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Lord Bacon, Part I: His Life, and Character

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LORD BACON.*

PART I.

HIS LIFE, AND CHARACTER.

Birth--education--father's death—his uncle, Lord Burleigh, and cousin, Robert Cecil--their jealousy—his law-studies—disappointments--figure in Parliament--his patriotism rebuked--abject submission--friendship and generosity of Essex--Bacon's Essays--fall of Essex, and Bacon's ingratitude--death of Queen Elizabeth--accession of James I—his character--Bacon's knighthood and marriage--Bacon and Waller compared—successive promotions--his treatise on the "Advancement of Learning"—other works--his oppression of Peachain—Coke's manly resistance---Bacon's patron, Villiers, Duke of Buckingham---Bacon made Councillor,---Lord Keeper,---and Lord Chancellor---his corruptions as judge---impeachment---conviction and disgrace---sentence---pardon---literary pursuits---death.

Francis Bacon, the youngest son of Sir Nicholas Bacon, was born at York House, his father's residence in the Strand, on the 22d of January, 1561. His health was very delicate, and to this circumstance may be partly attributed that gravity of carriage, and that love of sedantary pursuits, which distinguished him from other boys. Every body knows how much his premature readiness of wit, and sobriety of deportment, amused the Queen; and how she used to call him her young Lord Keeper. We are told that while still a mere child, he stole away from his playfellows to a vault in St. James's fields, for the purpose of investigating the cause of a singular echo which he had observed there. It is certain that, at only twelve, he busied himself with very ingenious speculations on the art of legerdemain,—a subject which, as Professor Dugald Stewart has most justly observed, merits much more attention from philosophers than it has ever received. These are trifles. But the eminence which Bacon afterwards attained renders them interesting.

In the thirteenth year of his age, he was entered at Trinity College, Cambridge. It has often been said that Bacon, while still at college, planned that great intellectual revolution with which his name is inseparably connected. The evidence on this subject, however, is hardly sufficient to prove what is in itself so improbable, as that any definite scheme of that kind should have been so early formed, even by so powerful and active a mind. But it is certain, that after a residence of three years at Cambridge, Bacon departed, carrying with him a profound contempt for the course of study pursued there; a fixed conviction that the system of academic education in England was radically vicious; a just scorn for the trifles on which the followers of Aristotle had wasted their powers, and no great reverence for Aristotle himself.

In his sixteenth year, he visited Paris, and resided there for some time, under the care of Sir Amias Paulet, Elizabeth's minister at the French court, and one of the ablest and most upright of the many valuable servants whom she employed. France was at that time in a deplorable state of agitation. The Huguenots and the Catholics were mustering all their forces for the fiercest and most protracted of their many struggles: while the Prince, whose duty it was to protect and to restrain both, had by his vices and follies degraded himself so deeply that he had no authority over either. Bacon, however, made a tour through several provinces, and appears to have passed some time at Poitiers. We have abundant proof that during his stay on the Continent he did not neglect literary and scientific pursuits. But his attention seems to have been chiefly directed to statistics and diplomacy. It was at this time that he wrote those Notes on the State of Europe which are printed in his works. He studied the principles of the art of deciphering with great interest; and invented one cipher so ingenious that, many years later, he thought it deserving of a place in the *De Augmentis*. In February, 1580, while engaged in these pursuits, he received intelligence of the almost sudden death of his father, and instantly returned to England.

His prospects were greatly overcast by this event. He was most desirous to obtain a provision which might enable him to devote himself to literature and politics. He applied to the Government, and it seems strange that he should have applied in vain. His wishes were moderate. His hereditary claims on the administration were great. He had himself been favorably noticed by the Queen. His uncle was Prime Minister. His own talents were such as any minister might have been eager to enlist in the public service. But his solicitations were unsuccessful. The truth is, that the Cecils disliked him, and did all that they could decently do to keep him down. It has never been alleged that Bacon had done anything to merit this dislike; nor is it at all probable that a man whose temper was naturally mild, whose manners were courteous, who, through life, nursed his fortunes with the utmost care, and who was fearful even to a fault of offending the powerful—would have given any just cause of displeasure to a kinsman who had the means of rendering him essential service, and of doing him irreparable injury. The real explanation, we have no doubt, is this: Robert Cecil, the Treasurer's second son, was younger by a few months than Bacon. He had been educated with the utmost care; had been initiated, while still a

* The *Edinburg Review* for July contains an article of great length, but far greater ability, upon Basil Montagu's voluminous edition of Bacon's works, and history of his life. The article so teems with interesting facts, and contains what we take to be so just a view of Bacon's character, and so clear as well as just an exposition of his philosophy, that we cannot forbear enabling all our readers to share the pleasure and benefit derivable from the perusal. To this end, we cull those paragraphs and pages which are necessary to present an unbroken thread of narrative or of disquisition, and print them continuously; omitting little, besides the reviewer's discussions with Mr. Montagu, of some points on which that gentleman, with the amiable though too common weakness of biographers, is a mere apologist for his hero. The portions thus culled, we arrange in three divisions, with a table of contents to each; the first containing the Reviewer's sketch of Lord Bacon's life and character, and the other two a view of his philosophy--and a triumphant contrast of its useful aims, with the sounding emptiness of that taught by the ancient philosophers. We give translations of the passages in foreign tongues; hoping that unlearned as well as learned readers, will be attracted by this masterly performance. And we have tried so to mould the several parts together, and give it so much the appearance of a consistent whole, that no one might suppose it to be other than an original and independent Life of Bacon, and account of his works, but for this declaration to the contrary.

No reader will finish this article, exhibiting the amazing intellect and weak (not bad) heart of the wonderful man it commemorates, without regarding as literally true, that line which calls him

"The greatest, wisest, meanest,---of mankind."

boy, in the mysteries of diplomacy and court-intrigue; and was just at this time about to be produced on the stage of public life. The wish nearest to Burleigh's heart was that his own greatness might descend to this favorite child. But even Burleigh's fatherly partiality could hardly prevent him from perceiving that Robert, with all his abilities and acquirements, was no match for his cousin Francis. That Bacon himself attributed the conduct of his relatives to jealousy of his superior talents, we have not the smallest doubt. In a letter, written many years after to Villiers, he expresses himself thus:—"Countenance, encourage, and advance able men in all kinds, degrees, and professions. For in the time of *the Cecils, the father and the son*, able men were by design and of purpose suppressed."

Whatever Burleigh's motives might be, his purpose was unalterable. The supplications which Francis addressed to his uncle and aunt were earnest, humble, and almost servile. He was the most promising and accomplished young man of his time. His father had been the brother-in-law, the most useful colleague, the nearest friend of the minister. But all this availed poor Francis nothing. He was forced, much against his will, to betake himself to the study of the law. He was admitted at Gray's Inn, and, during some years, he labored there in obscurity.

What the extent of his legal attainments may have been, it is difficult to say. It was not hard for a man of his powers to acquire that very moderate portion of technical knowledge which, when joined to quickness, tact, wit, ingenuity, eloquence, and knowledge of the world, is sufficient to raise an advocate to the highest professional eminence. The general opinion appears to have been that which was on one occasion expressed by Elizabeth. "Bacon," said she, "hath a great wit and much learning; but in law sheweth to the uttermost of his knowledge, and is not deep." The Cecils, we suspect, did their best to spread this opinion by whispers and insinuations. Coke openly proclaimed it with that rancorous insolence which was habitual to him. No reports are more readily believed than those which disparage genius and soothe the envy of conscious mediocrity. It must have been inexpressibly consoling to a stupid sergeant,—the forerunner of him who, a hundred and fifty years later, "shook his head at Murray as a wit"—to know that the most profound thinker, and the most accomplished orator of the age, was very imperfectly acquainted with the law touching *bastard eigné* and *mulier puisné*, and confounded the right of free fishery with that of common piscary.

It is certain that no man in that age, or indeed during the century and a half which followed, was better acquainted with the philosophy of law. His technical knowledge was quite sufficient, with the help of his admirable talents, and his insinuating address, to procure clients. He rose very rapidly into business, and soon entertained hopes of being called within the bar. He applied to Lord Burleigh for that purpose, but received a testy refusal. Of the grounds of that refusal we can in some measure judge by Bacon's answer, which is still extant. It seems that the old Lord, whose temper, age and gout had by no means altered for the better, and who omitted no opportunity of marking his dislike of the showy, quick-witted young men of the rising generation, took this opportunity to read Francis a very sharp lecture on his vanity, and want of respect for his betters. Francis returned a most submissive reply, thanked the Treasurer for the admonition, and promised to profit by it. Strangers meanwhile were less unjust to the young barrister than his nearest kinsmen had been. In his twenty-sixth year he became a bencher of his Inn; and two years later he was appointed Lent reader. At length, in 1590, he obtained for the first time some show of favor from the Court. He was sworn in Queen's Counsel extraordinary. But this mark of honor was not accompanied by any pecuniary emolument. He continued, therefore, to solicit his powerful relatives for some provision which might enable him to live without drudging at his profession. He bore with a patience and serenity which, we fear, bordered on meanness, the morose humors of his uncle, and the sneering reflections which his cousin cast on speculative men, lost in philosophical dreams, and too wise to be capable of transacting public business. At length the Cecils were generous enough to procure for him the reversion of the Registrarship of the Star Chamber. This was a lucrative place, but as many years elapsed before it fell in, he was still under the necessity of laboring for his daily bread.

In the Parliament which was called in 1593 he sat as member for the county of Middlesex, and soon attained eminence as a debater. It is easy to perceive from the scanty remains of his oratory, that the same compactness of expression and richness of fancy which appear in his writings characterized his speeches; and that his extensive acquaintance with literature and history enabled him to entertain his audience with a vast variety of illustrations and allusions which were generally happy and apposite, but which were probably not least pleasing to the taste of that age when they were such as would now be thought childish or pedantic. It is evident also that he was, as indeed might have been expected, perfectly free from those faults which are generally found in an advocate who, after having risen to eminence at the bar, enters the House of Commons; that it was his habit to deal with every great question, not in small detached portions, but as a whole; that he refined little, and that his reasonings were those of a capacious rather than a subtle mind. Ben Jonson, a most unexceptionable judge, has described his eloquence in words, which, though often quoted, will bear to be quoted again. "There happened in my time one noble speaker who was full of gravity in his speaking. His language, where he could spare or pass by a jest, was nobly censorious. No man ever spoke more neatly, more pressly, more weightily, or suffered less emptiness, less idleness, in what he uttered. No member of his speech but consisted of his own graces. His hearers could not cough or look aside from him without loss. He commanded where he spoke, and had his judges angry and pleased at his devotion. No man had their affections more in his power. The fear of every man that heard him was lest he should make an end." From the mention which is made of *judges*, it would seem that Jonson had heard Bacon only at the bar. Indeed we imagine that the House of Commons was then almost inaccessible to strangers. It is not probable that a man of Bacon's nice observation would speak in Parliament exactly as he spoke in the Court of King's Bench. But the graces of manner and lan-

guage must to a great extent, have been common between the Queen's Counsel and the Knight of the Shire.

Bacon tried to play a very difficult game in politics. He wished to be at once a favorite at Court and popular with the multitude. If any man could have succeeded in this attempt, a man of talents so rare, of judgment so prematurely ripe, of temper so calm, and of manners so plausible, might have been expected to succeed. Nor indeed did he wholly fail. Once, however, he indulged in a burst of patriotism which cost him a long and bitter remorse, and which he never ventured to repeat. The Court asked for large subsidies, and for speedy payment. The remains of Bacon's speech breathe all the spirit of the Long Parliament. "The gentlemen," said he, "must sell their plate, and the farmers their brass pots, ere this will be paid; and for us, we are here to search the wounds of the realm, and not to skin them over. The dangers are these. First, we shall breed discontent and endanger her Majesty's safety, which must consist more in the love of the people than their wealth. Secondly, this being granted in this sort, other princes hereafter will look for the like; so that we shall put an evil precedent on ourselves and on our posterity; and in histories, it is to be observed, of all nations the English are not to be subject, base, or taxable." The Queen and her ministers resented this outbreak of public spirit in the highest manner. Indeed, many an honest member of the House of Commons had, for a much smaller matter, been sent to the Tower by the proud and hot-blooded Tudors. The young patriot condescended to make the most abject apologies. He adjured the Lord Treasurer to show some favor to his poor servant and ally. He bemoaned himself to the Lord Keeper, in a letter which may keep in countenance the most unmanly of the epistles which Cicero wrote during his banishment. The lesson was not thrown away. Bacon never offended in the same manner again.

He was now satisfied that he had little to hope from the patronage of those powerful kinsmen whom he had solicited during twelve years with such meek pertinacity; and he began to look towards a different quarter. Among the courtiers of Elizabeth, had lately appeared a new favorite,—young, noble, wealthy, accomplished, eloquent, brave, generous, aspiring,—a favorite who had obtained from the grey-headed queen such marks of regard as she had scarce vouchsafed to Leicester in the season of the passions; who was at once the ornament of the palace and the idol of the city; who was the common patron of men of letters and of men of the sword; who was the common refuge of the persecuted Catholic and of the persecuted Puritan. The calm prudence which had enabled Burleigh to shape his course through so many dangers, and the vast experience which he had acquired in dealing with two generations of colleagues and rivals, seemed scarcely sufficient to support him in this new competition; and Robert Cecil sickened with fear and envy as he contemplated the rising fame and influence of Essex.

Nothing in the political conduct of Essex entitles him to esteem; and the pity with which we regard his early and terrible end, is diminished by the consideration, that he put to hazard the lives and fortunes of his most attached friends, and endeavored to throw the whole country into confusion for objects purely personal. Still, it is impossible not to be deeply interested for a man so brave, high spirited, and generous;—for a man who, while he conducted himself towards his sovereign with a boldness such as was then found in no other subject, conducted himself towards his dependants with a delicacy such as has rarely been found in any other patron. Unlike the vulgar herd of benefactors, he desired to inspire, not gratitude, but affection. He tried to make those whom he befriended feel towards him as towards an equal. His mind, ardent, susceptible, naturally disposed to admiration of all that is great and beautiful, was fascinated by the genius and the accomplishments of Bacon. A close friendship was soon formed between them,—a friendship destined to have a dark, a mournful, a shameful end.

In 1594 the office of Attorney-General became vacant, and Bacon hoped to obtain it. Essex made his friend's cause his own,—sued, expostulated, promised, threatened,—but all in vain. It is probable that the dislike felt by the Cecils for Bacon had been increased by the connexion which he had lately formed with the Earl. Robert was then on the point of being made Secretary of State. He happened one day to be in the same coach with Essex, and a remarkable conversation took place between them. "My Lord," said Sir Robert, "the Queen has determined to appoint an Attorney-General without more delay. I pray your Lordship to let me know whom you will favor." "I wonder at your question," replied the Earl. "You cannot but know that resolutely, against all the world, I stand for your cousin, Francis Bacon." "Good Lord!" cried Cecil, unable to bridle his temper, "I wonder your Lordship should spend your strength on so unlikely a matter. Can you name one precedent of so raw a youth promoted to so great a place?" This objection came with a singularly bad grace from a man who, though younger than Bacon, was in daily expectation of being made Secretary of State. The blot was too obvious to be missed by Essex, who seldom forebore to speak his mind. "I have made no search," said he, "for precedents of young men who have filled the office of Attorney-General; but I could name to you, Sir Robert, a man younger than Francis, less learned, and equally inexperienced, who is suing and striving with all his might for an office of far greater weight." Sir Robert had nothing to say but that he thought his own abilities equal to the place which he hoped to obtain; and that his father's long services deserved such a mark of gratitude from the Queen,—as if his abilities were comparable to his cousin's, or as if Sir Nicholas Bacon had done no service to the State. Cecil then hinted that if Bacon would be satisfied with the Solicitorship, that might be of easier digestion to the Queen. "Digest me no digestions," said the generous and ardent Earl. "The Attorneyship for Francis is that I must have; and in that I will spend all my power, might, authority, and amity; and with tooth and nail procure the same for him against whomsoever; and whosoever getteth this office out of my hands for any other, before he have it, it shall cost him the coming by. And this be you assured of, Sir Robert, for now I fully declare myself; and for my own part, Sir Robert, I think strange both of my Lord Treasurer and you, that can have the mind to seek the preference of a stranger before so near a kinsman; for

if you weigh in a balance the parts every way of his competitor and him, only excepting five poor years of admitting to a house of court before Francis, you shall find in all other respects whatsoever no comparison between them."

When the office of Attorney-General was filled up, the Earl pressed the Queen to make Bacon Solicitor-General, and, on this occasion, the old Lord Treasurer professed himself not unfavorable to his nephew's pretensions. But after a contest which lasted more than a year and a half, and in which Essex, to use his own words, "spent all his power, might, authority, and amity," the place was given to another. Essex felt this disappointment keenly, but found consolation in the most munificent and delicate liberality. He presented Bacon with an estate, worth near two thousand pounds, situated at Twickenham; and this, as Bacon owned many years after, "with so kind and noble circumstances, as the manner was worth more than the matter."

It was soon after these events that Bacon first appeared before the public as a writer. Early in 1597 he published a small volume of Essays, which was afterwards enlarged, by successive editions, to many times its original bulk. This little work was, as it well deserved to be, exceedingly popular. It was reprinted in a few months; it was translated into Latin, French and Italian, and it seems to have at once established the literary reputation of its author. But though Bacon's reputation rose, his fortunes were still depressed. He was in great pecuniary difficulties; and on one occasion was arrested in the street at the suit of a goldsmith, for a debt of 300*l.*, and was carried to a spunging-house in Coleman street.

The kindness of Essex was in the meantime indefatigable. In 1596 he sailed on his memorable expedition to the coast of Spain. At the very moment of his embarkation, he wrote to several of his friends, commending to them, during his own absence, the interests of Bacon. He returned, after performing the most brilliant military exploit that was achieved on the Continent by English arms, during the long interval which elapsed between the battle of Agincourt and that of Blenheim. His valor, his talents, his humane and generous disposition, had made him the idol of his countrymen, and had extorted praise from the enemies whom he had conquered. He had always been proud and headstrong; and his splendid success seems to have rendered his faults more offensive than ever. But to his friend Francis he was still the same. Bacon had some thoughts of making his fortune by marriage; and had begun to pay court to a widow of the name of Hatton. The eccentric manners and violent temper of this woman, made her a disgrace and a torment to her connections. But Bacon was not aware of her faults, or was disposed to overlook them for the sake of her ample fortune. Essex pleaded his friend's cause with his usual ardor. The letters which the Earl addressed to Lady Hatton and to her mother are still extant, and are highly honorable to him. "If," he wrote, "she were my sister or my daughter, I protest I would as confidently resolve to further it as I now persuade you." And again—"If my faith be anything, I protest, if I had one as near me as she is to you, I had rather match her with him, than with men of far greater titles." The suit, happily for Bacon, was unsuccessful. The lady indeed was kind to him in more ways than one. She rejected him, and she accepted his enemy. She married that narrow-minded, bad-hearted pedant, Sir Edward Coke, and did her best to make him as miserable as he deserved to be.

The fortunes of Essex had now reached their height, and began to decline. The person on whom, during the decline of his influence, he chiefly depended,—to whom he confided his perplexities, whose advice he solicited, whose intercession he employed,—was his friend Bacon. The lamentable truth must be told. This friend, so loved, so trusted, bore a principal part in ruining the Earl's fortunes, in shedding his blood, and in blackening his memory.

But let us be just to Bacon. We believe that, to the last, he had no wish to injure Essex. Nay, we believe that he sincerely exerted himself to serve Essex, as long as he thought he could serve Essex without injuring himself. The advice which he gave to his noble benefactor was generally most judicious. He did all in his power to dissuade the Earl from accepting the Government of Ireland. "For," says he, "I did as plainly see his overthrow, chained as it were by destiny to that journey, as it is possible for a man to ground a judgment upon future contingents." The prediction was accomplished. Essex returned in disgrace. Bacon attempted to mediate between his friend and the Queen; and, we believe, honestly employed all his address for that purpose. But the task which he had undertaken was too difficult, delicate, and perilous, even for so wary and dexterous an agent. He had to manage two spirits equally proud, resentful, and ungovernable. At Essex House, he had to calm the rage of a young hero, incensed by multiplied wrongs and humiliations; and then to pass to Whitehall for the purpose of soothing the peevishness of a sovereign, whose temper, never very gentle, had been rendered morbidly irritable by age, by declining health, and by the long habit of listening to flattery and exacting implicit obedience. It is hard to serve two masters. Situated as Bacon was, it was scarcely possible for him to shape his course, so as not to give one or both of his employers reason to complain. For a time he acted as fairly as, in circumstances so embarrassing, could reasonably be expected. At length, he found that while he was trying to prop the fortunes of another, he was in danger of shaking his own. He had disobliged both the parties whom he wished to reconcile. Essex thought him wanting in zeal as a friend—Elizabeth thought him wanting in duty as a subject. The Earl looked on him as a spy of the Queen, the Queen as a creature of the Earl. The reconciliation which he had labored to effect appeared utterly hopeless. A thousand signs, legible to eyes far less keen than his, announced that the fall of his patron was at hand. He shaped his course accordingly. When Essex was brought before the council to answer for his conduct in Ireland, Bacon, after a faint attempt to excuse himself from taking part against his friend, submitted himself to the Queen's pleasure, and *appeared at the bar in support of the charges.* But a darker scene was behind. The unhappy young nobleman, made reckless by despair, ventured on a rash and criminal enterprise, which rendered him liable to the highest penalties of the law. What course was Bacon to take? This was one of those conjunctures which show what

men are. To a highminded man, wealth, power, court-favor, even personal safety, would have appeared of no account, when opposed to friendship, gratitude, and honor. Such a man would have stood by the side of Essex at the trial,—would have "spent all his power, might, authority, and amity," in soliciting a mitigation of the sentence,—would have been a daily visiter at the cell,—would have received the last injunctions and the last embrace on the scaffold,—would have employed all the powers of his intellect to guard from insult the fame of his generous, though erring friend. An ordinary man would neither have incurred the danger of succoring Essex, nor the disgrace of assailing him. Bacon did not even preserve neutrality. He appeared as counsel for the prosecution. In that situation, he did not confine himself to what would have been amply sufficient to procure a verdict. He employed all his wit, his rhetoric, and his learning,—not to ensure a conviction, for the circumstances were such that a conviction was inevitable,—but to deprive the unhappy prisoner of all those excuses which, though legally of no value, yet tended to diminish the moral guilt of the crime; and which, therefore, though they could not justify the peers in pronouncing an acquittal, might incline the Queen to grant a pardon. The Earl urged as a palliation of his frantic acts, that he was surrounded by powerful and inveterate enemies, that they had ruined his fortunes, that they sought his life, and that their persecutions had driven him to despair. This was true, and Bacon well knew it to be true. But he affected to treat it as an idle pretence. He compared Essex to Pisistratus, who, by pretending to be in imminent danger of assassination, and by exhibiting self-inflicted wounds, succeeded in establishing tyranny at Athens. This was too much for the prisoner to bear. He interrupted his ungrateful friend, by calling on him to quit the part of an advocate,—to come forward as a witness, and tell the Lords whether, in old times, he, Francis Bacon, had not under his own hand, repeatedly asserted the truth of what he now represented as idle pretexts. It is painful to go on with this lamentable story. Bacon returned a shuffling answer to the Earl's question: and, as if the allusion to Pisistratus were not sufficiently offensive, made another allusion still more unjustifiable. He compared Essex to Henry Duke of Guise, and the rash attempt in the city, to the day of the barricades at Paris. Why Bacon had recourse to such a topic, it is difficult to say. It was quite unnecessary for the purpose of obtaining a verdict. It was certain to produce a strong impression on the mind of the haughty and jealous princess on whose pleasure the Earl's fate depended. The faintest allusion to the degrading tutelage in which the last Valois had been held by the house of Lorraine, was sufficient to harden her heart against a man who in rank, in military reputation, in popularity among the citizens of the capital, bore some resemblance to the Captain of the League. Essex was convicted. Bacon made no effort to save him, though the Queen's feelings were such, that he might have pleaded his benefactor's cause, possibly with success, certainly without any serious danger to himself. The unhappy nobleman was executed. His fate excited strong, perhaps unreasonable feelings of compassion and indignation. The Queen was received by the citizens of London with gloomy looks and faint acclamations. She thought it expedient to publish a vindication of her late proceedings. The faithless friend who had assisted in taking the Earl's life was now employed to murder the Earl's fame. The Queen had seen some of Bacon's writings, and had been pleased with them. He was accordingly selected to write "A Declaration of the practices and treasons attempted and committed by Robert, Earl of Essex," which was printed by authority. In the succeeding reign, Bacon had not a word to say in defence of this performance—a performance, abounding in expressions which no generous enemy would have employed respecting a man who had so dearly expiated his offences. His only excuse was, that he wrote it by command,—that he considered himself as a mere secretary,—that he had particular instructions as to the way in which he was to treat every part of the subject,—and that, in fact, he had furnished only the arrangement and the style.

The real explanation of all this is perfectly obvious; and nothing but a partiality amounting to a ruling passion, could cause any body to miss it. The moral qualities of Bacon were not of a high order. We do not say that he was a bad man. He was not inhuman or tyrannical. He bore with meekness his high civil honors, and the far higher honors gained by his intellect. He was very seldom, if ever, provoked into treating any person with malignity and insolence. No man more readily held up the left cheek to those who had smitten the right. No man was more expert at the soft answer which turneth away wrath. He was never accused of intemperance in his pleasures. His even temper, his flowing courtesy, the general respectability of his demeanor, made a favorable impression on those who saw him in situations which do not severely try the principles. His faults were—we write it with pain—coldness of heart and meanness of spirit. He seems to have been incapable of feeling strong affection, of facing great dangers, of making great sacrifices. His desires were set on things below. Wealth, precedence, titles, patronage,—the mace, the seals, the coronet,—large houses, fair gardens, rich manors, massy services of plate, gay hangings, curious cabinets,—had as great attractions for him as for any of the courtiers who dropped on their knees in the dirt when Elizabeth passed by, and then hastened home to write to the King of Scots that her Grace seemed to be breaking fast. For these objects he had stooped to everything and endured everything. For these he had sued in the humblest manner, and when unjustly and ungraciously repulsed, had thanked those who had repulsed him, and had begun to sue again. For these objects, as soon as he found that the smallest show of independence in Parliament was offensive to the Queen, he had abased himself to the dust before her, and implored forgiveness, in terms better suited to a convicted thief than to a knight of the shire. For these he joined, and for these he forsook Lord Essex. He continued to plead his patron's cause with the Queen, as long as he thought that by pleading that cause he might serve himself. Nay, he went further—for his feelings, though not warm, were kind—he pleaded that cause as long as he thought he could plead it without injury to himself. But when it became evident that Essex was going headlong to his ruin, Bacon began to tremble for his own

fortunes. What he had to fear would not indeed have been very alarming to a man of lofty character. It was not death. It was not imprisonment. It was the loss of court favor. It was the being left behind by others in the career of ambition. It was the having leisure to finish the *Instauratio Magna*. The Queen looked coldly on him. The courtiers began to consider him as a marked man. He determined to change his line of conduct, and to proceed in a new course with so much vigor as to make up for lost time. When once he had determined to act against his friend, knowing himself to be suspected, he acted with more zeal than would have been necessary or justifiable if he had been employed against a stranger. He exerted his professional talents to shed the Earl's blood, and his literary talents to blacken the Earl's memory. It is certain that his conduct excited at the time great and general disapprobation. While Elizabeth lived, indeed, this disapprobation, though deeply felt, was not loudly expressed. But a great change was at hand.

The health of the Queen had long been decaying; and the operation of age and disease was now assisted by acute mental suffering. The pitiable melancholy of her last days has generally been ascribed to her fond regret for Essex. But we are disposed to attribute her dejection partly to physical causes, and partly to the conduct of her courtiers and ministers. They did all in their power to conceal from her the intrigues which they were carrying on at the Court of Scotland. But her keen sagacity was not to be so deceived. She did not know the whole. But she knew that she was surrounded by men who were impatient for that new world which was to begin at her death,--who had never been attached to her by affection,--and who were now but very slightly attached to her by interest. Prostration and flattery could not conceal from her the cruel truth, that those whom she had trusted and promoted had never loved her, and were fast ceasing to fear her. Unable to avenge herself, and too proud to complain, she suffered sorrow and resentment to prey on her heart, till, after a long career of power, prosperity and glory, she died, sick and weary of the world.

James mounted the throne; and Bacon employed all his address to obtain for himself a share of the favor of his new master. This was no difficult task. The faults of James, both as a man and as a prince, were numerous; but insensibility to the claims of genius and learning was not amongst them. He was indeed made up of two men,—a witty, well-read scholar, who wrote, disputed, and harangued,—and a nervous drivelling idiot, who acted. If he had been a Canon of Christ Church, or a Prebendary of Westminster, it is not improbable that he would have left a highly respectable name to posterity,—that he would have distinguished himself among the translators of the Bible, and among the Divines who attended the Synod of Dort,—that he would have been regarded by the literary world as no contemptible rival of Vossius and Casaubon. But fortune placed him in a situation in which his weakness covered him with disgrace; and in which his accomplishments brought him no honor. In a college, much eccentricity and childishness would have been readily pardoned in so learned a man. But all that learning could do for him on the throne, was to make people think him a pedant as well as a fool.

Bacon was favorably received at Court; and soon found that his chance of promotion was not diminished by the death of the Queen. He was solicitous to be knighted—for two reasons—which are somewhat amusing. The King had already dubbed half London, and Bacon found himself the only untitled person in his mess at Gray's Inn. This was not very agreeable to him. He had also, to quote his own words, "found an Alderman's daughter, a handsome maiden, to his liking." On both these grounds, he begged his cousin Robert Cecil, "if it might please his good Lordship" to use his interest in his behalf. The application was successful. Bacon was one of three hundred gentlemen who, on the coronation-day, received the honor, if it is to be so called, of knighthood. The handsome maiden, a daughter of Alderman Barnham, soon after consented to become Sir Francis's lady.

The unfavorable impression which Bacon's conduct had made, appears to have been gradually effaced. Indeed it must be some very peculiar cause that can make a man like him long unpopular. His talents secured him from contempt, his temper and his manners from hatred. There is scarcely any story so black that it may not be got over by a man of great abilities, whose abilities are united with caution, good-humor, patience, and affability,—who pays daily sacrifice to Nemesis, who is a delightful companion, a serviceable though not an ardent friend, and a dangerous yet a placable enemy. Waller in the next generation was an eminent instance of this. Indeed Waller had much more than may at first sight appear in common with Bacon. To the higher intellectual qualities of the great English philosopher,—to the genius which has made an immortal epoch in the history of science,—Waller had indeed no pretensions. But the mind of Waller, as far as it extended, coincided with that of Bacon, and might, so to speak, have been cut out of that of Bacon. In the qualities which make a man an object of interest and veneration to posterity, there was no comparison between them. But in the qualities by which chiefly a man is known to his contemporaries, there was a striking similarity. Considered as men of the world, as courtiers, as politicians, as associates, as allies, as enemies, they had nearly the same merits and the same defects. They were not malignant. They were not tyrannical. But they wanted warmth of affection and elevation of sentiment. There were many things which they loved better than virtue, and which they feared more than guilt. Yet after they had stooped to acts of which it is impossible to read the account in the most partial narratives without strong disapprobation and contempt, the public still continued to regard them with a feeling not easily to be distinguished from esteem. The hyperbole of Juliet seemed to be verified with respect to them. "Upon their brows shame was ashamed to sit." Every body seemed as desirous to throw a veil over their misconduct as if it had been his own. Clarendon, who felt, and who had reason to feel, strong personal dislike towards Waller, speaks of him thus:—"There needs no more to be said to extol the excellence and power of his wit and pleasantness of his conversation, than that it was of magnitude enough to cover a world of very great faults,--that is, so to cover them that they were not taken notice of to his reproach, viz., a narrowness in his nature to the lowest degree,--an abjectness and want of courage to support him in

any virtuous undertaking,—an insinuating and servile flattery to the height the vainest and most imperious nature could be contented with. . . . It had power to reconcile him to those whom he had most offended and provoked, and continued to his age with that rare felicity, that his company was acceptable where his spirit was odious, and he was at least pitied where he was most detested.' Much of this, with some softening, might, we fear, be applied to Bacon. The influence of Waller's talents, manners, and accomplishments, died with him; and the world has pronounced an unbiassed sentence on his character. A few flowing lines are not bribe sufficient to pervert the judgment of posterity. But the influence of Bacon is felt and will long be felt over the whole civilized world. Leniently as he was treated by his contemporaries, posterity has treated him more leniently still. Turn where we may, the trophies of that mighty intellect are full in view. We are judging Manlius in sight of the Capitol.

Under the reign of James, Bacon grew rapidly in fortune and favor. In 1604 he was appointed King's Counsel, with a fee of forty pounds a-year; and a pension of sixty pounds a-year was settled upon him. In 1607 he became Solicitor-General; in 1612 Attorney-General. He continued to distinguish himself in Parliament, particularly by his exertions in favor of one excellent measure on which the King's heart was set,—the union of England and Scotland. It was not difficult for such an intellect to discover many irresistible arguments in favor of such a scheme. He conducted the great case of the *Post Nati* in the Exchequer Chamber; and the decision of the judges,—a decision the legality of which may be questioned, but the beneficial effect of which must be acknowledged,—was in a great measure attributed to his dexterous management. While actively engaged in the House of Commons and in the courts of law, he still found leisure for letters and philosophy. The noble treatise on the "Advancement of Learning," which at a later period was expanded into the *De Augmentis*, appeared in 1605. The "Wisdom of the Ancients,"—a work which, if it had proceeded from any other writer, would have been considered as a masterpiece of wit and learning, but which adds little to the fame of Bacon, was printed in 1609. In the mean time the *Novum Organum* was slowly proceeding. Several distinguished men of learning had been permitted to see sketches or detached portions of that extraordinary book; and though they were not generally disposed to admit the soundness of the author's views, they spoke with the greatest admiration of his genius. Sir Thomas Bodley, the founder of the most magnificent of English libraries, was among those stubborn Conservatives who considered the hopes with which Bacon looked forward to the future destinies of the human race as utterly chimerical; and who regarded with distrust and aversion the innovating spirit of the new schismatics in philosophy. Yet even Bodley after perusing the *Cogitata et Visa*—one of the most precious of those scattered leaves out of which the great oracular volume was afterwards made up—acknowledged that in "those very points, and in all proposals and plots in that book, Bacon showed himself a master-workman;" and that "it could not be gainsaid but all the treatise over did abound with choice conceits of the present state of learning, and with worthy contemplations of the means to procure it." In 1612 a new edition of the "Essays" appeared, with additions surpassing the original collection both in bulk and quality. Nor did these pursuits distract Bacon's attention from a work the most arduous, the most glorious, and the most useful that even his mighty powers could have achieved, "the reducing and re-compiling," to use his own phrase, "of the laws of England."

Unhappily he was at that very time employed in perverting those laws to the vilest purposes of tyranny. When Oliver St. John was brought before the Star Chamber for maintaining that the King had no right to levy benevolences, and was for his manly and constitutional conduct sentenced to imprisonment during the royal pleasure, and to a fine of five thousand pounds, Bacon appeared as counsel for the prosecution. About the same time he was deeply engaged in a still more disgraceful transaction. An aged clergyman, of the name of Peacham, was accused of treason, on account of some passages of a sermon which was found in his study. The sermon, whether written by him or not, had never been preached. It did not appear that he had any intention of preaching it. The most servile lawyers of those servile times were forced to admit that there were great difficulties both as to the facts and as to the law. Bacon was employed to remove those difficulties. He was employed to settle the question of law by tampering with the Judges, and the question of fact by torturing the prisoner. Three Judges of the Court of King's Bench were tractable. But Coke was made of different stuff. Pedant, bigot, and savage as he was, he had qualities which bore a strong, though a very disagreeable resemblance to some of the highest virtues which a public man can possess. He was an exception to a maxim which we believe to be generally true,—that those who trample on the helpless are disposed to cringe to the powerful. He behaved with gross rudeness to his juniors at the bar, and with execrable cruelty to prisoners on trial for their lives. But he stood up manfully against the King and the King's favorites. No man of that age appeared to so little advantage when he was opposed to an inferior, and was in the wrong. But, on the other hand, it is but fair to admit that no man of that age made so creditable a figure when he was opposed to a superior, and happened to be in the right. On such occasions, his half-suppressed insolence and his impracticable obstinacy, had a respectable and interesting appearance, when compared with the abject servility of the bar and of the bench. On the present occasion he was stubborn and surly. He declared that it was a new and a highly improper practice in the Judges, to confer with a law-officer of the crown about capital cases which they were afterwards to try; and for some time he resolutely kept aloof. But Bacon was equally artful and persevering. "I am not wholly out of hope," said he, in a letter to the King, "that my Lord Coke himself, when I have in some dark manner put him in doubt that he shall be left alone, will not be singular." After some time, Bacon's dexterity was successful; and Coke, sullenly and reluctantly, followed the example of his brethren. But in order to convict Peacham, it was necessary to find facts as well as law. Accordingly, this wretched old man was put to the rack; and, while undergoing the horrible infliction, was examined by Bacon, but in vain. No confession could be wrung out of him; and Bacon wrote to

the King, complaining that Peacham had a dumb devil. At length the trial came on. A conviction was obtained; but the charges were so obviously futile, that the government could not, for very shame, carry the sentence into execution; and Peacham was suffered to languish away the short remainder of his life in a prison.

There were many points of resemblance between the two celebrated courtiers who, at different times, extended their patronage to Bacon. It is difficult to say whether Essex or Villiers was the more eminently distinguished by those graces of person and manner which have always been rated in courts at much more than their real value. Both were constitutionally brave; and both, like most men who are constitutionally brave, were open and unreserved. Both were rash and headstrong. Both were destitute of the abilities and the information which are necessary to statesmen. Yet both, trusting to the accomplishments which had made them conspicuous in tilt-yards and ball-rooms, aspired to rule the state. Both owed their elevation to the personal attachment of the sovereign; and in both cases this attachment was of so eccentric a kind, that it perplexed observers,—that it still continues to perplex historians,—and that it gave rise to much scandal, which we are inclined to think unfounded. Each of them treated the sovereign whose favor he enjoyed with a rudeness which approached to insolence. This petulence ruined Essex, who had to deal with a spirit naturally as proud as his own, and accustomed, during nearly half a century, to the most respectful observance. But there was a wide difference between the haughty daughter of Henry and her successor. James was timid from the cradle. His nerves, naturally weak, had not been fortified by reflection or by habit. His life, till he came to England, had been a series of mortifications and humiliations. With all his high notions of the origin and extent of his prerogatives, he was never his own master for a day. In spite of his kingly title,—in spite of his despotic theory, he was to the last a slave at heart. Villiers treated him like one; and this course, though adopted, we believe, merely from temper, succeeded as well as if it had been a system of policy formed after mature deliberation.

In generosity, in sensibility, in capacity for friendship, Essex far surpassed Buckingham. Indeed, Buckingham can scarcely be said to have had any friend, with the exception of the two princes, over whom successively he exercised so wonderful an influence. Essex was to the last adored by the people. Buckingham was always a most unpopular man; except perhaps for a very short time after his return from the childish visit to Spain. Essex fell a victim to the rigor of the government, amidst the lamentations of the people. Buckingham, execrated by the people, and solemnly declared a public enemy by the representatives of the people, fell by the hand of one of the people, and was lamented by none but his master.

The way in which the two favorites acted towards Bacon, was highly characteristic, and may serve to illustrate the old and true saying,—that a man is generally more inclined to feel kindly towards one on whom he has conferred favors, than towards one from whom he has received them. Essex loaded Bacon with benefits, and never thought that he had done enough. It never seems to have crossed the mind of the powerful and wealthy noble, that the poor barrister whom he treated with such munificent kindness, was not his equal. It was, we have no doubt, with perfect sincerity that he declared, that he would willingly give his sister or daughter in marriage to his friend. He was in general more than sufficiently sensible of his own merits; but he did not seem to know that he had ever deserved well of Bacon. On that cruel day when they saw each other for the last time at the bar of the Lords, the earl taxed his perfidious friend with unkindness and insincerity, but never with ingratitude. Even in such a moment, more bitter than the bitterness of death, that noble heart was too great to vent itself in such a reproach.

Villiers, on the other hand, owed much to Bacon. When their acquaintance began, Sir Francis was a man of mature age, of high station, and of established fame as a politician, an advocate, and a writer. Villiers was little more than a boy, a younger son of a house then of no great note. He was but just entering on the career of court favor; and none but the most discerning observers could as yet perceive that he was likely to distance all his competitors. The countenance and advice of a man so highly distinguished as the Attorney-General, must have been an object of the highest importance to the young adventurer. But though Villiers was the obliged party, he was less warmly attached to Bacon and far less delicate in his conduct towards him than Essex had been.

To do the new favorite justice, he early exerted his influence in behalf of his illustrious friend. In 1616, Sir Francis was sworn of the Privy Council; and, in March, 1617, on the retirement of Lord Brackley, was appointed Keeper of the Great Seal.

On the 7th of May, the first day of the term, he rode in state to Westminster Hall, with the Lord Treasurer on his right hand, the Lord Privy Seal on his left,—a long procession of students and ushers before him,—and a crowd of peers, privy-councillors, and judges, followed in his train. Having entered his court, he addressed the splendid auditory in a grave and dignified speech, which proves how well he understood those judicial duties which he afterwards performed so ill. Even at that moment,—the proudest moment of his life in the estimation of the vulgar, and, it may be, even in his own,—he cast back a look of lingering affection towards those noble pursuits from which, as it seemed, he was about to be estranged. "The depth of the three long vacations," said he, "I would reserve in some measure free from business of estate, and for studies, arts, and sciences, to which of my own nature I am most inclined."

The years during which Bacon held the Great Seal were among the darkest and most shameful in English history. Every thing at home and abroad was mismanaged. First came the execution of Raleigh, an act which, if done in a proper manner, might have been defensible, but which, under all the circumstances, must be considered as a dastardly murder. Worse was behind—the war of Bohemia—the successes of Tilly and Spinola—the Palatinate conquered—the King's son-in-law in exile—the house of Austria dominant on the Continent—the Protestant religion and the liberties of the Germanic body trodden under foot. In the mean time the wavering and cowardly policy of England furnished matter of ridicule to all the nations of Europe. The

love of peace, which James professed would, even when indulged to an impolitic excess, have been respectable, if it had proceeded from tenderness for his people. But the truth is, that, while he had nothing to spare for the defence of the natural allies of England, he resorted without scruple to the most illegal and oppressive devices, for the purpose of enabling Buckingham and Buckingham's relations to outshine the ancient aristocracy of the realm. Benevolences were exacted. Patents of monopoly were multiplied. All the resources which could have been employed to replenish a beggared Exchequer, at the close of a ruinous war, were put in motion during this season of ignominious peace.

The vices of the administration must be chiefly ascribed to the weakness of the King, and to the levity and violence of the favorite. But it is impossible to acquit the Lord Keeper. For those odious patents, in particular, which passed the Great Seal while it was in his charge, he must be held answerable.

In his judicial capacity his conduct was not less reprehensible. He suffered Buckingham to dictate many of his decisions. Bacon knew as well as any man, that a judge who listens to private solicitations is a disgrace to his post. He had himself, before he was raised to the woolsack, represented this strongly to Villiers, then just entering on his career. "By no means,"—said Sir Francis, in a letter of advice addressed to the young courtier,—"By no means be you persuaded to interpose yourself, either by word or letter, in any cause depending in any court of justice, nor suffer any great man to do it where you can hinder it. If it should prevail, it perverts justice; but, if the judge be so just and of such courage as he ought to be, as not to be inclined thereby, yet it always leaves a taint of suspicion behind it." Yet he had not been Lord Keeper a month when Buckingham began to interfere in Chancery suits, and his interference was, as might have been expected, successful.

A man who stooped to render such services to others was not likely to be scrupulous as to the means by which he enriched himself. He and his dependants accepted large presents from persons who were engaged in Chancery suits. The amount of the plunder which he collected in this way it is impossible to estimate. There can be no doubt that he received much more than was proved on his trial, though, it may be, less than was suspected by the public. His enemies stated his illicit gains at a hundred thousand pounds. But this was probably an exaggeration.

It was long before the day of reckoning arrived. During the interval between the second and third Parliaments of James, the nation was absolutely governed by the Crown. The prospects of the Lord Keeper were bright and serene. His great place rendered the splendor of his talents even more conspicuous; and gave an additional charm to the serenity of his temper, the courtesy of his manners, and the eloquence of his conversation. The pillaged suitor might mutter. The austere Puritain patriot might, in his retreat, lament that one on whom God had bestowed without measure all the abilities which qualify men to take the lead in great reforms, should be found among the adherents of the worst abuses. But the murmurs of the suitor, and the lamentations of the patriot, had scarcely any avenue to the ears of the powerful. The King, and the minister who was the King's master, smiled on their illustrious flatterer. The whole crowd of courtiers and nobles sought his favor with emulous eagerness. Men of wit and learning hailed with delight the elevation of one who had so signally shown that a man of profound learning and of brilliant wit might understand, far better than any plodding dunce, the art of thriving in the world.

Once, and but once, this course of prosperity was for a moment interrupted. It should seem that even Bacon's brain was not strong enough to bear without some discomposure the inebriating effect of so much good fortune. For some time after his elevation, he showed himself a little wanting in that wariness and self-command to which, more than even to his transcendent talents, his elevation was to be ascribed. He was by no means a good hater. The temperature of his revenge, like that of his gratitude, was scarcely ever more than lukewarm. But there was one person whom he had long regarded with an animosity which, though studiously suppressed, was perhaps the stronger for the suppression. The insults and injuries which, when a young man struggling into note and professional practice, he had received from Sir Edward Coke, were such as might move the most placable nature to resentment. About the time at which Bacon received the Seals, Coke had, on account of his contumacious resistance to the royal pleasure, been deprived of his seat in the Court of King's Bench, and had ever since languished in retirement. But Coke's opposition to the Court, we fear, was the effect, not of good principles, but of a bad temper. Perverse and testy as he was, he wanted true fortitude and dignity of character. His obstinacy, unsupported by virtuous motives, was not proof against disgrace. He solicited a reconciliation with the favorite, and his solicitations were successful. Sir John Villiers, the brother of Buckingham, was looking out for a rich wife. Coke had a large fortune and an unmarried daughter. A bargain was struck. But Lady Coke—the lady whom twenty years before Essex had wooed on behalf of Bacon—would not hear of the match. A violent and scandalous family quarrel followed. The mother carried the girl away by stealth. The father pursued them, and regained possession of his daughter by force. The king was then in Scotland, and Buckingham had attended him thither. Bacon was, during their absence, at the head of affairs in England. He felt towards Coke as much malevolence as it was in his nature to feel towards any body. His wisdom had been laid to sleep by prosperity. In an evil hour he determined to interfere in the disputes which agitated his enemy's household. He declared for the wife, countenanced the Attorney-General in filing an information in the Star Chamber against the husband, and wrote strongly to the King and the favorite against the proposed marriage. The language which he used in those letters shows that, sagacious as he was, he did not quite know his place;—that he was not fully acquainted with the extent either of Buckingham's power, or of the change which the possession of that power had produced in Buckingham's character. He soon had a lesson which he never forgot. The favorite received the news of the Lord Keeper's interference, with feelings of the most violent resentment, and made the King even more angry than himself. Bacon's

eyes were at once opened to his error, and to all its possible consequences. He had been elated, if not intoxicated, by greatness. The shock sobered him in an instant. He was all himself again. He apologized submissively for his interference. He directed the Attorney-General to stop the proceedings against Coke. He sent to tell Lady Coke that he could do nothing for her. He announced to both the families that he was desirous to promote the connexion. Having given these proofs of contrition, he ventured to present himself before Buckingham. But the young upstart did not think that he had yet sufficiently humbled an old man who had been his friend and benefactor,—who was the highest civil functionary in the realm, and the most eminent man of letters in the world. It is said that on two successive days Bacon repaired to Buckingham's house—that on two successive days he was suffered to remain in an antechamber among foot-boys, seated on an old wooden box, with the Great Seal of England at his side; and that when at length he was admitted, he flung himself on the floor, kissed the favorite's feet, and vowed never to rise till he was forgiven.

He put a strong curb on those angry passions which had for the first time in his life mastered his prudence. He went through the forms of a reconciliation with Coke, and did his best, by seeking opportunities of paying little civilities, and by avoiding all that could produce collision, to tame the untameable ferocity of his old enemy.

In the main, however, his life, while he held the Great Seal, was, in outward appearance, most enviable. In London he lived with great dignity at York-House, the venerable mansion of his father. Here it was that, in January, 1620, he celebrated his entrance into his sixtieth year amidst a splendid circle of friends. He had then exchanged the appellation of Keeper for the higher title of Chancellor. Ben Jonson was one of the party, and wrote on the occasion some of the happiest of his rugged rhymes. All things, he tells us, seemed to smile about the old house,—"the fire, the wine, the men." The spectacle of the accomplished host, after a life marked by no great disaster, entering on a green old age, in the enjoyment of riches, power, high honors, undiminished mental activity, and vast literary reputation, made a strong impression on the poet, if we may judge from those well known lines—

> "England's high Chancellor, the destined heir,
> In his soft cradle, to his father's chair,
> Whose even thread the fates spin round and full,
> Out of their choicest and their whitest wool."

In the intervals of rest which Bacon's political and judicial functions afforded, he was in the habit of retiring to Gorhambury. At that place his business was literature, and his favorite amusement gardening, which in one of his most pleasing Essays he calls "the purest of human pleasures." In his magnificent grounds he erected, at a cost of ten thousand pounds, a retreat to which he repaired when he wished to avoid all visiters, and to devote himself wholly to study. On such occasions, a few young men of distinguished talents were sometimes the companions of his retirement. And among them his quick eye soon discerned the superior abilities of Thomas Hobbes. It is not probable, however, that he fully appreciated the powers of his disciple, or foresaw the vast influence, both for good and for evil, which that most vigorous and acute of human intellects was destined to exercise on the two succeeding generations.

In January, 1621, Bacon had reached the zenith of his fortunes. He had just published the *Novum Organum*; and that extraordinary book had drawn forth the warmest expressions of admiration from the ablest men in Europe. He had obtained honors of a widely different kind, but perhaps not less valued by him. He had been created Baron Verulam. He had subsequently been raised to the higher dignity of Viscount St. Albans. His patent was drawn in the most flattering terms, and the Prince of Wales signed it as a witness. The ceremony of investiture was performed with great state at Theobalds, and Buckingham condescended to be one of the chief actors. Posterity has felt that the greatest of English philosophers could derive no accession of dignity from any title which James could bestow; and, in defiance of the royal letters patent, has obstinately refused to degrade Francis Bacon into Viscount St. Albans.

In a few weeks was signally brought to the test the value of those objects for which Bacon had sullied his integrity, had resigned his independence, had violated the most sacred obligations of friendship and gratitude, had flattered the worthless, had persecuted the innocent, had tampered with judges, had tortured prisoners, had plundered suitors, had wasted on paltry intrigues all the powers of the most exquisitely constructed intellect that has ever been bestowed on any of the children of men. A sudden and terrible reverse was at hand. A Parliament had been summoned. After six years of silence, the voice of the nation was again to be heard. Only three days after the pageant which was performed at Theobalds in honor of Bacon, the houses met.

Want of money had, as usual, induced the King to convoke his Parliament. But it may be doubted whether, if he or his ministers had been at all aware of the state of public feeling, they would not have tried any expedient, or borne with any inconvenience, rather than have ventured to face the deputies of a justly exasperated nation. But they did not discern those times. Indeed almost all the political blunders of James, and of his more unfortunate son, arose from one great error. During the fifty years which preceded the Long Parliament, a great and progressive change was taking place in the public mind. The nature and extent of this change was not in the least understood by either of the first two Kings of the House of Stuart, or by any of their advisers. That the nation became more and more discontented every year, that every House of Commons was more unmanageable than that which had preceded it,—were facts which it was impossible not to perceive. But the Court could not understand why these things were so. The Court could not see that the English people, and the English Government, though they might once have been well suited to each other, were suited to each other no longer,—that the nation had outgrown its old institutions, was every day more uneasy under them, was pressing against them, and would soon burst through them. The alarming phenomena, the existence of which no sycophant could deny, were ascribed to every cause except the true one.

"In my first Parliament," said James, "I was a novice. In my next, there was a kind of beasts called *undertakers*,"—and so forth. In the third Parliament he could hardly be called a novice, and those beasts, the *undertakers*, did not exist. Yet his third Parliament gave him more trouble than either the first or the second.

The Parliament had no sooner met than the House of Commons proceeded, in a temperate and respectful, but most determined manner, to discuss the public grievances. Their first attacks were directed against those odious patents, under cover of which Buckingham and his creatures had pillaged and oppressed the nation. The vigor with which these proceedings were conducted spread dismay through the Court. Buckingham thought himself in danger, and, in his alarm, had recourse to an adviser who had lately acquired considerable influence over him,—Williams, Dean of Westminster. He advised the favorite to abandon all thoughts of defending the monopolies—to find some foreign embassy for his brother Sir Edward, who was deeply implicated in the villanies of Mompesson—and to leave the other offenders to the justice of Parliament. Buckingham received this advice with the warmest expressions of gratitude, and declared that a load had been lifted from his heart. He then repaired with Williams to the royal presence. They found the King engaged in earnest consultation with Prince Charles. The plan of operations proposed by the Dean was fully discussed, and approved in all its parts.

The first victims whom the Court abandoned to the vengeance of the Commons, were Sir Giles Mompesson and Sir Francis Mitchell. It was some time before Bacon began to entertain any apprehensions. His talents and his address gave him great influence in the house,—of which he had lately become a member,—as indeed they must have done in any assembly. In the House of Commons he had many personal friends and many warm admirers. But at length, about six weeks after the meeting of Parliament, the storm burst.

A committee of the lower house had been appointed to inquire into the state of the Courts of Justice. On the 15th of March, the chairman of that committee, Sir Robert Philips, member for Bath, reported that great abuses had been discovered. "The person," said he, "against whom these things are alleged is no less than the Lord Chancellor,—a man so endued with all parts, both of nature and art, as that I will say no more of him, being not able to say enough." Sir Robert then proceeded to state, in the most temperate manner, the nature of the charges. A person of the name of Aubrey had a case depending in Chancery. He had been almost ruined by law expenses, and his patience had been exhausted by the delays of the court. He received a hint from some of the hangers-on of the Chancellor, that a present of one hundred pounds would expedite matters. The poor man had not the sum required. However, having found out a usurer who accommodated him with it at a high interest, he carried it to York House. The Chancellor took the money, and his dependants assured the suitor that all would go right. Aubrey was, however, disappointed; for, after considerable delay, "a killing decree" was pronounced against him. Another suitor of the name of Egerton complained that he had been induced by two of the Chancellor's jackals to make his Lordship a present of four hundred pounds; and that, nevertheless, he had not been able to obtain a decree in his favor. The evidence to these facts was overwhelming. Bacon's friends could only entreat the house to suspend its judgment, and to send up the case to the Lords, in a form less offensive than an impeachment.

On the 19th of March the King sent a message to the Commons, expressing his deep regret that so eminent a person as the Chancellor should be suspected of misconduct. His Majesty declared that he had no wish to screen the guilty from justice, and proposed to appoint a new kind of tribunal, consisting of eighteen commissioners, who might be chosen from among the members of the two houses, to investigate the matter. The Commons were not disposed to depart from the regular course of proceeding. On the same day they held a conference with the Lords, and delivered in the heads of the accusation against the Chancellor. At this conference Bacon was not present. Overwhelmed with shame and remorse, and abondoned by all those in whom he had weakly put his trust, he shut himself up in his chamber from the eyes of men. The dejection of his mind soon disordered his body. Buckingham, who visited him by the King's order, "found his Lordship very sick and heavy." It appears from a pathetic letter which the unhappy man addressed to the Peers on the day of the conference, that he neither expected nor wished to survive his disgrace. During several days he remained in his bed, refusing to see any human being. He passionately told his attendants to leave him,—to forget him,—never again to name his name,—never to remember that there had been such a man in the world. In the mean time, fresh instances of corruption were every day brought to the knowledge of his accusers. The number of charges rapidly increased from two to twenty-three. The Lords entered on the investigation of the case with laudable alacrity. Some witnesses were examined at the bar of the house. A select committee was appointed to take the depositions of others; and the inquiry was rapidly proceeding, when, on the 26h of March, the King adjourned the Parliament for three weeks.

This measure revived Bacon's hopes. He made the most of his short respite. He attemped to work on the feeble mind of the King. He appealed to all the strongest feelings of James,—to his fears, to his vanity, to his high notions of prerogative. Would the Solomon of the age commit so gross an error as to encourage the encroaching spirit of Parliament? Would God's annointed, accountable to God alone, pay homage to the clamorous multitude? "Those," he exclaimed, "who now strike at the Chancellor will soon stike at the Crown. I am the first sacrifice. I wish I may be the last." But all his eloquence and address were employed in vain. Indeed, whatever Mr. Montagu may say, we are firmly convinced that it was not in the King's power to save Bacon, without having recourse to measures which would have convulsed the realm. The crown had not sufficient influence in Parliament to procure an acquittal, in so clear a case of guilt. And to dissolve a Parliament which is universally allowed to have been one of the best Parliaments that ever sat,—which had acted liberally and respectfully towards the Sovereign, and which enjoyed in the highest degree the favor of the people, only in order to stop a grave, temperate, and constitu-

tional inquiry into the personal integrity of the first judge in the kingdom,—would have been a measure more scandalous and absurd than any of those which were the ruin of the House of Stuart. Such a measure, while it would have been as fatal to the Chancellor's honor as a conviction, would have endangered the very existence of the monarchy. The King, acting by the advice of Williams, very properly refused to engage in a dangerous struggle with his people, for the purpose of saving from legal condemnation a minister whom it was impossible to save from dishonor. He advised Bacon to plead guilty, and promised to do all in his power to mitigate the punishment.

On the 17th of April the houses reassembled, and the Lords resumed their inquiries into the abuse of the Court of Chancery. On the 22d, Bacon addressed to the Peers a letter, which Prince Charles condescended to deliver. In this artful and pathetic composition, the Chancellor acknowledged his guilt in guarded and general terms, and, while acknowledging, endeavored to palliate it. This, however, was not thought sufficient by his judges. They required a more particular confession, and sent him a copy of the charges. On the 30th, he delivered a paper, in which he admitted, with few and unimportant reservations, the truth of the accusations brought against him, and threw himself entirely on the mercy of his peers. "Upon advised consideration of the charges," said he, "descending into my own conscience, and calling my memory to account so far as I am able, I do plainly and ingenuously confess, that I am guilty of corruption, and do renounce all defence."

The Lords came to a resolution that the Chancellor's confession appeared to be full and ingenuous, and sent a committee to inquire of him whether it was really subscribed by himself. The deputies, among whom was Southampton, the common friend many years before of Bacon and Essex, performed this duty with great delicacy. Indeed, the agonies of such a mind, and the degradation of such a name, might well have softened the most obdurate natures. "My lords," said Bacon, "it is my act, my hand, my heart. I beseech your lordships to be merciful to a broken reed." They withdrew: and he again retired to his chamber in the deepest dejection. The next day, the sergeant-at-arms and usher of the House of Lords came to conduct him to Westminster Hall, where sentence was to be pronounced. But they found him so unwell that he could not leave his bed; and this excuse for his absence was readily accepted. In no quarter does there appear to have been the smallest desire to add to his humiliation. The sentence was, however severe,—the more severe, no doubt, because the lords knew that it would not be executed, and that they had an excellent opportunity of exhibiting at small cost, the inflexibility of their justice, and their abhorrence of corruption. Bacon was condemned to pay a fine of forty thousand pounds, and to be imprisoned in the Tower during the King's pleasure. He was declared incapable of holding any office in the State, or of sitting in parliament, and he was banished for life from the verge of the court. In such misery and shame ended that long career of worldly wisdom and worldly prosperity!

No State-Trial in our history is more creditable to all who took part in it, either as prosecutors or judges. The decency, the gravity, the public spirit,—the justice moderated, but not unnerved, by compassion,—which appeared in every part of the transaction, would do honor to the most respectable public men of our own times. The accusers, while they discharged their duty to their constituents by bringing the misdeeds of the Chancellor to light, spoke with admiration of his many eminent qualities. The Lords, while condemning him, complimented him on the ingenuousness of his confession, and spared him the humiliation of a public appearance at their bar. So strong was the contagion of good feeling, that even Sir Edward Coke, for the first time in his life, behaved like a gentleman. No criminal ever had more temperate prosecutors than Bacon. No criminal ever had more favorable judges. If he was convicted, it was because it was impossible to acquit him without offering the grossest outrage to justice and common sense.

The sentence of Bacon had scarcely been pronounced when it was mitigated. He was indeed sent to the Tower. But this was merely a form. In two days he was set at liberty, and soon after he retired to Gorhambury. His fine was speedily released by the Crown. He was next suffered to present himself at Court; and at length, in 1624, the rest of his punishment was remitted. He was now at liberty to resume his seat in the House of Lords, and he was actually summoned to the next Parliament. But age, infirmity, and perhaps shame, prevented him from attending. The Government allowed him a pension of one thousand two hundred pounds a year; and his whole annual income is estimated by Mr. Montagu at two thousand five hundred pounds,—a sum which was probably above the average income of a nobleman of that generation, and which was certainly sufficient for comfort and even for splendor. Unhappily, Bacon was fond of display, and unused to pay minute attention to domestic affairs. He was not easily persuaded to give up any part of the magnificence to which he had been accustomed in the time of his power and prosperity. No pressure of distress could induce him to part with the woods of Gorhambury. "I will not," he said, "be stripped of my feathers." He travelled with so splendid an equipage, and so large a retinue, that Prince Charles, who once fell in with him on the road, exclaimed with surprise,—"Well! do what we can, this man scorns to go out in snuff." This carelessness and ostentation reduced him to frequent distress. He was under the necessity of parting with York House, and of taking up his residence, during his visits to London, at his old chambers in Gray's Inn. He had other vexations, the exact nature of which is unknown. It is evident from his will, that some part of his wife's conduct had greatly disturbed and irritated him.

But whatever might be his pecuniary difficulties or his conjugal discomforts, the powers of his intellect still remained undiminished. Those noble studies for which he had found leisure in the midst of professional drudgery and of courtly intrigues, gave to this last sad stage of his life a dignity beyond what power or titles could bestow. Impeached, convicted, sentenced,—driven with ignominy from the presence of his Sovereign, shut out from the deliberations of his fellow nobles, loaded with debt, branded with dishonor, sinking under the weight of years, sorrow and disease,—Bacon was Bacon still.

"My conceit of his person," says Ben Johson very finely, "was never increased towards him by his place or honors; but I have and do reverence him for the greatness that was only proper to himself; in that he seemed to me ever, by his work, one of the greatest men and most worthy of admiration, that had been in many ages. In his adversity I ever prayed that God would give him strength; for greatness he could not want."

The services which he rendered to letters during the last five years of his life, amidst ten thousand distractions and vexations, increase the regret, with which we think on the many years which he had wasted,—to use the words of Sir Thomas Bodley,—"on such study as was not worthy such a student." He commenced a Digest of the Laws of England,—a History of England under the Princes of the House of Tudor, a body of Natural History, a Philosophical Romance. He made extensive and valuable additions to his essays. He published the inestimable Treatise *De Augmentis Scientiarum*. The very trifles with which he amused himself in hours of pain and languor bore the mark of his mind. The best Jest-Book in the world is that which he dictated from memory, without referring to any book, on a day on which illness had rendered him incapable of serious study.

The great apostle of experimental philosophy was destined to be its martyr. It had occurred to him that snow might be used with advantage for the purpose of preventing animal substances from putrefying. On a very cold day, early in the spring of the year 1626, he alighted from his coach near Highgate, in order to try the experiment. He went into a cottage, bought a fowl, and with his own hands stuffed it with snow. While thus engaged he felt a sudden chill, and was soon so much indisposed that it was impossible for him to return to Gray's Inn. The Earl of Arundel, with whom he was well acquainted, had a house at Highgate. To that house Bacon was carried. The Earl was absent; but the servants who were in charge of the place showed great respect and attention to the illustrious guest. Here, after an illness of about a week, he expired early on the morning of Easter-day, 1626. His mind appears to have retained its strength and liveliness to the end. He did not forget the fowl which had caused his death. In the last letter that he ever wrote, with fingers which, as he said, could not steadily hold a pen, he did not omit to mention that the experiment of the snow had succeeded "excellently well."

Our opinion of the moral character of this great man has already been sufficiently explained. Had his life been passed in literary retirement, he would, in all probability, have deserved to be considered, not only as a great philosopher, but as a worthy and good natured member of society. But neither his principles nor his spirit were such as could be trusted, when strong temptations were to be resisted, and serious dangers to be braved. In his will, he expressed with singular brevity, energy, dignity, and pathos, a mournful consciousness that his actions had not been such as to entitle him to the esteem of those under whose observation his life had been passed; and, at the same time, a proud confidence that his writings had secured for him a high and permanent place among the benefactors of mankind. So at least we understand those striking words which have been often quoted, but which we must quote once more—"For my name and memory, I leave it to men's charitable speeches, and to foreign nations, and to the next age."

His confidence was just. From the day of his death his fame has been constantly and steadily progressive; and we have no doubt that his name will be named with reverence to the latest ages, and to the remotest ends of the civilized world.