VI. *Account of the Seal of Geoffrey Bishop of Lincoln, natural son of King Henry the Second. In a Letter from HENRY ELLIS, Esq. F. R. S. Secretary, to the Right Honourable the EARL OF ABERDEEN, President.*

Read 13th March 1823.

MY LORD,

BY the kindness of Mr. Philip Audinet, I am enabled to lay before your Lordship, and the Society, a Drawing of an impression from an unpublished Seal of Geoffrey, Bishop of Lincoln, the second of the natural sons of King Henry the Second by fair Rosamond. The original is appended to a grant of certain Churches to the Priory of Burlington, in Lincolnshire, remaining among the Harleian charters in the British Museum.

The impression of the Seal is on red wax, of an oval form. The Bishop, whose figure is represented as that of a boy, holds a sort of pastoral crutch in his right hand; he is dressed in a robe or gown with long sleeves, and is bare-headed. The inscription round, which wants a portion of each of the two first words, runs thus; SIGILLVM. GALFRIDI. CLERICI. REGIS. ANGLOR². FILII.

The exact date of the birth of this Geoffrey I have not ascertained. Carte is certainly wrong in affixing it to the year 1151; three years before Henry's accession to the throne of England. All our historians agree that Geoffrey was preferred to the See of Lincoln in 1175, and Giraldus Cambrensis, who wrote his life, and resided in his father's court, expressly says, "*cum adhuc quartum ætatis suæ vix lustrum implesset, patris assensu unaninique fratrum concordia, vacante sede Lincolnensi, in ejusdem loci episcopatum est electus,*"^a which would place his birth at least as late as A. D. 1158.

Diceto, in his "*Ymagine Historiarum,*" says he had a dispensation for holding this preferment "*tam ætatis quam nativitat.*"^b

His election was confirmed, in the year already mentioned, at the Ecclesiastical Council of Woodstock. Brompton says, that on account of his tender years, King Henry the Second would not suffer him to be consecrated; but sent him to Tours for education.^c He presided over the See of Lincoln seven years, during the whole of which time he continued bishop-elect only; and, as such, is designated in the instrument to which the present impression is appended. In 1182 he resigned his See, having been made Chancellor of England.^d In this office we find

^a Angl. Sacr. ii. 379.

^b Twysd. Script. X. col. 586.

^c "In eodem vero concilio de mandato Alexandri Papæ electio Ganfridi Lincolnensis electi confirmata est, sed dominus rex pater suus noluit ut ipse tunc consecraretur, quia ille infra annos ætatis adhuc existens, nescivit tanti oneris et honoris regere dignitatem, et ideo misit eum rex Turonum, ut scholas ibi exerceret et disceret, donec dignus esset ad tantum onus suscipiendum."—Brompt. sub an. 1175.

^d "Electioni sponte renunciavit apud Merlebergam in Epiphaniâ Domini. Qui prius a patre suo fratre suo, rege consentiente, fuerat sollempnitate rinstitutus Angliæ cancellarius."—Rad. de Diceto, ut supr. col. 613.

him named in the will of King Henry the Second, at the making of which at Waltham he appears to have been present.^e

In the reign of Richard the First, in 1191, he was advanced to the archbishoprick of York; but the latter part of his life, in John's reign, was clouded with disaster. Wealth and power made him refractory. His *préferment* and its profits were seized; and he died an exile in 1213.

The circumstance of an illegitimate son boasting himself as *REGIS ANGLORUM FILIUS* upon an official seal, and that an episcopal one, may perhaps be thought singular; but the pride of royal descent under such circumstances was not confined to Geoffrey Bishop of Lincoln: we have a stronger instance of it recorded in another son of Henry the Second. Stowe says, under the year 1213, that Morgan provost of Beverley, brother to King John, was elected Bishop of Durham: but he coming to Rome to be consecrated, returned again without it, for that he was *a bastard*, and King Henry, father to King John, had begotten him of the wife of one Radulph Bloeth; yet would the Pope have dispensed with him, if he would have called himself the son of the knight, and not of *THE KING*. But he, using the advice of one William Lane, his clerke, answered, “that for no worldly promotion he would *deny the KING'S BLOOD*.”

I am, my Lord,

Your Lordship's faithful humble servant,

HENRY ELLIS.

^e ——— “*præsentibus episcopis R. Wintoniensi et Johanne Norwicensi, et Gaufrido Cellario filio meo.*”—&c.