his house at Westminster some months, to collect and digest his 'Saxon Dictionary'; and contributed to the expence of its publication /2.

That great Master of History and Law, Sir Roger Twisden of West-Peckham in Kent Baronet, exchange'd many kind letters, and intimate visits, with our Author; receiv'd from him notes, and corrections, to his edition of the Laws of Henry the first; furnish'd him with the chartulary of St. Augustin's Abby in Canterbury, and other curiosities /3; prevail'd with him to adorn the 'X. Scriptores', with an incomparable 'Glossary'; bore a generous share in the costly edition of his 'Saxon Dictionary' /4; and gave him the just character of 'a man of primitive probity and candour, a most sagacious searcher into the Antiquities of his Country, and most expert in the Saxon tongue', &c /5. For which service and civilities, Mr. Somner does more than once acknowledge him 'his very noble and

1. Sax. Dict. Præf. 2. ib. Append. 3. Treat. of Gavelkind p. 171. 4. Sax. Dict. Append. 5. Twisdeni Epist. ad Lect. X. Script.

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learned friend, the prime encourager of his studies' /1.

That great example of industry Sir W. Dugdale, by his genius and parity of studies, was directed to the acquaintance of Mr. Somner, and contracted a fast friendship with him. He call'd in his assistance to the magnificent volumes of 'Monast. Anglican.' 1655. and 1661. appeal'd to him for the etymology of names of places, to illustrate his 'Antiquities of Warwickshire', 1656. receiv'd from his hands very many of the materials, that fill'd up the second volume of 'Provincial Councils', 1664. depended upon his judgment and information, to complete the Glossary of Sir Henry Spelman. He seems to have attempted nothing without his advice, and to have publisht nothing without his approbation: giving among others, this testimony of his respect and love. 'In etymologizing the names of Towns and Places, I have not been over bold, &c. Nor should I have adventured thus far, had I not received much light from that learned Gentleman Mr. William Somner of Canterbury, my singular friend, unto whom I

1. Treat. of Gavelkind. p. 171. & Sax. Dict. in voce 'craflan'.

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cannot attribute enough for his great knowledge in Antiquities, and those commendable works which he hath allready, and is now taking pains in' /1. By this last, he meant the 'Saxon Dictionary', to which Mr. Dugdale contributed his knowledge and his money; and had this grateful acknowledgement made of it, 'The great retriever of our English Antiquities, my noble friend, Mr. William Dugdale, one (to do him right) without whose active and effectual assistance, in the publication of it, this work had never seen the light' /2.

The treasurer of Antiquities Mr. Roger Dodsworth, knew the person, and the worth of Mr. Somner. He borrowed from him the chartulary of Horton-monachorum in Kent /3, and many other evidences of old devotion. He receiv'd from him farther satisfaction in the catalogue of Archdeacons of Canterbury, which he had transcrib'd from his Antiquities of that City /4: and from his kindness had a copy of many Wills, out of the Registers of that See /5.

Sir Simonds D'ewes Baronet, of Stow-Hall in Suffolk, a zealous assertor of

1. Dugdales Pref. to Warwickshire illustrated. 2. Sax. Dict. in voce '*Hlaepc'. 3. Roger Dodsworth collect. vol. 55. f. 86. 4. ib. vol. 59<.> f. 161. 5. ib. vol. 17. f. 81.

*sic

Antiquities, was not so happy in the use of his own learning, as in his interest with Mr. Somner; who instructed him in the notice of many things; and made the better use of his inestimable records; taking occasion to tell the world, 'of a very rare Deed or Charter, taken from an ancient Manuscript chartulary, then remaining with Sir Thomas Cotton, which he must confess to owe to the courtesie of his late learned friend, Sir Simonds D'ewes'.

That excellent Philologer and Antiquary Mr. William Burton, had a knowledge and esteem of Mr. Somner; when he mentions Canterbury for one of the Roman stages, 'for its modern splendor and glory, he refers' his Reader 'to courteous Mr. Somner's description thereof', and approves the derivation of its name, given by that 'learned Antiquary' /1: and in fixing other of these ancient stations, he rejects the opinions of Talbot, Harrison, Camden, &c. and adheres to Mr. Somner, 'as a very rational Gentleman', who places Noviomagus or Noviodunum at Crayford in Kent, 'very judiciously, as he doth other things' /2. And for the situation of Durolenum, he follows the same

1. Burton comment. on Anton. Itin. p. 185. 2. ib. p. 176.

'knowing Gentleman, whom' (says he) 'for his courtesie, and love to ancient studies, I singularly respect: who takes it to have been seated not far from Newington, a village on the road from Rochester to Canterbury. In this particular, not a little strengthened in his conjecture, by the multitude of Roman urns, lately found in digging there, as is already discovered, and discovered of by the learned Meric Casaubon, his ever honour'd friend' /1. This new designation of the Roman ways and stages, so happily determin'd by Mr. Somner, is allow'd and confirm'd by a Prelate of incomparable knowledge /2.

Sir John Marsham of Whornplace in Kent, valued at home, and admir'd abroad for his profound learning, had a just esteem of our Author: and gave him the public character of 'a man most expert in our national Antiquities, the Author of a most useful Glossary', and the 'Projector of a copious Saxon Dictionary' /3; the Edition of which he encourag'd by a liberal contribution /4.

Sir Edward Bysshe, Clarenceaux King of Arms, had the counsel and assistance

1. Ib. p. 180. 2. Stillingf. Orig. Britan. chap. 2. p. 63. 3. Jo.

of Mr. Somner, to improve him in his own profession of Heraldry: kept an Epistolary correspondence with him: and kindly advanc'd the impression of his Saxon Dictionary /1.

Another accurate Herald and Anti-quary, Elias Ashmole Esq;,, exhibited to the same work of Mr. Somner /2: furnish'd him with many select papers and tracts /3: and receiv'd from him the notice of many books and things, to carry on his complete History of the Order of the Garter, and to fill up his many volumes of elaborate Collections, which are now repositid in this place /4, by the last Will of that generous Benefactor.

Dr. Thomas Fuller, who labour'd for the reputation of an Historian and Antiquary, courted the friendship of our Author: and, had he been more guided by him, would never have defil'd his writings with puns and tales. He closes his discourse of Canterbury with these words, 'For the rest, I refer the Reader to the pains of my worthy friend, Mr. William Somner, who hath written justum volumen of the antiquities of this City. I am sorry to see him subject bound (betrayed

1. Ib. 2. ib. 3 Sax. Dict. in voce 'Tima', &c. 4. In Musæo Ashmoleano.

thereto by his own modesty) seeing otherwise, not the City, but the Diocese of Canterbury, had been more adequate to his abilities' /1.

Dr. William Watts, the learned and noble Editor of Matthew Paris, 1640. in the useful Glossary affixt to that work, was assisted by Mr. Somner, who conveyed to him many other informations, and at last laments him as his 'deceased friend' /2.

Mr. George Davenport, an absolute Critic in the Saxon tongue, was a true and useful friend to Mr. Somner, and after publication of the Saxon Dictionary, contracted a more firm acquaintance with him: recommended to him some few emendations, and several additions to that work: for which our Author gave him the respectful language of his 'approved friend, of whose communicative goodness', he had 'formerly tasted' /3, &c.

But in recounting Mr. Somner's friends, it would be injustice to omit his most intimate guide and companion, Dr.

Meric Casaubon, whose affection to his person, and influence on his studies,

1. Fuller's worthies of England, p. 100. 2. Treat. of Gavel-kind. 3. MS. Letter of Mr. Somner, 12. October 1664.

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have appear'd in many instances before related. Mr. Somner very often expresst his grateful sense of obligation: confesses, that 'to the study of the Saxon tongue, he was encourag'd by his precious friend, and ever honoured Mecenat, Dr. Casaubon /1, who had admitted him to an entire friendship, and familiar daily conversation, whose good learning and good nature, he could never enough celebrate /2: the only Patron of his studies; and one who deserv'd greatly from all that were ambitious of the Saxon tongue' /3.

Many other worthy names rewarded the public spirit of Mr. Somner, and contributed to the service he did the world: Sir Orlando Bridgman, Sir Simon Archer, Sir Richard Leveson, Walter Chetwind, Thomas Stanley, Thomas Henshaw, Ralph Sheldon, &c. Esquires; of Divines, Bishop Warner, Dr. Langbain, Mr. Barlow, &c. of Physitians, Dr. Ferne, Dr. Pugh, Dr. Curre, Dr. Rogers, &c. and of our own County, all those Gentlemen who had an affection to virtue and good letters: The Honourable John Finch, Baron of Fordwich, Sir Edward Monins of Walder-shire, Sir Norton Knatchbull of Mersham,

1. Pref. to Treat. of Gavel-kind. & Sax. Dict. ad Lector. 2. ib. 3. Sax. Dict. in initio.

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Sir Richard Hardres of Hardres, Sir Henry Palmer of Wingham, Baronets, Sir Christopher Harleete of Hackington, Sir Anthony Archer of Bishopsbourn, Sir Thomas Godfrey of Nackington, Sir William Man of Canterbury, Sir John Boys of Bonington, Knights, John Boys of Fredfield, John Boys of Hode-court, John Boys of Betheshanger, Edward Scot of Scots-hall, Richard Master of West-Langdon, Thomas Engham of Goodnestone, James Brockman of Bitchborough, Arnold Brames of Bridge, Thomas Courthope of Stodmersh, Thomas Peke of Ashe, Laurence Rooke of Monks-Horton, Esquires. Edward Master of Canterbury, Herbert Randolph of Canterbury, William Randolph of Biddenden, Joseph Roberts of Canterbury, John Lynch of Staple, Gentlemen, &c. These all did honour to their Country, and to their Families, by serving the interest of Mr. Somner, and the public.

Pray, Sir, accept this plain account of

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the life of Mr. Somner: and my hearty thanks for your affection to the memory of this good man: and for your care in publishing this excellent part of his works. It is true, to send forth every *postumous tract of learned men, from loose and indigested papers, is an

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affront to the world: and often seems a libel to the Author, and Editor of them; but where the remains of an accurate writer are left complete and absolute, and argue a design of being wrote for public notice: there, to convey such reliques to the press, is an offence of justice to the Author, and of charity to all the world.

Your Obliged Faithful Friend,

White Kennett.

Edm. Hall. Oxon.

Feb. 15. 1693.

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Mr. SOMNER's Postumous Manuscripts, now in the Library of Christ's-Church Canterbury.

Collections out of ancient MSS and Records, relating to the City and Church of Canterbury, and to other Towns and Churches in Kent.

Large Extracts out of the Chronicle of William Thorn, with other extracts out of the Obituary of Christ-church, Canterbury; and out of the Registers of the Churches of Canterbury and Rochester, with Collections out of the Saxon Annals.

Observations upon the Commissary of Canterbury's Patent; being a large discourse concerning the original Jurisdiction, *Priveleges, Laws, &c. of the Spiritual Court.

*sic

A discourse of Portus Iccius.

A transcript of a large Saxon Theological Treatise.

A large Collection, in order to the compiling his Saxon Dictionary, in two Volumes.

Scholia & Animadversiones in Leges Henrici primi, Regis Angliæ, subnectitur Glossarium rerum & verborum difficilium in dictis Legibus. Dedicated to Sir Roger Twisden.

Collections out of Transcripts of several ancient Saxon MSS. in two volumes.

His Antiquities of Canterbury interleaved, with very large additions.

Lamberti Leges Saxonicae. Where he has amended the translation.

His emendations upon Spelman's two volumes, where he has Collated the text with MSS; and amended the Saxon Translation, and has gone through the whole work.

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His large notes upon Spelman's Glossary.

Some marginal notes upon the Grand custom of

Normandy.

Some emendations upon his Treatise of Gavel-kind.

Another Copy of 'Archaionomia', full of Emendations and Annotations throughout.

Marginal notes upon Mr. Silas Taylor's Gavel-kind History, correcting his mistakes.

Marginal notes upon Bracton de Legibus Angli.

Marginal notes upon the old Collection of English and Latin Statutes, printed 1556.

Marginal notes upon Horn's Mirrour of Justice.

Marginal notes upon Mr. Selden's Spicilegium ad Eadmerum; especially an emendation of Selden's translation of the Laws of William the Conquerour, publish'd by him. p. 173. &c.

Some marginal emendations on Spelman's Saxon Psalter.

Marginal emendations on Fox's Saxon Gospels.

Marginal emendations on Lisle's Saxon monuments.

Large marginal notes upon Meric Casaubon's book, De quatuor Linguis.

Large marginal notes upon Verstegan.

Adversaria in Spelmanni Glossarium, in Watsii Glossarium, Matthæo Paris additum; In tractatum Gerardi Vossii de vitio sermonis. In one volume.

Leges Anglo-Saxonicae, a V. C. Guil. Lambardo olim Editæ, ex integro Latine datæ.

Some Collections towards his intended History of Kent.

<Not wishing to come between the reader and the author, I add just one word of warning. Kennett shared in the confusion between Laurence Nowell (Lambard's friend, declared dead in 1571 after vanishing in Germany two years before) and his better-known cousin Laurence Nowell (who died as dean of Lichfield in 1576). The confusion seems to have originated with Anthony Wood; it was only quite recently resolved (ODNB). At one point (page 50) Kennett confuses him with another cousin, Alexander Nowell; but that was just a slip of the pen, put right in the second edition. – C.F. Apr. 2010.>