

field or Buller. He was lacking in initiative—too cautious in his views; too scrupulous in his adherence to formalities. The reputation he has left is that of a sound and painstaking judge—not a judge of the brilliant or architectonic order.

“He was not too busy to find time for innocent amusements. He was, says his brother-in-law, ‘notwithstanding his contracted brow (owing in a great measure to his being very near-sighted) and an appearance of sternness in his countenance, often mistaken for ill-nature, a cheerful, agreeable, and facetious companion.’ But all men have their failings, and his was a constitutional irritability of temper, increased in later years by a strong nervous affection. This may be illustrated by an anecdote related by the author of *The Biographical History of Sir William Blackstone*: ‘I was perfectly well acquainted with a certain bookseller, who told me that, upon hearing Mr. Blackstone had commenced Doctor of Civil Law, the next time he did him the honour of a visit, he (the bookseller) in the course of conversation, and out of pure respect, called the new made civilian, “Doctor.” This familiar manner of accosting him (as he was pleased to term it) put him in such a passion, and had such an instantaneous and violent effect, and operated upon him to so alarming a degree, that the poor bookseller thought he should have been obliged to send for a doctor. People in these days put such irritability down to temperament, and are rather proud of it. Not so Blackstone. He was—so Lord Stowell tells us—the only man he had ever known who acknowledged and bewailed his bad temper.’

“His home was at Priory Place, Wallingford—conveniently situate between London and Oxford—and here, as elsewhere, he was active in local improvements, in road making and bridge building; the bridge at Shillingford, well known to lovers of the Thames, is one which we owe to him. To his architectural talents, liberal disposition, and judicious zeal, Wallingford likewise owes the rebuilding of the handsome fabric, St. Peter's Church. He died on February 14th, 1780, in the fifty-seventh year of his age, and was buried in a vault built for his family in this church.”