

**THE LONDON SERIES OF ENGLISH
CLASSICS; BACON'S ESSAYS,
WITH INTRODUCTION, NOTES
AND
INDEX. IN TWO VOLUMES, VOL. I**

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EDWIN A. ABBOTT & J. W. HALES & C. S. JERRAM

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PREFACE.

THE object of the present edition of Bacon's Essays is to illustrate them as far as possible, not merely by disconnected notes, but by a continuous Introduction, bringing to bear upon the Essays such knowledge of Bacon's thoughts, as can be derived from his life and works. The basis of this Introduction is, of course, the edition of Bacon's Works issued by Mr. Ellis and Mr. Spedding; and the 'Letters and Life' recently completed by Mr. Spedding. Allusions and textual difficulties are explained by notes; but the writer's experience, while reading the Essays with a class of advanced pupils, led him to the conviction that, for the proper understanding of the Essays, more is wanted than mere annotation, however accurate and judicious. Bacon's Essays can hardly be understood without reference to Bacon's life.

The text adopted is generally that of the accurate and scholar-like edition of Mr. Aldis Wright; but I have ventured to depart from his example in the matter of spelling and punctuation. As regards

spelling, the principle adopted in the following pages is this : whatever quotations or extracts are made for critical or antiquarian purposes are printed with the old spelling, but the Essays themselves are placed on the same footing as the Bible and Shakespeare ; and, as being not for an age but for all ages, they are spelt with the spelling of this age. Still less scruple has been felt in departing from the old punctuation ; it has no right to be considered Bacon's ; it often makes absolute nonsense of a passage ; it sometimes produces ambiguities that may well cause perplexity even to intelligent readers ; and its retention can only be valuable to archæologists as showing how little importance should be attached to the commas and colons scattered at random through their pages by the Elizabethan compositors.

By way of illustrating Bacon's style and method, the ten Essays of 1597 are printed (and, in accordance with the principle stated above, in their original spelling) below the corresponding Essays of A.D. 1625. The comparison of these may furnish a useful exercise in composition ; but it has not been thought necessary to add in full the edition of A.D. 1612, some account of which will, however, be found in the Notes, and in the Appendix in the second volume.

It is hoped that this edition may be of some use in the highest classes of schools ; but the object has been, not the compilation of a book adapted for the use of persons desiring to pass examinations, but of

a work that may enable readers of all ages and classes to read Bacon's Essays easily and intelligently.

I am indebted to Dr. Kuno Fischer's 'Francis of Verulam' for some valuable hints, which will be found acknowledged severally where they occur. Of Mr. Spedding's work I have made so much use that the words 'debt' and 'obligation' cannot sufficiently express what I owe to it. Though (as I regret to learn from Mr. Spedding, who most kindly and laboriously criticised my proofs) my interpretation of Bacon's character differs widely from his, yet it is founded almost entirely upon the evidence that he has himself collected. I have endeavoured to throw a little additional light on Bacon through Machiavelli.

In the notes, I have gained much from Mr. Aldis Wright's edition, and especially from his references. I regret that I did not see Mr. Gardiner's *History of England from the Accession of James I., &c.*, in time to do more than add a few foot-notes from it. I find myself in complete accord with almost every word referring to Bacon in those valuable volumes.