

**THE
ADVANCEMENT OF
LEARNING, BOOK I**

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The Advancement of Learning, Book I by Francis Bacon & Albert S. Cook

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FRANCIS BACON & ALBERT S. COOK

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Bacon

THE
ADVANCEMENT OF LEARNING

BOOK I

EDITED

WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

BY

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TO THE MEMORY OF
GEORGE HAMMELL COOK
WHO LOVED SCIENCE AND HIS FELLOW-MEN

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PREFACE.

WHEN this book was announced, the admirable edition by Wright (Clarendon Press) was extant, but that by Selby (Macmillan) had not yet appeared. My object was to make the meaning of Bacon somewhat more accessible by translating his Latin quotations in the text, the originals being relegated to the foot of the page, and by furnishing quotations in English for the mere citations of Wright, which to the average student are practically useless, since he lacks the means or the opportunity of consulting the originals.

When Selby's edition appeared, I found that it proceeded upon the general principle that I had conceived, but that the notes were often too extended and elementary for the student I had in mind. Since much excellent illustrative matter had been brought together by my predecessors, I have fully drawn upon their stores; of the assistance thus derived I wish here to make general acknowledgment, in addition to the credit given in particular instances.

In the Introduction I have allowed a variety of authorities upon Bacon to express their views upon some of the important aspects of his achievement. There will always be debate about his character and his work, precisely because of a greatness which confounds all ordinary standards. His utterances are seminal, and we feel too indebted to the author who can cause our barren intellects to quicken with new life, to be capable of criticizing him narrowly. I know of no secular author who so defies all efforts to comprehend him, Shakespeare not excepted.

Perhaps if we knew more of Shakespeare's life, and if he had adventured himself in a similar variety of fields, we might find even greater difficulty in harmonizing and unifying all the aspects of his nature. In considering Shakespeare, we must ever remember that it was of the essence of his dramatic profession to take the ply of various characters and moods; while Bacon, besides being in turn subdued to the various matters which occupied him — each of which would have tasked the abilities of even an uncommon man — to such an extent that when he speaks with the accent of authority we seem to hear the voice of nature herself, had also to maintain his own individual character as a man apart from his creations, and in the eyes of the world superior to them all. That this taxed his utmost powers — that it would have taxed the utmost powers of any one — who can deny? Was he not obliged at once to embody in himself the return to classical antiquity, so far as literature and motive impulses were concerned, and to transcend it so far as physical science was concerned? to maintain reverence in his soul while he was undermining the towers of tradition? to write compelling and artistic prose, never since surpassed in some of the greatest qualities of prose, at a time when compelling and artistic prose did not yet exist in English? to serve his monarch in a laborious profession, while building up in imagination a kingdom of science which should enlarge the whole scope of man and extend its own boundaries with every generation? to advocate and exemplify a minute examination of particulars, while ever bearing in mind and making provision for an ultimate and all-embracing synthesis? in a word, to be in his own person prophet and projector, philosopher and poet, as well as man of affairs and servant of the State? Did he always follow in practice the axioms he enounced in theory? With regard to Dante and Sophocles we cannot

answer this question, for lack of knowledge concerning their life in the world. We are puzzled in attempting to answer it with regard to Bacon, because, while he allows us to perceive adumbrations of a comprehensive philosophy of life, and to feel obscurely its power over himself, he is constantly, even in his utterances on the subject, abating the stern ideality which springs from untroubled contemplation, in order to make due concessions to that base world of activity by which he was confronted, and in which he must lay the foundations for a fabric of science which was to endure. Had he been solely concerned with spiritual principles, it would have been otherwise; but his aim was to conduce to the material good of mankind; and how could he have a future material good at heart, if he were totally indifferent to all material considerations in the present? It was his lot to be at cross-purposes with himself, and he must often have felt, with Paul, 'O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' And yet no one could have done what was immediately necessary in the general interests of science, and still have gained such permanent influence over the thoughts of mankind, without experiencing and exhibiting in himself this contradiction. That it was, in a sense, inherent in the circumstances of the time, and not peculiar to an individual, the life of Galileo may suffice to show.

The *Life* by Rawley, the foundation of all subsequent biographies of Bacon, has been reprinted in full, as it is not generally accessible save in the Spedding edition of Bacon's works.

ALBERT S. COOK.

YALE UNIVERSITY,
March 21, 1904.