

THE ESSAYS OF FRANCIS BACON

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The essays of Francis Bacon by Francis Bacon

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TO M. ANTHONY BACON, HIS 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 bin troublesome and subject to interpretation; to let them pass had been to adventure the wrong they mought receive by untrue copies, or by some garnishment which it mought 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 mought be as great a vanity in retiring and withdrawing men's conceits (except they be of some nature) from the world, as in obtruding them: so in these particulars I have played myself the inquisitor, and find nothing to my understanding in them contrary or infectious to the state of religion or manners, but rather (as I suppose) medicinable. Only I disliked now to put them out, because they will be like the late new half-pence, which, though the silver were good, yet

the pieces were small. But since they would not stay with their master, but would needs travel abroad, I have preferred them to you that are next myself, dedicating them, such as they are, to our love, in the depth whereof (I assure you) I sometimes wish your infirmities translated upon myself, that her Majesty might have the service of so active and able a mind, and I might be with excuse confined to these contemplations and studies for which I am fittest. So commend I you to the preservation of the divine Majesty.

From my chamber at Gray's Inn, this 30. of
January, 1597.

Your entire loving brother,
FRAN. BACON.

TO MY LOVING BROTHER, SIR JOHN
CONSTABLE, KNIGHT.

My last Essays I dedicated to my dear brother Master Anthony Bacon, who is with God. Looking amongst my papers this vacation, I found others of the same nature: which if I myself shall not suffer to be lost, it seemeth the world will not, by the often printing of the former. Missing my brother, I found you

next in respect of bond of near alliance, and of straight friendship and society, and particularly of communication in studies, wherein I must acknowledge myself beholding to you. For as my business found rest in my contemplations, so my contemplations ever found rest in your loving conference and judgment. So wishing you all good, I remain

Your loving brother and friend,

1612.

FRA. BACON.

TO THE RIGHT HONORABLE MY VERY
GOOD LORD THE DUKE OF BUCKING-
HAM HIS GRACE, LORD HIGH ADMI-
RAL OF ENGLAND.

EXCELLENT LORD, Salomon says: "A good name is as a precious ointment;" and I assure myself, such will your Grace's name be with posterity. For your fortune and merit both have been eminent, and you have planted things that are like to last. I do now publish my Essays, which of all my other works have been most current, for that, as it seems, they come home to men's business and bosoms. I have enlarged them, both in number and weight, so that they

are indeed a new work. I thought it therefore agreeable to my affection and obligation to your Grace, to prefix your name before them, both in English and in Latin; for I do conceive that the Latin volume of them (being in the universal language) may last as long as books last. My Instauration I dedicated to the King, my History of Henry the Seventh (which I have now also translated into Latin) and my portions of Natural History to the Prince. And these I dedicate to your Grace, being of the best fruits that by the good increase which God gives to my pen and labours I could yield. God lead your Grace by the hand.

Your Grace's most obliged and
faithful servant,

1625.

FR. ST. ALBAN.

ESSAYS OR COUNSELS
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