

ESSAYS MORAL,
ECONOMICAL, AND
POLITICAL

by

FRANCIS BACON

PERPUSTAKAAN
NEGARA MALAYSIA

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FRANCIS BACON,
BARON OF VERULAM,
AND
VISCOUNT ST. ALBANS.

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P R E F A C E.

THE illustrious Author of these Essays is so generally known as a man and a writer, that any particular account of him on the present occasion would be superfluous. To dwell, indeed, on the incidents of my Lord Bacon's life would be an unpleasant and mortifying task: for ever must it be deplored by the lover of literature and his species, that the possessor of this extraordinary intellect should have been exposed to the dangers of a situation to which his firmness was unequal; and, withdrawn from the retirement of his study, where he was the first of men, should have been thrown into the tumult of business, where he discovered himself to be among the last. The superiority, it is true, of his talents rendered him every where eminent; and when we see him acting at court, in the senate, at the bar,

ESSAYS OR COUNSELS,
CIVIL AND MORAL.

TO MR. ANTHONY BACON,
My dear Brother.

LOVING and beloved brother, I do now like some that have an orchard ill neighboured, that gather their fruit before it is ripe, to prevent stealing. These fragments of my conceits were going to print: to labour the stay of them had been troublesome, and subject to interpretation; to let them pass had been to adventure the wrong they might receive by untrue copies, or by some garnishment which it might please any that should set them forth to bestow upon them; therefore I held it best discretion to publish them myself, as they passed long ago from my pen, without any further disgrace than the weakness of the author; and as I did ever hold, there might be as great a vanity in retiring and withdrawing men's conceits, (except they be of some

ESSAYS

CIVIL AND MORAL.

OF TRUTH.

WHAT is truth? said jesting Pilate, and would not stay for an answer. Certainly there be that delight in giddiness, and count it a bondage to fix a belief, affecting free-will in thinking, as well as in acting; and, though the sects of philosophers of that kind be gone, yet there remain certain discoursing wits which are of the same veins, though there be not so much blood in them as was in those of the ancients. But it is not only the difficulty and labour which men take in finding out of truth; nor again, that, when it is found, it imposeth upon men's thoughts that doth bring lies in favour;

but a natural, though corrupt love of the lie itself. One of the later school of the Grecians examineth the matter, and is at a stand to think what should be in it, that men should love lies, where neither they make for pleasure, as with poets ; nor for advantage, as with the merchant ; but for the lie's sake. But I cannot tell : this same truth is a naked and open daylight, that doth not shew the masques, and mummeries, and triumphs of the world half so stately and daintily as candlelights. Truth may perhaps come to the price of a pearl, that sheweth best by day ; but it will not rise to the price of a diamond or carbuncle, that sheweth best in varied lights. A mixture of a lie doth ever add pleasure. Doth any man doubt, that if there were taken out of men's minds vain opinions, flattering hopes, false valuations, imaginations as one would, and the like, but it would leave the minds of a number of men poor shrunken things, full of melancholy and indisposition, and unpleasing to themselves ? One of the fathers, in great severity, called poesy " *vinum dæmonum*," because it filleth the imagination, and yet it is but with the shadow of a lie. But it is not the lie that passeth through the

mind, but the lie that sinketh in and settleth in it, that doth the hurt, such as we spake of before. But howsoever these things are thus in men's depraved judgments and affections, yet truth, which only doth judge itself, teacheth that the inquiry of truth, which is the love-making, or wooing of it; the knowledge of truth, which is the presence of it; and the belief of truth, which is the enjoying of it, is the sovereign good of human nature. The first creature of God, in the works of the days, was the light of the sense; the last was the light of reason; and his Sabbath work, ever since, is the illumination of his Spirit. First he breathed light upon the face of the matter, or chaos; then he breathed light into the face of man; and still he breatheth and inspireth light into the face of his chosen. The poet that beautified the sect, that was otherwise inferior to the rest, saith yet excellently well,

“ It is a pleasure to stand upon the shore, and to
 “ see ships tost upon the sea : a pleasure to stand
 “ in the window of a castle, and to see a battle,
 “ and the adventures thereof below : but no
 “ pleasure is comparable to the standing upon
 “ the vantage ground of truth (a hill not to be

“ commanded, and where the air is always clear
 “ and serene), and to see the errors and wan-
 “ derings, and mists, and tempests, in the vale
 “ below :” so always that this prospect be with
 pity, and not with swelling or pride. Certainly,
 it is heaven upon earth to have a man’s mind
 move in charity, rest in providence, and turn
 upon the poles of truth.

To pass from theological and philosophical
 truth to the truth of civil business, it will be
 acknowledged, even by those that practise it
 not, that clear and round dealing is the honour
 of man’s nature, and that mixture of falsehood
 is like allay in coin of gold and silver, which
 may make the metal work the better, but it
 embaseth it: for these winding and crooked
 courses are the goings of the serpent; which
 goeth basely upon the belly, and not upon the
 feet. There is no vice that doth so cover a
 man with shame as to be found false and per-
 fidious: and therefore Montaigne saith pret-
 tily, when he inquired the reason why the
 word of the lie should be such a disgrace, and
 such an odious charge, “ If it be well weigh-
 “ ed, to say that a man lieth, is as much as
 “ to say that he is brave towards God, and a

“coward towards men: for a lie faces God, and “shrinks from man.” Surely the wickedness of falsehood and breach of faith cannot possibly be so highly expressed as in that it shall be the last peal to call the judgments of God upon the generations of men: it being foretold, that when “Christ cometh,” he shall not “find faith upon earth.”

OF DEATH.

MEN fear death as children fear to go in the dark; and as that natural fear in children is increased with tales, so is the other. Certainly the contemplation of death, as the wages of sin and passage to another world, is holy and religious; but the fear of it, as a tribute due unto nature, is weak. Yet in religious meditations there is sometimes mixture of vanity and of superstition. You shall read in some of the friars' books of mortification, that a man should think with himself what the pain is, if he have but his finger's end pressed, or tortured, and thereby imagine what the pains of death are when the whole body is corrupted

and dissolved ; when many times death passeth with less pain than the torture of a limb ; for the most vital parts are not the quickest of sense : and by him that spake only as a philosopher and natural man, it was well said, “ *Pompa mortis magis terret quàm mors ipsa.*” Groans, and convulsions, and a discoloured face, and friends weeping, and blacks, and obsequies, and the like, shew death terrible. It is worthy the observing, that there is no passion in the mind of man so weak, but it mates and masters the fear of death ; and therefore death is no such terrible enemy when a man hath so many attendants about him that can win the combat of him. Revenge triumphs over death ; love slights it ; honour aspireth to it ; grief flieth to it ; fear pre-occupieth it ; nay, we read, after Otho the emperor had slain himself, pity (which is the tenderest of affections) provoked many to die out of mere compassion to their sovereign, and as the truest sort of followers. Nay, Seneca adds, niceness and satiety ; “ *Cogita quamdiu eadem feceris ; mori velle, non tantum fortis, aut miser, sed etiam fastidiosus potest.*” A man would die, though he were neither valiant nor miserable,