

# The Life of Sir Francis Bacon

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*A brief historical sketch of the life of the poet, philosopher, statesman and lord chancellor, Sir Francis Bacon, Baron Verulam of Verulam, Viscount St Alban.*

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## Birth, Upbringing and Education

Francis Bacon was born at York House, Charing Cross, London, on 22 January 1561. He was baptised at St Martin-in-the-Fields on 25 January 1561 as second son of Sir Nicholas and Lady Ann Bacon. His father was Lord Keeper of the Great Seal of England and his mother was one of the most highly educated and accomplished women of her time, second daughter of the great scholar and humanist, Sir Anthony Cooke, and sister of Sir Anthony's eldest daughter, Mildred, wife of Sir William Cecil, Principal Secretary of State, who later became Lord Burghley (1571) and the Queen's Lord High Treasurer (1572). Both Sir Nicholas and Sir William, besides holding the highest political offices under Queen Elizabeth, were patrons and active promoters of the arts and sciences. The two families, the Cecils and the Bacons, maintained close contact with each other and often visited each other's homes.

As a child Francis showed more than unusual promise and attracted the attention of Queen Elizabeth, who liked to call him her "young Lord Keeper". Together with his brother Anthony, he was given a privileged private education by the best teachers of the time, which took place mainly at York House, the Lord Keeper's London residence—a thriving hub of State business that adjoined York Place, the Queen's Palace of Whitehall, or in the vacations at Sir Nicholas' country home of Gorhambury, St Albans, with visits to Theobalds House, Sir William Cecil's nearby country estate, and Gidea Hall, the country home of Sir Anthony Cook, Francis' learned grandfather and principal tutor.<sup>1</sup> Francis also had regular access to Cecil House, the London mansion of his uncle, which operated as a school for young noblemen who included, at one time or another, the Earls of Oxford, Surrey, Rutland, Southampton and Essex, plus Fulke Greville and Sir Philip Sidney.

Because of Sir Nicholas' high office and the associated standing of Lady Ann at court, there were also tours with the royal court, visiting country mansions and castles of the nobility, and palaces of the Queen and her courtiers. Francis was likely to have been present at various Court entertainments, such as the regular Christmas festivities and the two great entertainments of 1575. These latter entertainments, which were pivotal events in the Queen's reign, were the Arcadian Woodstock Tournament presented by Sir Henry Lee, the Queen's Champion, and the sumptuous Kenilworth Entertainment laid on for the Queen at Kenilworth Castle by her favourite, Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester. The Woodstock Tournament was the forerunner of the annual Accession Day Tournaments, whilst the Kenilworth Entertainment was designed by Leicester to persuade the Queen to marry him, which offer she turned down.

Francis' "dearest brother", "comfort" and "second self", Anthony, two years Francis' senior, was brought up and educated with Francis. The two brothers became thoroughly learned in the Classics and fluent in Latin, Greek, Hebrew, French and Italian. They also learnt Spanish and Dutch, studied mathematical subjects and music, played the lute, and were proficient in the art of fencing and horse riding. In addition to all this they learnt classical mythology and

philosophy, and had a thorough grounding in the scriptures. All this was from a Protestant and Humanistic point of view; for Sir Anthony was a strict Protestant and his daughter, Lady Anne, even more vehemently so. Sir Nicholas, although a Protestant, was far more moderate and a principal advocate of 'the advancement of learning' style of education initiated by Sir Thomas More and promoted by the 'secret society' founded in London by Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa in 1510—a society that adopted the name and symbolism of the rose and cross from c.1570 onwards.<sup>2</sup>

The particular 'advancement of learning' project promoted by Sir Nicholas was for the advancement of learning and training of young men and women, not only in literature and the arts but also in morals and athletic exercises. During the reign of Henry VII he had proposed a scheme (which was rejected then) for the establishment of a college in London for the education of statesmen, where young men of good family and attainments should be taught civil law, Latin and French, some of whom were to be attached to foreign embassies to further their education. This scheme, which Sir Nicholas had partly derived from the earlier example of Sir Thomas More, was then adapted, developed further and put into practice in Queen Elizabeth's reign, incorporating ideas outlined in Roger Ascham's book, *The Schoolmaster*, that was commissioned by the Queen in 1563 for the education of the children of noblemen and princes. In respect of the young men, Sir Nicholas' project involved educating them in French, Latin, Greek, civil and common law, music and dancing, together with overseas experience accompanying ambassadors.

In April 1573, at the age of twelve, with a "new star" blazing away in the heavens (a supernova in Cassiopeia), Francis entered Trinity College, Cambridge University, accompanied by his brother Anthony. They were placed under the direct charge and tuition of the Master of Trinity, Dr John Whitgift, and lodged in rooms under his roof. (Whitgift afterwards became Archbishop of Canterbury.) Their contemporaries and friends at Cambridge included William Clerke, Edmund Spenser, Philemon Holland and Gabriel Harvey—the latter being their tutor in rhetoric and poetry, who later became a leading member of Sir Philip Sidney's group of philosopher-poets, the English 'Areopagus'.

Whilst a student at Cambridge, Francis became thoroughly disillusioned with the Aristotelian system of thought and teaching. As a reaction to this, and inspired with prophetic vision as to what to do to improve matters, his grand idea was born, revealing to him his mission in life. Less than three years later, at Christmas 1575, he and Anthony left Cambridge, carrying with them the embryo of a plan by means of which Francis' grand idea might be set in motion and gradually achieved. In this project Anthony was a dedicated partner, even though for the next fifteen years their respective paths would separate them physically for most of the time.

## France

On 27 June 1576 Francis, aged fifteen, and Anthony, aged seventeen, were entered as law students at Gray's Inn, one of the four Inns of Court in London, to follow in their father's footsteps. Five months later they were admitted, together with all of Sir Nicholas Bacon's sons, to the Grand Company of Ancients by Order of Pension dated 21 November 1576, which gave them certain privileges. However, instead of taking up residence at Gray's Inn immediately, Francis was sent abroad to further his education. In this, Francis was following the special course of education that had been delineated by Sir Nicholas Bacon "for the

advancement of learning and training of statesmen”—a name and course of action that was to be enlarged upon and incorporated by Francis into his Great Instauration.<sup>3</sup>

Francis was appointed as an attaché to Sir Amyas Paulet, his French tutor, who had been knighted and commissioned by Queen Elizabeth as the new English Ambassador to the French Court. Moreover, he was sent to France ‘from the Queen’s hand’, which meant that he had the special—and, for a fifteen-year-old boy, unusual—privilege of kissing the Queen’s Royal Hand before leaving. This meant that he went with the Queen’s direct authority and blessing. Also accompanying Francis was Mr Duncombe, a tutor in diplomacy, and Francis’ half-brother Edward Bacon. Both Francis and Edward were granted a licence to travel on the continent for a period of three years, together with their servants, six horses or geldings, baggage, and carrying £60 in money, “for their increase in knowledge and experience”.<sup>4</sup>

The embassy set out for France in grand style on 25 September 1576, sailing on the battleship *Dreadnought*, one of the four new galleons designed by John Hawkins that revolutionised naval battle and which was specially commissioned for the occasion. The party landed at Calais later that day, from whence they travelled on to Paris and the court of Henri III. Edward seems to have parted company with the party shortly after landing, as he intended to visit such places as Padua, Ravenna and Vienna (and in December 1577 he was in Strasburg).<sup>5</sup>

The embassy happened to arrive in the middle of the French Wars of Religion when, on one hand, the functions of the French State were in disorder and, on the other hand, the French Renaissance was at its height. This was a time when, despite the corrupt level of French politics, the French court was abuzz with cultural activity and splendour, and the French philosophers, humanists, artists, musicians, scholars and poets were at their height of fame. They formed a royal academy patronised by the king of France, Henri III, which extended its field of interest far beyond the Platonic type of academy that had its renaissance in Italy under the patronage of the Médici. Henri III’s Palace Academy included philology, drama and music, and the artists and poets who composed the academy were largely responsible for the court entertainments, which included elaborate masques and pageants, and involved women as well as men. Chief amongst the poets were the Pléiade, of whom five of the original seven were still alive: Pierre de Ronsard, Antoine de Baïf, Pontus de Tyard, Remy Belleau and Jean Daurat.<sup>6</sup>

During his sojourn abroad, Francis studied the laws, languages, politics, history, culture and customs of France and other countries, gained experience in diplomacy, made contact with Henri de Navarre’s Huguenot ministers, and became involved with the philosophers and poets, including the esoteric movement or society founded in Paris by Agrippa that was twin to the Rosicrucian society in England. He also worked for the Queen’s intelligence service, decrypting information and inventing cipher systems, including the Biliteral Cipher which later inspired the creation of the Morse Code and the binary code of modern computer technology. As a member of the English embassy, he travelled with the French court to Fontainebleau, Blois, Tours, Poitiers and Chenonceaux, as well as living in Paris where the French court was normally based.

When the French Court moved from Paris to Blois for a meeting of the Estates-General in December 1576, the English embassy accompanied it. At Blois there was an opportunity for Francis to witness the famous Italian *commedia dell’arte*, whose direct influence can be found in many Shakespeare plays.<sup>7</sup> In March 1577 the embassy followed the French court to Tours,

then from Tours to Poitiers, where in the autumn of 1577 they spent three months. At Poitiers the French court met with the noblemen and diplomats of Henri de Navarre's court, including Du Plessis-Mornay and Du Bartas, to carry out peace negotiations. Whilst there, Francis made the acquaintance of the poet Jean de La Jessée, private secretary to Henri III's brother, Francis, Duke of Anjou. Jessée penned a tributary sonnet to Francis in which he referred to Bacon's Muse as being Pallas Athena and greater than Jessée's own Muse.

In August-September 1577 Francis made some kind of perilous journey, which may refer to his brief visit to England when he was entrusted by Paulet with "some message or advertisement to the Queen", for which he was commended (or else he made two separate journeys in the autumn of that year). Soon after his return to France, on 14 September 1577 Henri III signed the Peace of Bergerac with the Huguenot princes (later ratified by the Edict of Poitiers on 17 September 1577). With a moderation of peace being secured, the French court plus the English embassy moved back to Paris, where the Palace Academy flourished. The Gelosi Company was also in Paris from May 1577 until April 1578, performing *commedia dell'arte* publicly as well as at court.

Besides the Pléiade, Francis Bacon was influenced by Bernard Palissy (the Potter), who was lecturing on Natural Science at his 'Petit Academie' in Paris. Many of Francis' early opinions in philosophy and natural science show indebtedness to Palissy. Attendees at the Little Academy included the brothers Jacques and Pierre de la Primaudaye, the latter being the ascribed author of *L'Académie française*, a compendium of moral, philosophical and scientific knowledge in which Francis seems to have had a hand—even maybe as the real author—and which is considered to have been used as a source by 'Shakespeare'. This book of natural history refers in its introduction to Solomon and employs the twinned 'A' cipher signature of the mystery school in a cryptic way. The signature also occurs as an 'AA' headpiece,<sup>8</sup> the first of its kind, in an extremely rare Hebrew Grammar, the *Hebraicum Alphabethum Jo. Bovlaese*, published in Paris in 1576, which Francis owned and annotated.<sup>9</sup>



AA headpiece, *Hebraicum Alphabethum Jo. Bovlaese* (Paris, 1576/7)

This and all Francis' other interests and knowledge may have been what induced Nicholas Hilliard, who had accompanied Paulet's embassy, to inscribe the words, "Si tabula daretur digna animum mallem" ("It would be preferable if a picture deserving of his mind could be brought about"), on the portrait miniature he painted in Paris of Francis Bacon at some time in 1578.<sup>10</sup>

Up until the beginning of 1578 Francis had been living with Paulet and his family and assistants in the embassy, but in January 1578 he moved into the household of a French civil lawyer so as to be able to observe civil law in action and learn the French ways. It was during that month that Francis first begged to be allowed to journey into Italy, as his half-brother Edward had

done, but Paulet advised against it as being too dangerous for Francis in particular, at that particular time.

In August 1578 Catherine de' Medici (the Queen Mother) and Marguerite de Valois (Henri III's sister) set out in royal embassy for the kingdom of Navarre in the south of France, each with their respective court of some 300 courtiers and beautiful ladies-in-waiting. The purpose was for Marguerite to be reunited with her husband, Henri de Navarre, from whom she had been separated for over two years, and to settle various affairs of state. The royal embassy travelled in grand progress, reaching Nerac, the northern capital of the Kingdom of Navarre, in October 1578. In the lead-up to Christmas, 15-22 December 1578, the visitors were entertained at Navarre's palace in Nerac with what became known as the infamous Court of Love festivities. This was a major political event, and without doubt the English embassy would have done all they possibly could to have been well informed about its entire goings on. There is no known record of Francis being present in Nerac at any time, and it is perhaps unlikely that he would have been given permission to be there, unless accompanied; but it is not an impossibility. At some point he began a friendship with Henri de Navarre—a friendship later carried on by Anthony Bacon—and this could have been during the festivities at Nerac.

## Return to England

Pierre Amboise, Bacon's first biographer (who had access to Bacon's papers and letters and is quoted as an authority by Gilbert Wats),<sup>11</sup> appears to say that Francis Bacon visited not only France but also Italy and Spain: -

I wish to state that he employed some years of his youth in travel, in order to polish his mind and to mould his opinion by intercourse with all kinds of foreigners. France, Italy, and Spain, as the most civilised nations of the world, were those whither his desire for knowledge carried him. And, as he saw himself destined one day to hold in his hands the helm of the Kingdom, instead of looking only at the people and the different fashions in dress, as do the most of those who travel, he observed judiciously the laws and the customs of the countries through which he passed, noted the different forms of Government in a State, with their advantages or defects, together with all the other matters which might help to make a man able for the government of men.<sup>12</sup>

However, there is no evidence of this; only that Francis obtained a licence to remain abroad for a further three years, with the intention to visit Italy and Spain. This, however, was not to be. In February 1579 his sojourn in France was brought to a painfully abrupt end. He was making preparations to travel to Italy when, on the night of 17/18 February 1579 he dreamt that his family home of Gorhambury was plastered all over in black mortar. Since Gorhambury was actually plastered white and known as the "White House" or "White Temple", this was an ominous dream. Two weeks later he received news that his father had died on 20 February of a chill caught at his official home in London, York House. Shocked, Francis packed his bags and set off for England as soon as he could, bearing a despatch from Sir Amyas Paulet to the Queen in which he was mentioned as "of great hope, endued with many and singular parts," and one who, "if God gave him life, would prove a very able and sufficient subject to do her Highness good and acceptable service."<sup>13</sup>

The Lord Keeper's funeral took place on 9 March 1579, with a procession from York House to St Paul's Cathedral where Sir Nicholas' body was placed in a tomb beside that of John of Gaunt. If, as Spedding reports,<sup>14</sup> Francis Bacon left Paris for England on 20 March 1579, then he would have missed his father's funeral. Not only this, but one of the results of Sir Nicholas' unfortunate death was that Francis was left with very little financial support of his own, as Sir Nicholas had died before he had been able to complete arrangements for a suitable inheritance for Francis. This meant that the Lord Keeper's sons by his first marriage inherited what would otherwise have been Francis' share.

### Gray's Inn – Law, Philosophy, Poetry

It is not recorded where Francis Bacon lived during the first few months after Sir Nicholas Bacon's funeral, but by the beginning of October (the start of the legal year) he would have taken up residence in Gray's Inn so as to continue his law studies, as pre-arranged by his father and now supervised by Lord Burghley, who had taken on the role of *in loco parentis*. Francis was certainly well ensconced there a year later, as recorded by an entry dated 13 May 1580 in the Gray's Inn Pension Book, which notes that "Mr Francis Bacon in respect of his health is allowed to have the benefit of a special admittance." This meant that Francis was freed from the obligation of keeping Commons and could choose his diet and take meals in his chambers. In addition he (together with his brother Anthony), as a son of a Lord Keeper, had been admitted *de societate magistrorum* ('to the society of masters'—the Grand Company of Ancients)<sup>15</sup> at the Pension of 27 June 1576, which meant that he could come and go as he liked, without regard to the Inn's formal teaching arrangements and without being bound to any vacations (i.e. learning vacations, as distinct from both holidays and terms).<sup>16</sup>

The chambers that Francis occupied were the "Bacon Chambers", which were centrally placed in Gray's Inn and housed the Inn's library. The chambers had originally been those of Sir Nicholas Bacon but were now reserved for Sir Nicholas' two younger sons, Anthony and Francis. Sir Nicholas' elder sons, half-brothers to Francis and Anthony, had no need of the chambers as by now they had their own town houses and were not studying or practising law. Anthony, however, having used the chambers during the previous three years, and after having sorted out legacy disagreements with his half-brother Nathaniel, made preparations for a continental tour, leaving for France in December 1579. This left the Bacon Chambers free for Francis' sole use.

However, law was not Francis' great interest and about it he writes later that "the Bar will be my bier". In later years he informed Dr William Rawley that law was to him but an accessory, not his principal study, even though in law, according to Rawley, "he obtained to great excellency" and "in the science of the grounds and mysteries of law he was exceeded by none". Francis' passion in life was literary and educational, and devoted to the realisation of his grand idea. Besides his despair at the barrenness of Aristotelian-based university education and philosophical enquiry, he had been both shocked and inspired by what he saw and experienced in France. The French court was dissolute and its government was corrupt, but its culture otherwise was refined and glorious, whereas English culture at that time was uncouth and the English language still a sorry patchwork of almost incomprehensible dialects. Francis' grand idea and mission, therefore, was, as he described it, a renovation of all arts and sciences based upon the proper foundations, and one which, by means of a special method that he was to test out and then teach, could spread to other countries for the benefit of the

whole world. It was a truly grand concept—one that he was later to call “The Great Instauration” or “Six Days Work”.

To help him in his educational and cultural endeavours Francis applied to his uncle Lord Burghley to exert influence with the Queen on his behalf, in recognition of his special abilities and circumstances, so that he might have not only royal approval but also a position whereby he could have sufficient influence and income, without having to practice law, to give him “commandment of more wits” than his own to assist him in his proposed task, since his own inherited resources were far too limited. In this, Francis was probably thinking of the royal patronage and financial support given to the Palace Academy and the Pléiade in France. In letters he not only confessed that he had “as vast contemplative ends as [he had] moderate civil ends”, for he had “taken all knowledge as his province”, but he also made clear that neither law nor government officialdom was his desired occupation or interest, but “philanthropia” and “the waters of Parnassus” (the Castalian Spring, dedicated to the Muses, that provides poetic inspiration to those who bathe in or drink its waters). The Queen, who was interested in the French academies and fond of grand entertainment, and Burghley, who was a patron of scholars and musicians (but not poets), gave Francis to believe that such a place would be found for him; but, other than moral and verbal encouragement, in this “rare and unaccustomed suit” Francis was to meet with little success.

### Renewal of Friendships

Having returned from France and settled in London, Francis Bacon was able to renew and build up a strong life-long friendship with Fulke Greville, Philip Sidney, Philip’s sister Mary, Robert Devereux, and Robert’s sister Penelope. Robert Devereux had become 2nd Earl of Essex when his father died on September 1576. Penelope Devereux was the “Stella” of Sir Philip Sidney’s *Astrophel and Stella* sonnet sequence. He was given the chance to marry her, but he turned it down, much to his later chagrin and despair when he discovered too late that he loved his childhood friend.<sup>17</sup> Mary Sidney, who was virtually the same age as Francis Bacon, had become the Countess of Pembroke when she married her father’s close ally and friend, Henry Herbert, 2nd Earl of Pembroke, in April 1577. Together with Francis’ brother Anthony, the seven of them became a coterie of close friends.

Francis and Anthony Bacon had known Robert and Penelope Devereux from childhood, as they had once been neighbours, the Bacon family living in York House and the Devereux family living next door in Durham House. Durham House was owned by the Queen, who provided it to certain courtiers and distinguished foreigners as a ‘grace and favour’ residence in London,<sup>18</sup> amongst whom were Robert and Penelope’s parents, Walter Devereux, 2nd Viscount Hereford and 1st Earl of Essex, and Lettice Knollys, daughter of Sir Francis Knollys and cousin to the Queen. When Walter Devereux died on 22 September 1576, his son Robert, the new Earl of Essex, became a ward of Lord Burghley and soon after, in 1577, came to live at Burghley House amongst the Cecil household.

Francis and Anthony also came to know Philip and Mary Sidney at Burghley House. Philip and Mary were the children of Sir Henry Sidney, a close friend of William Cecil, Lord Burghley. During his absences in Ireland during the years 1565-1571, Sir Henry used to leave his children in the care of the Cecils; thus, although never a formal ward, Philip spent a great deal of time at Burghley House, as also did his sister Mary. Francis and Anthony also, from a young age

and during that same period of time, were often at Burghley House, mixing with the Cecil household—their uncle, aunt, cousins, nephews, nieces, and his uncle's wards.

Sir Henry's wife, Mary Dudley, the mother of Philip and Mary, was the sister of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, and one of Queen Elizabeth's most intimate confidantes during the early years of her reign. Well educated, Lady Mary Sidney was fluent in Italian, French and Latin, as well as a writer of poetry. She was interested in alchemy and became a friend of John Dee, corresponding with and visiting him often. In 1579 she had to retire from Court life because of ill-health, but by that time her daughter Mary, the wife of Henry Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, was attending the Queen at Court. Pembroke had been good friends with Sir Nicholas Bacon, with whom he had a business arrangement, co-owning the wire works at Tintern which produced brass plates used for printing. This business arrangement was carried on by Francis Bacon.<sup>19</sup>

The coterie of friends was to be found often at Leicester House from 1579 until Leicester's death in September 1588, for in 1578 Lady Essex (Lettice Knollys), the widowed mother of Robert and Penelope, had married the Queen's favourite, Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester. It was at Leicester House, in 1579, that the English Areopagus of poets started to meet, led ostensibly by Philip Sidney.

### Intelligence Work

Besides studying law, developing his grand scheme, taking part in the various activities of Gray's Inn and being "sometimes a courtier",<sup>20</sup> Francis also assisted in the compilation and assessment of political intelligence, working with Sir Francis Walsingham, the Queen's Secretary of State, who had set up and headed one of the most efficient intelligence networks then in existence. Walsingham reported not only to the Queen but also to Burghley, whom he had succeeded as Secretary of State in 1573 when Burghley became the Queen's Lord Treasurer. Part of this work was cryptography and cryptanalysis (cryptology being another of Francis' particular interests and areas of expertise), which Francis carried out together with Thomas Phelippes, Walsingham's leading code-breaker.

One of those supplying intelligence was Anthony Bacon who, at the behest of Burghley as well as his own personal desire, travelled Europe (France, Switzerland, Navarre) from 1579 to 1592 gathering intelligence of various kinds, building a network of friends and agents, acting as a diplomat, and sending his brother items of literary and philosophical interest. In the process Anthony became a personal friend of the Protestant theologian Theodore Beza, the Huguenot king Henri de Navarre (later Henri IV of France), and the French essayist Michel de Montaigne. One result of this was that, in 1582, Francis Bacon was involved in creating a report or State Paper for the Queen entitled *Notes on the Present State of Christendom*. The countries covered included France, Italy, Spain, Austria, Germany, Portugal, Poland, Denmark and Sweden. Of the cities, Florence, Venice, Mantua, Genoa and Savoy are dealt with in most detail. The descriptions of the various kings, princes, dukes and states show the information to have been compiled in the years 1581-2, the writing being carried out or at least completed in the summer of 1582. The notes, which were found amongst Francis Bacon's papers,<sup>21</sup> appear to have been the result of intelligence gathered by Nicholas Faunt and Anthony Bacon, who liaised with each other, and other agents who helped them, since Faunt (who had travelled in France, Germany, Switzerland and the north of Italy) had been in Geneva with

Anthony and had returned home from there via Paris to England at the beginning of April 1582, carrying with him the results of the intelligence work to date.

All in all, Francis Bacon was at the heart of and privy to a huge web and data bank of intelligence on all kinds of matters, from politics, economics, law, trade, history, geography, science, literature, poetry, military strength and religious beliefs, right down to social customs, manners, costumes, personal behaviour, travel facilities, environmental details and individual experiences, at home and abroad. Moreover, besides his brother Anthony, his friend Thomas Phelippes and his mentor John Dee, others in the intelligence service whom Francis would have known and worked with included Walsingham's secretaries, Nicholas Faunt, Francis Milles, William Waad and Robert Beale, and the poets, Edmund Spenser, Thomas Watson, Samuel Daniel, Christopher Marlowe and Anthony Munday, who acted periodically as agents. This is in addition to Francis' family, Inns of Court, government, aristocracy and royal Court connections, and his Freemasonic and Rosicrucian involvement.

### Member of Parliament – Barrister – Queen's Council – Great Instauration

In 1581 Francis Bacon began his thirty-six years of Parliamentary service as a Member of Parliament, entering the Commons as a member for Cornwall. On 27 June 1582, six years to the day from his date of admission to Gray's Inn, he was called to the Bar and admitted Utter Barrister at Gray's Inn. His involvement in high politics started in 1584, when he wrote his first political memorandum, *A Letter of Advice to Queen Elizabeth*, and in March 1584 he visited Scotland. By 1585 he had composed his first "juvenile" work, *Temporis Partum Maximum* ('The Greatest Birth of Time'), on what was later to become publicly known as 'The Great Instauration'. On 10 February 1586 he became a Bencher of Gray's Inn. Then, less than two years later, on 23 November 1587 he was appointed a Reader of Gray's Inn.

Just two days prior to this appointment as Reader, the grant of the lease and demise of the Bacon Chambers that had been given to Anthony and Francis Bacon nine years previously was renewed to them for a term of fifty years, but this time with "libertie & power to rayse & erect new buildings as well over there aforesaid lodginge as alsoe over & above the library," with the condition that the library also be extended with a balcony added.<sup>22</sup> With this extra grant, and with an allowance of four years in which to carry out any building work, Francis set about adding a further storey or two of extra rooms, thereby transforming Bacon's Chambers into an elegant four-storied house.<sup>23</sup>

From that time onwards we learn that Francis was regularly associated with other gentlemen of Gray's Inn in devising and presenting masques and entertainments at Gray's Inn and the royal Court at Greenwich, and writing speeches and devices to be used in the Queen's Accession Day Tilts.

Francis' movements tended to oscillate between Gray's Inn, the royal Court when he was in attendance on the Queen, and Twickenham Lodge. The latter was situated in Twickenham Park, the Crown property leased by Edward Bacon, with land leading down to the River Thames immediately opposite the Queen's palace of Richmond. The lodge with its park was a tranquil and beautiful place where Francis could write in peace, together with his friends and "good pens". Edward seems to have allowed Francis the use of Twickenham Lodge whenever he wanted and it is here that Francis carried out his early experiments related to his Great Instauration project and, with the help of his team of "good pens", wrote poetry

(masques and plays) and intelligence reports. (In November 1595, when Edward's lease expired, the Queen granted Francis the lease.) Francis had the use of the lodge and its parkland until 1606, when he surrendered the lease. He also made occasional visits in the vacations to Gorhambury, the country mansion built by Sir Nicholas Bacon on the outskirts of St Albans. Although inherited by Anthony Bacon, Gorhambury was, under the terms of Sir Nicholas Bacon's will, Lady Anne Bacon's home and residence for the rest of her life.

In the Parliament of February 1589 Francis sat for Liverpool and took part in various committees. The Queen's government asked for a double taxation, to meet the expenses of defending the country against the Spanish Armada. The members of the House of Commons accepted this, but only on condition that this should not be seen as a precedent. Francis was commissioned to draft a passage to that effect, for inclusion in the preamble to the bill drafted by the Queen's learned counsel.

During 1589 Francis was elected Dean of the Chapel for that year. Then, in the midst of the Martin Marprelate controversy and pamphlet-war between the High Church establishment and the non-conformist Puritans, which was at its height in the summer of 1589, Francis wrote *An Advertisement Touching the Controversies of the Church of England* in an attempt to pour water on the more fiery extremist propaganda and promote a more harmonious middle-way suitable to the Queen—and suiting his family motto, “*Mediocria Firma*” (“Moderation is Sure”), which in the ideal sense finds its fulfilment in the loving harmony and union portrayed by the myth of the Gemini.<sup>24</sup>

On 16 November 1589 Francis received by patent the potentially valuable appointment of reversion to the Clerk of the Counsel in the Star Chamber, a post worth £1,600 a year. This appointment was thanks to Burghley, but it was not, however, something that Francis could immediately benefit from, for the position was already occupied. (In fact, as it eventually turned out, he was not able to take up the office until 1608, nearly twenty years later.) Still left impecunious, Francis remarked that “it was, like another man's ground, buttalling upon his house; which might mend his prospect but it did not fill his bam.”<sup>25</sup>

In the early months of 1590, Francis was commissioned to prepare a suitable letter for Walsingham to send to the new French administration, known as ‘Sir Francis Walsingham, Secretary, to Monsieur Critoy, Secretary of France’, as a statement of English religious and foreign policy—essentially a justification of Elizabeth's policies on religion. (The greater part of this letter was re-used in Francis' 1592 tract, *Certain Observations made upon a libel*.) But soon after, on 6 April 1590, Sir Francis Walsingham died, heavily in debt due to personally subsidising most of the operations of the intelligence network for the Queen.

In 1591 Francis appears to have almost given up his fruitless “rare and unaccustomed suit” with Burghley and the Queen, threatening that if his Lordship would not carry him on he would sell the small inheritance he had in order to purchase some means of quick revenue, and thereby give up all care of service (i.e. to Burghley and the Queen) in order to become some “sorry bookmaker or a true pioneer in that mine of truth which (Anaxagoras) said lay so deep”. Suspecting Burghley's motives, Francis tried to make it absolutely clear to his uncle that just as he had vast contemplative ends so he had moderate civil ends, and that he did not “seek or affect any place whereunto any that is nearer unto your Lordship shall be concurrent”.<sup>26</sup> In this Francis was particularly referring to his hunchback cousin, Robert Cecil, Burghley's son by his second wife, Mildred, the sister of Lady Ann Bacon. Besides being Lord

Treasurer and Master of the Court of Wards, the most lucrative office in the land, Burghley was doing his best to advance Robert as high and as quickly as possible.

At about the same time Francis struck up a good friendship with Robert Devereux, 2nd Earl of Essex, whom he had known since their youth. The earl, with his sparkling charisma and gallantry, was fast becoming the foremost favourite of the Queen and a popular hero with the people. Francis, completely disillusioned with and thwarted by his uncle Burghley, decided to assist Essex in every way possible, believing him to be “the fittest instrument to do good to the State”,<sup>27</sup> but always with the reservation that his first duty was to the Queen. Essex in turn promised to help Francis. Ultimately this turned out to be a perilous mistake for Francis. Essex’s temperament was so hot-headed and imperious that, rather than helping Francis, he repeatedly made matters worse, with the Queen and him clashing like gladiators. Burghley and Robert Cecil came to loathe Essex, resulting in their admitted policy of doing their utmost to block the advancement of any of the Earl's friends, including the Bacon brothers.

At some unrecorded moment in time—but which, from various evidence, would seem to have been in 1592—the Queen appointed Francis Bacon as her Counsel Learned, Extraordinary. This, as Rawley explains in his *Life of Bacon*, “was a grace scarce known before”. In fact the rank of Queen’s Counsel Learned, Extraordinary, was a completely new position, specially created for Francis, which brought him “within the bar” with the judges and Serjeants-at-Law, and gave him standing with and precedence over the serjeants.<sup>28</sup> His duties were not clearly defined, but, besides the fundamental duty of conducting court work on behalf of the sovereign, they encompassed a wide spectrum: such as supplying legal advice to the Queen and her Privy Councillors, attending the examination of prisoners suspected of treason or other grave offences and examining their testimonies, drawing up various reports and papers on religious, political and legal matters, acting as a government propagandist, and generally protecting the Queen’s interests. However, as an ‘extraordinary’ rather than an ‘ordinary’ position, it was an unpaid one and without a pension or a regular means for accumulating fees. It didn’t solve Francis’ financial predicament, but it gave him a special standing and enabled him to enjoy official access to the Queen, which for him was not just ‘ordinary’ but ‘near’ access also. This was the first such appointment and was the birth of what later became known as the Queen's (or King's) Counsel, or 'QC' for short.

### Anthony Bacon – Intelligence Network – Shakespeare Circle

In February 1592 Anthony Bacon returned home from the continent. Anthony, whom Francis called his “dearest brother” and “comfort”, shared Francis’ aspirations. His main love was literary and, like his brother, he was a secret poet, known only as such to his friends, as revealed in their letters to him. All the time he was abroad he had kept in communication with his brother Francis as well as with his uncle Burghley and Sir Francis Walsingham, and besides intelligence reports and other items of interest, he also sent home sonnets he had written.

Anthony Bacon’s foreign contacts were wide-spread and he enjoyed friendship in many high places, “being a gentleman whose ability the world taketh knowledge of for matters of state, specially foreign”.<sup>29</sup> His contacts and friendship with Henri de Navarre, later Henri IV of France, were later incorporated into the Shakespeare play, *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, as also was the result of his association and friendship with the King of Spain’s Secretary of State, Antonio

Perez, who defected to England and upon whom the Shakespearean character of Don Adriana de Armado is based.

When Anthony returned to England, he first of all joined his brother at Gray's Inn and started to pour all his energy and financial resources into his brother's project whilst at the same time continuing his intelligence work. Together the brothers formed a team of secretaries and writers to assist them, dealing with foreign and home intelligence of all kinds, cryptography, translations of correspondence and books in foreign languages and the classics, and the writing of poetry (masques, plays, devices, etc.). Francis also "knew" Anthony's service to the Earl of Essex, and from that time onwards Anthony developed and ran an intelligence service for Essex rather than for Burghley, so that Essex would have the chance of better intelligence than Burghley with which to inform the Queen and be kept in her high favour. Key assistants in this team included Thomas Phelippes, Anthony Standen, Henry Wotton and Nicholas Faunt, who between them had travelled in and gathered detailed intelligence of all kinds and over many years from France, Italy, Spain, Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Transylvania, Poland and Turkey.

Later that year Francis composed a dramatic device (i.e. spectacle or show) called *A Conference of Pleasure*, for Essex to present at the Queen's Accession Day Tilt on 17 November 1592. Four speeches of this particular spectacle are preserved in the Northumberland MS collection, grouped together under the title 'Of tribute or giving that which is due' and called: 'The praise of the worthiest virtue' (Fortitude), 'The praise of the worthiest affection' (Love), 'The praise of the worthiest power' (Knowledge), and 'The praise of the worthiest person' (Queen Elizabeth, the personification of Crowned Truth).

By now, Francis' literary and poetic endeavours had become closely entwined not only with members of Gray's Inn and other Inns of Court but also with Essex and his circle of friends. This 'Essex group', which had been linked with Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, Sir Francis Walsingham and Sir Philip Sidney until their deaths in the 1580's, and with the Areopagitae of English poets that used to meet at Leicester House (later Essex House), included: Robert Devereux, 2nd Earl of Essex; Henry Wriothesley, 3rd Earl of Southampton; Ferdinando Stanley, Baron Strange, 5th Earl of Derby; William Stanley, 6th Earl of Derby; Charles Blount, 8th Baron Mountjoy; Frances Walsingham, Countess of Essex, Essex's wife, daughter of Sir Francis Walsingham and widow of Sir Philip Sidney; Penelope Rich, Essex's sister, wife of Robert Rich, 3rd Baron Rich, and, after his death in 1586, Mountjoy's mistress; Elizabeth Vernon, Essex's cousin and Southampton's mistress (whom Southampton married in 1598); and Mary Sidney, the Countess of Pembroke, sister of Philip Sidney and mother of "the Two Noble Brethren", William and Philip, to whom the 1623 Shakespeare First Folio was dedicated. To these should be added Fulke Greville, Francis Bacon and Anthony Bacon.

Associated with this group of aristocrats and friends were other poets, writers and dramatists whom the group patronised, which included Samuel Daniel, Ben Jonson, John Florio, George Wither, Edmund Spenser, Thomas Nashe and John Lyly. Thomas Lodge, George Peele, Robert Greene and Christopher Marlowe were also connected with this group. In effect, the overall group of patrons and poets formed what might be called 'The Shakespeare Circle', with direct access to acting companies.

Mary Sidney's husband, Henry Herbert, 2nd Earl of Pembroke, whose country estate at Wilton borders on the Wiltshire River Avon, was the patron of his own professional acting company, the Lord Pembroke's Men, who had in their repertoire several of the earliest Shakespeare plays. Their tour of 1592-4 featured *The Taming of a Shrew* (an earlier version of the one published in the Shakespeare Folio), *Titus Andronicus* and *3 Henry VI*. *Titus Andronicus* was also performed by Sussex's Men and Derby's Men. The latter company was that of Ferdinando Stanley, Baron Strange, who became the 5th Earl of Derby on his father's death in 1593. Previous to that the company had been known as the Lord Strange's Men, who gave what might have been the first performance of *2 Henry VI* at The Rose playhouse in 1592. When Ferdinando Stanley died in 1594, most of the members of Derby's Men joined the newly reconstituted Lord Chamberlain's Men under the patronage of Sir Henry Carey, 1st Baron Hunsdon, and the leadership of the Burbages.

### Royal Disfavour – Birth of 'Shakespeare' – *Venus and Adonis*

Francis's new position was severely challenged in the Parliament of January-March 1593. He appeared there as an MP representing Middlesex, and took part in various debates and motions and committee meetings. The challenge, though, came about when he opposed an attempt by the Queen and House of Lords to diminish the House of Commons' vitally important prerogative of raising taxes and discussing such matters in private. He also thought that the triple subsidy (taxation) being demanded by Burghley, on behalf of the Queen and Lords, to be raised in three years, rather than the two subsidies raised in four years that at first been proposed by the House of Commons, would be too great for ordinary people to bear; and so, although agreeing that a substantial subsidy was needed to offset the costs of defending the country against the Armada, he recommended the proposal be moderated somewhat. Ultimately the Commons voted to debate the taxation proposals with the Lords, but with the caveat that it was extraordinary and not to be taken as a precedent. When the Commons met again afterwards to agree on what subsidies to provide, Francis agreed with the other MPs that the extra three subsidies should be provided, but he strongly suggested that they should be spread over six years instead of the three years that Burghley was demanding. In the end it was agreed by the Commons that three subsidies would be provided, spread over four years. The Queen was furious at Francis' behaviour and immediately he was made to feel her displeasure, being denied access to her presence and told "that he must nevermore look to her for favour or promotion".

Very soon after this, in June 1593, 'William Shakespeare' as an author's name was officially launched onto the public scene for the first time with the publication of the highly scholarly, erotic poem *Venus and Adonis*. Notably, it had been entered into the Stationers' Register on 18 April 1593, a date close to St George's Day, 23 April, the legendary birthday of William Shakespeare. This, the "first heir" of Shakespeare's "invention", was dedicated to Southampton, as was the second Shakespeare poem, *Lucrece*, published the next year (1594). A few years later, the writer Joseph Hall and poet John Marston, in an exchange of satires published during 1597-8, stated that the true author of the poems was a jurist, whom they nicknamed "Labeo", who used a living person, a "swain", to mask his authorship. They ultimately identified "Labeo" as Francis Bacon.

The royal disfavour precipitated a major crisis for Francis who, although helped by his mother and Anthony, who sold two estates to assist Francis, supported himself and his literary work mainly by loans and credit based on his standing with the Queen. In an attempt to prove his

worth to the Queen, Burghley and others as a barrister and Queen's Counsel, as well as to earn some money, Francis pleaded his first case in the King's Bench and Exchequer Chamber in January 1594, and his second and third in February. His first pleading was so successful that Burghley, content with Francis as a lawyer and pressured by his own family who had taken pity on Francis' predicament, undertook to make a report "where it might do him the most good".

During this time the case of Dr Roderigo Lopez, the Queen's physician, was being dealt with. For the last six months of 1593 Essex had been investigating a circle of Spanish and Portuguese plotters, which led to the uncovering of a conspiracy to poison the Queen through the agency of her Portuguese physician, Dr Lopez. The latter, who had been working as an intelligencer for Spain, was arrested on 21 January 1594 and brought to trial on 28 February 1594. Francis was commissioned by Essex to draw up a paper, *A True Report of the Detestable Treason intended by Doctor Roderigo Lopez*, outlining the case for proceeding against Lopez. Sir Edward Coke, as Solicitor-General, conducted the proceedings, which were heard in relative secrecy before a special commission of twelve persons appointed by the Queen. Lopez was found guilty of leaking secret intelligence to Philip of Spain, attempting to stir up rebellion against the Queen and of conspiring to poison her. Francis was commissioned to draw up a report of the trial, which was ready by the end of March but withheld from publication.

The Queen played a game of punishment or reward with Francis, trying to make him her creature in all ways, including the Parliamentary one. In 1593 the position of Attorney-General had fallen vacant and was kept vacant for a whole year, and several times it was intimated to Francis that the Queen might appoint him to this position and that it was only his conduct in Parliament that stood in the way. Essex, eager to help Francis, urged the Queen to appoint him to this position. But Francis would not recant, and there were other factors afoot. Robert Cecil suggested to Essex that if Sir Edward Coke, the Solicitor-General, were to be appointed as Attorney-General, which he felt the Queen would prefer, then perhaps Francis might be content with the lesser position of Solicitor-General instead. But Essex would not have it. Only the higher office would do for the friend of Essex! As Essex saw it, his own reputation was at stake.

Francis was in a difficult situation. He didn't really want the onerous legal position of Attorney-General, but he needed a position that brought him sufficient income as well as standing. Creditors were a continual problem, as his project was costly and he never had enough money. He wrote direct to the Queen, assuring her of his wish to serve her in whatever way was best pleasing to her, "to the end to have means to deserve your benefit and to repair my error," and emphasising that his request to serve her was not for any personal gain, for his "mind turneth upon other wheels than those of profit".<sup>30</sup>

Eventually the Queen announced that the position of Master of the Rolls was going to be given to Sir Thomas Egerton, the Attorney-General, and that of Attorney-General to Sir Edward Coke, the Solicitor-General. On 10 April 1594 they were officially appointed to their offices. Although a disappointment to Essex, it left the position of Solicitor-General free, and Essex, who had been made a member of the Privy Council in February 1594, now pursued this position for Francis. Even Burghley and Robert Cecil supported Francis for this office, as well as the Vice-Chamberlain, the Attorney-General (Egerton) and all the judges. Francis, meanwhile, pointed out that he was the Queen's "first man, of those who serve in Counsel of

Law", having precedence over the Sergeants-at-Law and therefore the one who should rightly be considered as the first in line for the office of Solicitor-General (which office was the next one above his own and that of the sergeants), and that he was not only available for the post but also would take it if asked.

It was about this time that Fulke Greville began to take an active part on Francis' behalf with the Queen. Whether because of this, or because Francis declared his intention of retiring to Cambridge with a couple of men to spend his life in studies and contemplation, there seemed to be a shift in the Queen's demeanour towards Francis. In May 1594 she appointed Francis as the Deputy Chief Steward of the Duchy of Lancaster, a lawyer's post devoted largely to adjudicating land and property disputes in the Crown's Lancastrian domains. Also, that summer, the Queen conferred on Francis some woodland in Somerset at a nominal rent, from which he could raise some finance. In June 1594 he was appointed to assist the investigation into the 'Walpole Plot' (associated with the Lopez conspiracy); and, on the 18 or 19 July 1594, he set out for the north on some important business of the Queen. However, on this mission he only reached as far as Huntington when he fell ill, writing to tell the Queen of it on 20 July. As we next learn that he was in Cambridge on 27 July to receive his degree of Master of the Arts at a specially convened ceremony, the assumption is that, because of his brief illness, his mission was aborted. In August-September 1594 Francis was back in London, examining prisoners on behalf of the Queen in yet another Catholic conspiracy.

So the Queen not only resumed employing Francis but also, in small ways, began to compensate him for the work he was doing for her, although financially it was not nearly enough. Moreover, she continued to remain undecided regarding the position of Solicitor-General, thereby prolonging Francis' agony and punishment.

### *Gray's Inn Revels – Knights of the Helmet, Comedy of Errors, Loves Labours Lost*

On 28 January 1594 Francis Bacon took over the role of Treasurer of Gray's Inn from a Mr Poley. The reason for this is not recorded in the Pension records. At that time there were two Treasurers. Since 19 November 1590 Mr Fuller and Mr Poley had been the Treasurers; from 28th January 1594 until 26 November 1594 (when the next two Treasurers<sup>31</sup> were elected) the positions were filled by Francis Bacon and Mr Fuller. As head of the Inn, the Treasurer was responsible for the Gray's Inn revels, and for the end of that year the Inn planned to hold extra-grand Christmas Revels. Because the revels had been intermitted for three or four years, the Inn was determined to redeem this lost time with something out of the ordinary, and they specifically asked Francis Bacon to redeem their good name in this respect.

The revels were by custom designed, organised, written and performed by the members of the Inn, as part of their education and training for both the court of law and the royal court. These particular revels would have needed to be prepared some time in advance, in the holidays, and this could explain why, at some point during the summer of 1594, Francis explained in a letter to Essex that he neither had much hope nor much desire for the position of Solicitor-General—the lack of desire or appetite being because he was so preoccupied with "the waters of Parnassus" which almost entirely quenched his thirst for other things, and the lack of hope because his only real reason for having the office, other than serving the Queen, was so as to be able to pay off his old debts and take on new ones.

It was decided that the Inn was to be turned into a mock royal court and kingdom, ruled by a 'Prince' (the customary Lord of Misrule), in jesting imitation of the Queen's royal court, complete with masques, plays, dances, pageants, ceremonial and 'serious' business. The revels, which took place over the Twelve Days of Christmas, were called *The Prince of Purpoole and the Honourable Order of the Knights of the Helmet*—the former part of the title referring to the Manor of Purpoole or Portpoole, the original name of Gray's Inn, and the latter part of the title referring to the philosophical ideal of the revels. The theme of these revels was built around the idea of errors being committed, disorder ensuing, a trial being held of the 'Sorcerer' responsible, who then restores order and transmutes everything to a higher and better level than before.

On 20 December 1594 the Gray's Inn Christmas Revels began, with "The High and Mighty Prince Henry, Prince of Purpoole" proceeding in royal state to the great hall of Gray's Inn and taking his seat on the throne. On the First Day of Christmas, St Steven's Day, 26 December 1594, Francis Bacon was ceremonially called upon by the Prince of Purpoole and his Council to assist in "recovering the lost honour of Gray's Inn". For this, certain Grand Nights were decreed to take place during the Twelve Days, to provide something special for the entertainment of strangers (i.e. guests), those to be invited being the Lord Keeper, the Lord Treasurer, the Vice-Chamberlain and others from the royal Court, including their ladies, plus an embassy from the Templars (the Inner Temple Inn of Court, with whom Gray's Inn is twinned).

The first Grand Night took place on the evening of the Third Day, Holy Innocent's Day, 28 December 1594. As prearranged, "there arose such a disordered tumult and crowd upon the stage, that there was no opportunity to effect that which was intended," causing the masque to end abruptly in general confusion and the Temple barristers, led by their Ambassador, to return to their Inn, feigning offence. Those who remained were then set to "dancing and revelling with gentlewomen", after which the Shakespeare play, *A Comedie of Errors like to Plautus his Menæchmi*, was performed by torchlight. The evening concluded with a masque of the Knights of the Helmet returning from a campaign in Russia against "Negro-Tartars".

The following day, the Fourth Day of Christmas, 29 December 1594, a mock trial was held, at which the "Sorcerer or Conjuror" was arraigned at the bar and accused for causing the previous night's disarray, for disgracing the "State of Templariá", and for foisting "a company of base and common fellows, to make up our disorders with a play of Errors and Confusions". However, the 'Conjuror' was acquitted with the resolution that "the Prince's Council should be reformed, and some Graver Conceits should take their places" in order to recover their honour. The Conjuror (Francis Bacon) then conjured up a new entertainment called *The Honourable Order of the Knights of the Helmet*, which was presented on the second Grand Night, 3 January 1595, the Feast of the Most Holy Name of Jesus. Unlike the previous Grand Night, there was no disorder or "errors", and the evening concluded with dancing and celebration.

In *The Honourable Order of the Knights of the Helmet* Francis Bacon presented his philosophical ideals and an Order of knighthood dedicated to carrying them out. The purpose of the Order was to correct the errors of the past and bring order out of chaos. The knights vow to keep nineteen articles, full of Baconian philosophy and precepts, including vows to defend God and the State, to attack ignorance, and to defend truth and virtue ceaselessly and

secretly. The name of this philosophical Order of knights refers to the divine Spear-shaker, Pallas Athena, the Tenth Muse and Patroness of the Arts and Sciences, whose helmet guards the sacred diadem of the Prince of Purpoole. In addition, the goddess presents helmets to her knight-heroes, hence the Order of the Knights of the Helmet. These helmets were said to bestow invisibility on the wearer as well as being 'will helms' (the derivation of 'William'), meaning 'helmets of strength', a symbolism that has the further cabalistic meaning of righteousness, virtue, clear perception and judgement. All such knights are, metaphorically, spear-shakers or shake-speares, like the Gemini and St George. They are also 'invisible brethren', a term used to describe the Rosicrucian fraternity.

On Shrove Tuesday 1595 a specially adapted masque of *The Prince of Purpoole and the Honourable Order of the Knights of the Helmet* was performed before the Queen at Greenwich. The entertainment concluded with a performance of *Proteus and the Rock Adamantine*. This marked the culmination of the 1594-5 Gray's Inn Revels. Both this Gesta Grayorum and Gray's Inn became much celebrated as a result.

In this entertaining and dramatic way, these Christmas Revels presented Francis Bacon's grand project for the complete reformation of philosophy and regeneration of all arts and sciences, thereby bringing order out of chaos, and knowledge of truth out of ignorance and confused thought. Sadly, though, the last two Grand Nights were cancelled, and there are many indications that on one of those nights it had been intended to perform *Love's Labour's Lost*. There are many allusions in these revels to the Shakespeare play, *Love's Labour's Lost*, and vice versa, inferring that *Love's Labour's Lost* was not only already well known at Gray's Inn or else about to be, but also that it was designed to have a close connection with the theme of the revels. Love's labour (i.e. charity) is the means by which we may discover and know Truth, the summary law, which is divine Love—"the work that God works from beginning to end". This is the ultimate purpose of Bacon's Great Instauration, as he describes it.

### Royal Entertainments and Reconciliation – Essays

In October 1595 Essex invited Anthony to take up residence in Essex House, offering him the apartments in which Perez had previously been lodged. Anthony accepted and moved into Essex House to act, in a voluntary way, as the Earl's virtual 'Secretary of State'. There he set up a secretariat dealing with political intelligence, cryptography, translations of correspondence and books in foreign languages and the classics, invention of new words, and literature generally. Besides Anthony's own secretariat, Essex also had four secretaries working at Essex House, including Henry Cuffe, a Greek scholar, and Henry Wotton, the friend and cousin of the Bacon brothers who published his memoirs, *Reliquiae Wottonianae*, in 1651. At various times the 'Shakespeare Circle' would meet in the house, some of them staying as guests for a while.

1595 was also the year in which the Lord Treasurer Burghley completed his personal coup d'état by seeing his son Robert, who was knighted in 1591 and made a member of the Privy Council, achieve the politically powerful position of Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. This climb to power culminated the following year when Robert was officially made the Principal Secretary of State, cementing the father-son combo which together held the reins of power in the Queen's Government. (When Burghley died in 1598, Robert continued as Secretary of State, maintaining his position of power.)

On 6 November 1595 the Queen formally appointed Thomas Fleming, the Queen's Serjeant-at-Law, as Solicitor-General. Essex was mortified by this result, feeling it as a matter of pride, and bestowed on Francis a gift of land (assumed to be adjoining Twickenham Park) in recompense for what he felt was his failure to help his friend. Francis was able to raise money on this land to ease his situation, and later he sold it.

For the Queen's Accession Day celebration on 17 November 1595, Francis wrote *The Philautia Device* and *The Device of the Indian Prince* for Essex to perform before Elizabeth, filled with flattering and adulatory references to her Majesty, which helped to reconcile her to Essex (who had, thanks to a book published abroad, been under a shadow of suspicion concerning his influence with the Queen upon the matter of succession). The device was sponsored by Essex and took place at York House. It was sufficiently successful with the result that the Queen was not only reconciled to both Essex and Francis but she also granted Francis the reversion of the lease of Twickenham Park.

A year later, Francis was again involved in composing a device for the 1596 Accession Day Tournament, this time for Robert Ratcliffe, the fifth Earl of Sussex. One of the speeches from the device, written by Francis Bacon, is preserved in the Northumberland MS collection.

In January 1597 Francis had a book published under his own name of 'Francis Bacon' for the first time, this being the first version of his *Essays*, which he dedicated with affection to his "Loving and beloved Brother", Anthony, "you that are next myself". Not only was Anthony Francis' brother, friend, co-writer and partner in Francis' grand scheme, but also Anthony was a major provider of the limited finance available for the brothers to live on and the work to be sponsored.

### *Courtship – Merchant of Venice – Essex's Insurgency – Richard II*

Besides his deep love for Anthony, Francis was also enamoured of his cousin, Elizabeth Cecil, one of Burghley's grand-daughters, with whom he had flirted when younger. He continued his friendship with Elizabeth after she was married to Sir William Hatton in 1594, which friendship deepened over the years. When Elizabeth was widowed in 1597 Francis courted her seriously, requesting her hand in marriage. She had been left a very wealthy young woman by her deceased husband, and so marriage with her could bestow a double grace and solve Francis' financial problems. But another disappointment was in store, and once again Sir Edward Coke, now Attorney-General and wealthy, won the day.

A romanticised account of this courtship, turned into an allegory, can be seen to underlie the Shakespeare play, *The Merchant of Venice*, as also the friendship between Francis and Anthony, the difficulties they endured through being forced year after year to raise loans from usurers, and the potential bankruptcy of Anthony on his brother's behalf. In the play Antonio is a good caricature of Anthony, who did trade abroad (but in intelligence rather than merchandise) and who hazarded all for his brother's sake; and Bassanio of Francis, whose 'Portia' he sought after was, in a philosophical sense, Wisdom on her Mountain of Beauty ('Belmont'), and, in a personal sense, his cousin Elizabeth (Lady Hatton), whose beautiful house and gardens (Hatton House, in London) he often visited. Many times either one or the other brother had to attend court and pay the forfeits demanded for late repayment of the loans. Being a lawyer and 'learned in the law', Francis often pleaded his own case. He was even arrested for debt at one time (September 1598), unjustly as it happened, because of the

maliciousness of a particular debtor, and had to be rescued from the awful possibility of incarceration in the Fleet.

In 1599 trouble between the Queen and Essex flared up dangerously, with Essex consistently acting against the advice of Francis Bacon who, knowing the Queen's wishes, urged Essex not to seek a military position and not to go to Ireland at the head of the English army—both of which Essex nevertheless did. Essex was appointed Lord Lieutenant of Ireland on 24 March 1599 and set out for that country at the head of 17,000 troops with orders to put an end to the rebellion led by the Earl of Tyrone.

Just before he set out for Ireland, a potentially volatile situation arose, in which the Shakespeare play of *Richard II* was indirectly involved. A book based on the play had been published by a young doctor of civil law, John Hayward, a friend of both Essex and Francis Bacon, which in its preface likened Essex to Bolingbroke and seemed to exhort Essex to rise up against the Queen and usurp the throne. Hayward was arrested and threatened with torture. Francis was immediately called before the Queen to advise whether it was treasonable, and to explain and sort matters out, which he successfully did. As a result, Hayward, although remaining in prison until James Stuart came to the throne of England, was spared any torture or trial for treason.

Fifteen months later Francis was again involved on the same subject, when Essex was arraigned before the Queen's Council on a charge of disobeying Her Majesty's orders in Ireland. Francis, as the Queen's Counsel, was given the specific role of charging Essex concerning the use of Hayward's book, a role to which Francis objected, remarking that "it would be said that I gave in evidence mine own tales".

When all this culminated in February 1601 with Essex's abortive attempt to raise an armed insurrection against the Queen and her government, which led to his trial for treason and subsequent execution (25 February 1601), the Bacon brothers were devastated. Both of them had been misled for several years by Essex, who had been secretly plotting and preparing his insurrection, and they only learnt the full truth during and after the trial. Both brothers had worked hard to try to prove the supposed innocence of Essex, and Francis did all he could to mediate with the Queen on Essex's behalf, right up to the end, at the expense of his own relationship with her. Moreover, Francis was ordered by the Queen to take part in the trial as her Counsel, to assist the State Prosecutor and protect her person, which landed him in the unenviable position of spelling out Essex's guilt.

As if these tragic events were not enough, a few months after Essex's execution Anthony Bacon, who had not been well, was reported to have died shortly before 27 May 1601, heavily in debt. Essex appears to have intended to reimburse Anthony for the substantial expenses incurred on the earl's behalf, having promised Anthony £2,000 set against Essex House in lieu of default, which the Queen thoroughly disapproved of and, in the event, was never fulfilled.<sup>32</sup> Before Essex's house arrest, on 10 March 1600 Anthony (together with Lady Leicester, Lord and Lady Southampton, and Sir Fulke Greville) had been ordered by the Queen to quit Essex House. It seems likely that Anthony went to Lady Walsingham's house in Seething Street, because his body was buried in a vault in St Olave's Church, Hart Street, located nearby.<sup>33</sup> Francis, who inherited Anthony's estate and therefore his debts, was only just able to save having to sell Gorhambury.

Once this was all over, the Queen ordered Francis to write the official government account of the trial. After being heavily edited by the Queen and her ministers till it read as an entirely different document to what Francis had first penned, it was published as *A Declaration of the Practices and Treasons attempted and committed by Robert late Earle of Essex and his Complices, against her Majestie and her Kingdoms*.

### King James – Knighthood – King's Counsel – Advancement of Learning

Queen Elizabeth died two years later, on 24 March 1603, and on 25 July 1603 King James VI of Scotland was crowned King James I of England. Anthony Bacon had over the years done some good service for the Scottish king, and so Francis, who pleaded his case as a “concealed poet” who was for the most part one with his brother in “endeavour and duties”, was helped by King James as a result.

In Queen Elizabeth's reign Francis had been continually by-passed in terms of being given a position wherein he could command both a sufficient income and influence for the needs of his great project, and his service under the Tudor queen had gone largely unpaid, except for the promise of the reversion of the position of Clerk to the Star Chamber when it became vacant, the granting under favourable terms of the lease of Twickenham Park, the lease of the Rectory of Cheltenham, the lease of some woodland in Somerset at a nominal rent, and the payment of a fee of £1200 for his services at Essex's trial. With James, after a cautious start, it was to be different.

Francis' philanthropic literary work in the reign of Elizabeth, and the largely unpaid legal work for his sovereign, had left him in dire straits financially. Anthony had died with debts that had to be paid, whilst Francis had his own debts, to cover which his Twickenham Park lease was mortgaged. The literary work was still continuing and had to be supported, and meaningful and sufficient patronage was still not forthcoming. Therefore, even though he inherited the manors and estates of Gorhambury from his brother, which brought a modicum of financial security, Francis still needed to earn a reasonable income, even if it meant practising law more fully and trying to obtain an official position in the King's service.

First Francis was knighted on 23 July 1603, along with three hundred others at Whitehall, two days before the coronation of King James and his Queen, Anne of Denmark, in Westminster Abbey. Then, a year later, in August 1604, he was confirmed by letters patent as the King's Counsel Learned Ordinary, with a pension of £40 per annum. It was at this time that he started writing the tracts that were the forerunners of his *Great Instauration*, and his first version of *The Advancement and Proficiency of Learning*, to be published in October 1605.

### Marriage – Solicitor-General – Gray's Inn Treasurer – Virginia Company

In 1603 Francis was introduced to Alice Barnham, a wealthy alderman's daughter, “an handsome maiden,” to whom he took a liking with a view to marriage when she was old enough (she was only eleven years old when they first met). A little over two years later, on 10 May 1606, when she was fourteen and he forty-five, they married in Marylebone Chapel. Bacon wrote two sonnets proclaiming his love for Alice; the first was written during his courtship and the second on his wedding day. At their wedding he was clothed “from top to toe” in purple. She brought with her a dowry of £6000 plus an annual income of £220, which Francis allowed her to keep for herself, whilst he settled on her a further income for life of £500 per annum. Francis treated his wife with much conjugal love and respect, and for nearly

all the years of their marriage they appear to have lived together in peace and contentment, as well as in style. However, for whatever reason, there were no offspring, although Francis clearly hoped there would be, as can be seen from legal arrangements he made.

It also appears that after his marriage (and having sold the lease of Twickenham Park) Francis was living with his wife Alice in Fulwood House which lay adjacent to Gray's Inn, whilst he still retained the Bacon Chambers within Gray's Inn for his work.<sup>34</sup> Fulwood House looked out onto "The Field" that became Gray's Inn Gardens, as also did the windows of his chambers. During 1606 these gardens began to be laid out in earnest, with Francis Bacon being the principal person responsible for designing and directing the garden development. Because of the avenues of walks that formed the main feature of the gardens, they became known as "The Walks". Francis not only designed the gardens himself but also selected all the plants, including elm, birch, beech, sycamore, osiers and apple trees, privet, woodbines (honeysuckle), violets, primroses, pinks, sweetbriars (i.e. eglantines, single-petalled hedge roses) and red roses (damask). It was there that he started the experiments that eventually gave Gray's Inn flowering roses throughout each winter.

On 25 June 1607, the year after his marriage to Alice, Francis was appointed Solicitor-General with a pension of £1000 per annum. This was not a particularly onerous position but one which Francis had previously hoped for and which would leave him enough time to pursue his philosophical and poetic programme, and with funds to pay his "good pens". In July 1608 the reversion of Clerk of the Star Chamber fell to him at last, which boosted his financial resources even further. On 17 October 1608, Francis Bacon was elected Treasurer of Gray's Inn, a position he continued to hold for a further nine years (until 26 October 1617). In 1611 he was appointed Judge of the Marshal's Court and President of the Court of the Verge.

During this early Jacobean period Francis became a founder member of both the Newfoundland Company<sup>35</sup> and the Virginia Company, both of which established colonies in North America.<sup>36</sup> Sitting with him on the Virginia Company council were the Earls of Pembroke, Montgomery and Southampton, amongst others. He was largely responsible for drawing up, in 1609 and 1612, the two charters of government for the Virginia Colony. These charters were the beginnings of constitutionalism in North America and the germ of the later Constitution of the United States of America.

1609 also saw three other important and related events: the death of the magus John Dee, a champion of colonisation and a model for Prospero in the Shakespeare play, *The Tempest*; the confidential report sent to the Virginia Company council members by William Strachey concerning the shipwreck on the Bermudas of the Company's flagship, the *Sea Adventurer*, which provided source material for *The Tempest*; and the publication of *Shakespeare's Sonnets* with the cryptic dedication page mentioning "The Well-Wishing Adventurer" (a term for a Virginia Company member) and signed with the Masonic "TT".

In August 1610 Lady Anne Bacon died, enabling Francis to take over Gorhambury completely and introduce his new ideas. He began to redesign and lay out the park with new vistas, avenues, gardens, woods and summerhouses, as well as building near the river a new mansion, called Verulam House. Close to and on the north side of Verulam House he designed and constructed what he called "pond yards", wherein the central pond had an island with a two-storey octagonal banqueting house upon it, floored with black and white marble, covered with Cornish slate and neatly wainscoted inside. Upon the highest point he built a pyramid-

temple, known as “Bacon’s Observatory”, which acted as the centre of a vast and meaningful geometric pattern that Francis laid out across his estate.

On Valentine's Day, 14 February 1613, the marriage of James I's daughter, Princess Elizabeth, to Frederick V, the Elector Palatine, took place in the royal chapel at the Palace of Whitehall. Elaborate celebrations followed, organised by Francis Bacon, which included two masques— *The Masque of the Inner Temple and Gray's Inn*, otherwise known as *The Marriage of the Rhine and Thames*, and *The Memorable Masque of the Middle Temple and Lincoln's Inn*, otherwise known as *The Virginia Masque*. The latter was written by George Chapman, with costumes, sets and stage effects designed by Inigo Jones, and was performed in the Great Hall of Whitehall Palace the day after the wedding by members of the Middle Temple and Lincoln's Inn. The former was written by Francis Beaumont, and performed on 20 February 1613 in the Banqueting House of Whitehall Palace by members of Gray's Inn and the Inner Temple. It should have taken place on Shrove Tuesday, 16 February 1613, but had to be postponed due to the fatigue of the King. Although Francis Beaumont is said to have written this masque, the chief contriver of it was, according to the Lord Chamberlain, Francis Bacon. When the masque was printed, the dedication began with an acknowledgement that Sir Francis Bacon, with the gentlemen of Gray's Inn and the Inner Temple, had "spared no pain nor travail in the setting forth, ordering, and furnishing of this Masque". The dedication continued: "And you, Sir Francis Bacon, especially, did by your countenance and loving affections advance it".

#### Attorney-General – Privy Counsellor – New Method – *Masque of Flowers*

On 26 October 1613 Francis was appointed as Attorney-General and Chief Advisor to the Crown. As Attorney-General, he became far more fully immersed in the King’s business, with far less time for writing any more. What little time he had for literary matters he mainly devoted to perfecting the writing and presentation of his *New Method*, the first two books of which he wrote in Latin and published in 1620 as the *Novum Organum*.

At the end of 1613 Francis devised, organised and paid for, at enormous cost, a beautiful and elaborate masque, *The Masque of Flowers*, to celebrate the nuptials of Robert Carr, Earl of Somerset, with Frances, Countess of Essex. This was presented at Court on 26 December 1613 by the gentlemen of Gray’s Inn as a unique wedding gift to the couple. This came about because the four Inns of Court, having been asked to present a masque for the wedding celebrations, decided that they could not manage it. Francis Bacon, who was Treasurer of Gray’s Inn, then stepped in to fill the gap, thereby providing a magnificent gift for the wedding that was also in the nature of a ‘thank-you’ complement to Somerset, who claimed to have used his influence with the King to secure Bacon’s promotion to Attorney-General. At the same time it gave honour to Gray’s Inn.

On 9 June 1616 Francis was made a Privy Councillor. That same year he took on a forty-year lease of Canonbury Manor, a fine mansion set in parkland on Islington’s hill, with panoramic views over London and fine oak-panelled rooms decorated with Masonic and Rosicrucian symbolism. This was the year when the “Invisible College” (which eventually gave rise to the Royal Society and other societies, academies and orders, based on Francis’ proposals and inspiration) was reputedly founded. Francis referred to this College in his *New Atlantis* as “the College of the Six Days’ Work” —Bacon’s whole project or ‘Great Instauration’ being based on his understanding of the biblical Six Days of Creation.

## Lord Keeper – Regent – Lord Chancellor – Baron Verulam of Verulam – Viscount St Alban

On 7 March 1617, Francis was appointed Lord Keeper of the Great Seal. Having made this appointment, King James immediately left Francis to act as his temporary regent in England whilst he departed for Scotland for a six-month visit—the first of his reign as King of Great Britain. In the King's absence, Francis took his place in Chancery with magnificent ceremony, and dressed in purple satin as he was on his wedding day.

Having taken up his new position, Francis worked hard to make up for the delays in Chancery caused by the illness of his predecessor, his old friend Lord Ellesmere (who still held the title of Lord High Chancellor), and by the tortuous workings of Chancery generally. He doubled the amount of time that he personally, together with his staff, were traditionally expected to spend on Chancery matters, in order to expedite and clear the cases of the court, although he made sure to reserve the depth of the vacations “for studies, arts, and sciences”, to which, he said in his inaugural speech, he was in his nature most inclined.

Ten months of hard work later and after Ellesmere's decease, on 4 January 1618 King James bestowed the honour of Lord High Chancellorship upon Francis Bacon. By this time Francis had moved into York House, the home of his father as Lord Keeper of the Great Seal (and of all subsequent Lord Keepers), and where his father had died and he had been born and bred. This was a home which meant a great deal to Francis and he set about making it into a beautiful mansion, repairing and furnishing it lovingly and lavishly, connecting it by pipe to the City's main water supply, building an aviary in its gardens, and installing in it a huge household of servants and retainers, dressed in his livery.

Fittingly, on 12 July 1618 his Majesty raised Francis to the peerage, creating him Baron Verulam of Verulam. Two and a half years later, on 22 January 1621, Bacon celebrated his 60th birthday at York House, at which his friend, Ben Jonson, gave an ode in tribute to him:-

Hail, happy genius of this ancient pile!  
How comes it all things so about thee smile?  
The fire, the wine, the men; and in the midst  
Thou stand'st as if a mystery thou didst.

Then, five days later, on 27th January 1621, at Theobalds Palace, Francis Bacon was created Viscount St Alban by King James. Noticeably and uniquely, this title is named after the saint and not the place, St Albans. Thanking the King, Bacon remarked:-

This is now the eighth time that your Majesty hath raised me... the eighth rise or reach, a diapason in music, even a good number and accord for a close. And so I may without superstition be buried in St. Alban's habit or vestment.

“The eight in music,” Bacon wrote elsewhere,<sup>37</sup> “is the sweetest concord”; but perhaps he had a premonition of what lay ahead, for he also noted that “Swans are said at the approach of their own death to chant sweet melancholy dirges”.<sup>38</sup>

## The Sacrifice – Last Years – Major Publications

Almost immediately upon receiving the title of Viscount St Alban, at the height of his public glory, a plot which had been hatched against him by those who envied him and his position

came to fruition. It fell upon Francis like a bombshell, even though friends such as Tobie Matthew had tried to warn him that something dangerous was afoot. By the end of April 1621 he had been made the scapegoat for complaints about the abuse of monopolies awarded by the King. Because he couldn't actually be held responsible for this, but at the same time Parliament did not want to condemn the King, Bacon was charged instead with accepting bribes, asked by the King to submit without defence, and impeached by Parliament for corruption in his office as a judge. His fall was contrived by his adversaries in Parliament and the Court so as to save Buckingham, the King's favourite, and others from public anger and retribution, and to preserve the good name of the King. In the notes of his interview with the King he refers to himself as being both as innocent as any babe born upon St. Innocent's Day and an oblation (sacrificial offering) to his Majesty.

Sentence was given on 3 May 1621. Francis was stripped of his office and banned from holding any further office, place or employment in the State or Commonwealth, or from sitting in Parliament. He was banished from the verge of Court, fined the enormous sum of £40,000 (the equivalent of about £20 million today) and imprisoned in the Tower of London.

Francis' imprisonment at the end of May was, however, brief, and after a few days he was released, although banished from London and commanded to retire to Gorhambury until the King's pleasure should be further known. Gorhambury was a beautiful and relaxing place for vacations, but to live there month after month meant that he and his wife were largely cut off from society, from their friends, and he from many of his books and papers and helpers (although Ben Jonson was able to spend some time with Francis at Gorhambury). Francis longed to return to the metropolis and he grieved greatly that his wife had to suffer on his behalf. He pleaded with the King to be allowed to return to London. He begged also for financial help in being able to at least live, having sold his plate and jewels and other commodities to pay his creditors and servants what he owed them, so that they should suffer as little as possible.

On 16 September 1621 King James issued a licence permitting Francis to return to London (but to lodge at Sir John Vaughan's house, not York House, and only for six weeks), and on 20 September 1621 he assigned the fine of £40,000 to four trustees of Francis' own choosing, which meant in effect that Francis was freed of its burden. Then, on 12 October 1621, King James signed a warrant for Francis' pardon. From the historical evidence and the tone of Francis' letters to Buckingham and the King, this pardoning of Francis would seem to have been because of an agreement Francis had with the King, if he would plead guilty to the charges made against him: but nevertheless the damage was done and as a result Francis Bacon's good name was and remains to this day tarnished in the eyes of the world.

Francis' bitter experience was not yet over. Although the King had granted his pardon, the new Lord Keeper, Bishop Williams, delayed putting his seal on it. Until this was done, Francis was still legally not a completely free man and, more to the point, was shut out of London (his six weeks at Sir John Vaughan's house having elapsed) and could not return to his beloved York House. Eventually it was made known to Francis that the delay was caused by Buckingham, who desired York House for his own purposes. Until Francis surrendered it, he would not be given either his full pardon or his freedom. Francis tried every way he could not to lose his London home, with its strong sentimental value and into which he had poured so much of himself and his finances, but eventually he had to give way. In mid-March 1622 he

surrendered York House to Buckingham, the Marquis contracting to buy the lease for £1,300. Immediately Francis' pardon and freedom arrived, signed, sealed and delivered, and by November his pension and a grant from the petty writs, both of which had been illegally stopped, had been restored to him—but not without him having to borrow money from friends and write to the King as a supplicant in great extremity.

To begin with, sometime at the end of March 1622 Francis moved with his wife and household to a house in Chiswick, but this was only temporary; for by June that year they had taken up residence in Bedford House on the Strand. This now became their London home, whilst Gorhambury (which was in Francis' ownership, unlike Bedford House which was leased) remained their country abode and family estate.

During his time of banishment from Court and forced retirement at Gorhambury (June 1621–March 1622) Francis was able to spend time on the final planning and organisation of the presentation of his Great Instauration to the world at large, gathering further material for his *Natural History*, the third part of his Great Instauration, and writing his revised and greatly enlarged final version of the *Advancement and Proficiency of Learning*. This latter work was to represent the first part of the Great Instauration, a portion of the second part (the *Novum Organum*) having already been published in 1620. Moreover, it was probably during the six weeks in London (September–October 1621) that he issued instructions for the collecting together of the Shakespeare plays and the purchasing of the publishing rights for them, so that they could be published collectively as his example of the fourth part of the *Great Instauration*—his working model or “machine” as he called it, by which the data collected concerning natural, human and divine nature might be “set as it were before the eyes”. For this he had Ben Jonson to help him, one of his “good pens who forsake me not”. His other remaining “good pens” included George Herbert, Thomas Hobbes, Peter Böener, Dr. William Rawley and Thomas Meautys.

Once back in London the composition and translation into Latin of the *Advancement and Proficiency of Learning* went full steam ahead, although it was not until the autumn of 1623 that it was finally published (as *De Dignitate et Augmentis Scientiarum*). The timing of this went hand in hand with the publication of the Shakespeare plays, the printing of which was set in motion early in 1622, probably under the supervision of Ben Jonson, and the publication of which occurred during the last two months of 1623 (as the Folio of *William Shakespeare's Comedies, Histories and Tragedies*). Francis also busied himself at this time with researching and writing a history of the reign of King Henry VII, as part of his intended collection of histories of the later sovereigns of England, and with making a start on a collection of studies that would comprise his example of a Natural History. Both *The History of the Reign of King Henry VII* and the first of six essays on natural history (*Historia Ventorum*, ‘The History of Winds’) were published in 1622.

Always Francis did his best to maintain his wife in a state befitting a viscountess, and had settled on her a suitable income in addition to her own private one, which she had always enjoyed throughout their marriage. This meant that by February 1623 Francis was again in financial difficulties. He tried to sell Gorhambury to Buckingham, but the Marquis was at that time about to embark for Spain with Charles, the Prince of Wales, to pursue the proposal for the marriage of the King of Spain's daughter to the Prince. Failing to sell Gorhambury, Bedford House had to be given up, as being too expensive to run. This left Gorhambury as their only

family home, so that, when in London, Lady Bacon had to rely on staying with family or friends whilst Francis retired to his “cell”, his chambers at Gray’s Inn, where he could carry on with his writings.

When the provostship of Eton fell vacant in April 1623, Francis applied to the King for the position, as it would have fulfilled his original desire to have a suitable position with a small but sufficient income to sustain him wherein he could “command wits and pens” and oversee the education of bright young minds. But even in this he failed, the position having already been promised to another and King James being unable to believe that his ex-Lord Keeper and Lord Chancellor, who in title was a viscount, would want to take up such a relatively humble position. The truth of the matter was, though, that beyond granting the pardon (which was never given in full, as Francis was denied being able to sit in parliament for the rest of his life), neither the King nor Buckingham did anything whatsoever to help Francis, other than to say friendly and encouraging things in answer to his letters and pleas.

So Francis remained at Gray’s Inn, writing copiously and urgently, and living at Gorhambury with his wife from time to time. Each year, usually in the summer months, he was subject to bouts of sickness, but always seemed to recover. He never lost his profound hope, his extraordinary mental faculties or his zest for completing his great work. Yet within three years he was to die, outliving by one year the King whom he had served so well, who died on 27 March 1625 and who was succeeded by his son Charles I.

Sir Francis Bacon, Baron Verulam of Verulam, Viscount St Alban, eventually died of pneumonia on Easter Day, 9th April 1626, at the Earl of Arundel's house in Highgate. His body was interred in the vault beneath the chancel of St Michael's Church, Gorhambury, St Albans, over which a statue of him in his Lord Chancellor's robes was later erected by Thomas Meautys, his private secretary. Meautys also published Francis Bacon's natural history, *Sylva Sylvarum*, and utopia, *New Atlantis*, before the end of the year.

### Tributes – Legacy

Within a few weeks of the death of Lord St Alban (Francis Bacon), a remarkable set of tributes—“tokens of love and memorials of sorrow”—were published in commemoration of him. These tributes, known as the *Manes Verulamiani*, are in the form of thirty-two Latin poems or elegies plus a preface written by Francis’ private chaplain, Dr William Rawley. The elegies, selected by Rawley from a much larger number of tributes to Francis, were largely written by scholars and Fellows of the Universities, and members of the Inns of Court, including a bishop, two royal chaplains and a Regius professor of divinity. The elegies refer to Francis Bacon as having been not only a great philosopher but also a concealed poet and playwright, “the very nerve of genius, the marrow of persuasion, the golden stream of eloquence, the precious gem of concealed literature,” who “immortalised the Muses” and renewed Philosophy “walking humbly in the socks of Comedy” and rising “in the loftier buskin of Tragedy”. He is likened to Apollo, “the brilliant Light-Bearer,” “Daystar of the Muses,” and “leader of our choir”, and to Pallas Athena, the Tenth Muse, “a Muse more rare than the nine Muses.”

From then on, as Ben Jonson remarked in his tribute to Bacon, “wits daily grow downward”. The unique half-century of brilliant English Renaissance culture was over. The ‘light’ had vanished, but not the inheritance which it has left behind for us to enjoy.

Francis Bacon left copious letters and manuscripts in various stages of completion, a library of books and a generous will—although he died so much in debt due to his misfortune that the benefits of his will could not be fully realised. Some of his letters and manuscripts were given into the care of his secretary Sir Thomas Meutys, others to his chaplain Dr William Rawley, and some to be looked after by his brother-in-law Sir John Constable and his literary friend Sir William Boswell, the English Ambassador at The Hague. Francis left them instructions to publish some and reserve others to a “private succession” of literary “sons”, as they deemed fit. His extensive library he bequeathed to Constable, but it seems that the books had to be sold because of the insolvency of his estate when he died.

Many of Bacon's manuscripts were edited and published by Rawley with the help of associates led by Thomas Meutys, Bacon's secretary. When Rawley died in 1667, the manuscripts were passed on to Thomas Tenison by Rawley's sons, John and William, who were both good friends of Thomas Tenison (1636-1715). Before he became Archbishop of Canterbury in 1694, Tenison published some of these unpublished writings in a collection called *Baconiana or Certaine Genuine Remains of Sir Francis Bacon, etc.*<sup>39</sup> In his preface to the book, Tenison mentions how Bacon did not sign all his writings, but that, with skill, it is nevertheless possible to determine what he did write.

And those who have true skill in the works of the Lord Verulam, like great Masters in Painting, can tell by the Design, the Strength, the way of Colouring, whether he was the Author of this or the other Piece, though his Name be not to it.<sup>40</sup>

Ben Jonson had once remarked that three hundred years is the period that Nature requires to produce a poet, “hence the coming up of good poets is so thin and rare amongst us.” Tenison said, speaking about Bacon: “I affirm with good assurance that Nature gives the world that individual species but once in five hundred years.” In a later tribute, Ben Jonson describes Francis Bacon as “a man who comes but once in an age.”

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rev. May 2020

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> The two families, the Cecils and the Bacons, maintained close contact with each other and often visited each other's homes, both in London and in the country.

<sup>2</sup> Michael Maier is alleged to have stated, in a manuscript residing at the University of Leiden (or Leipzig), that the Rosicrucian Fraternity of his time was formed c.1570 by followers of Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim, who had founded a secret society in London in 1510 similar to the one in Paris, with secret signs of recognition; and that this society gave rise to the Brethren of the Gold and Rosy Cross in 1570 and founded corresponding chapters of their society throughout Europe. See Bricaud, Joanny: 'Historique du Movement Rosicrucien,' *Le Voile d'Isis*, Vol. 91, July 1927, pp. 559-574. See also Hereward Tilton: *The Quest for the Phoenix: Spiritual Alchemy and Rosicrucianism in the Work of Count Michael Maier (1569-1622)*.

<sup>3</sup> Sir Nicholas' scheme, which he had partly derived from the earlier example of Sir Thomas More, was the establishment of a special academy in London for the education of the wealthier of the crown wards, to train them for royal service. This involved not only special instruction in French, Latin and Greek, and in both common and civil law, but also in the necessary courtly arts of music and dancing. In addition practical experience would be obtained by accompanying ambassadors on

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overseas missions. Sir Nicholas saw to it that the 'special academy' took form in the Inns of Court, and especially Gray's Inn, of which he was an Ancient.

<sup>4</sup> According to Letters Patent dated 30th June 1576 held at the Record Office.

<sup>5</sup> Edward Bacon spent about two years in continental Europe. Having travelled over to France in the embassy of Amias Paulet, together with his half-brother, Francis Bacon, and briefly visited Paris, he went on to Ravenna and Padua in Italy. He also spent some time in Vienna and remained for a long time at Geneva, where he lived in Theodore Béza's house and met Johannes Sturm and Lambert Danaeus (who dedicated a book to Edward).

<sup>6</sup> *Pleiad* was the name given in Greek literature to seven tragic poets who flourished during the reign of Ptolemy Philadelphus (285-247). The name is derived from the Pleiades, the cluster of 'seven' stars in the constellation of Taurus. In France, during the reign of Henri III (1574-89), another group of seven poets, led by Pierre de Ronsard, took the name of *Pléiade*. Their avowed purpose was to improve the French language and literature by imitation of the classics. They were not just poets but also philosophers, humanists, artists and scholars.

<sup>7</sup> E.g. *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *Comedy of Errors*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, *Twelfth Night*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *As You Like It*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, *Othello*, *The Tempest*.

<sup>8</sup> A modified (extended) version of this same headpiece was used in the 1623 Shakespeare First Folio.

<sup>9</sup> William T. Smedley, *The Mystery of Francis Bacon* (1910). Bacon's copy of the book came into the possession of Smedley, whose collection of books and manuscripts was obtained by the Folger-Shakespeare Library in Washington D.C.

<sup>10</sup> Hilliard returned to England in October 1578, so the portrait miniature of Francis Bacon in his eighteenth year was painted before then. An alternative translation of Hilliard's full Latin inscription, "Si tabula daretur digna / Animum mallem," as given by Lisa Jardin and Alan Stewart in their book, *Hostage to Fortune*, is "If the face as painted is deemed worthy, yet I prefer the mind." (See *Hostage to Fortune: The Troubled Life of Francis Bacon 1561-1626*. Victor Gollancz, London: 1998).

<sup>11</sup> Amboise is quoted as an authority by Gilbert Wats in the 'Testimonies consecrate to the Merite of the incomparable Philosopher' prefixed to Bacon's *The Advancement and Proficiency of Learning* published in English in 1640, wherein Wats refers to Amboise's "just and elegant discourse upon this life of our Author" and quotes from it.

<sup>12</sup> Pierre Amboise, 'Discourse on the Life of M. Francis Bacon, Chancellor of England,' *Histoire Naturelle de Mre. Francis Bacon* (Paris, 1631). Translated from the French by Granville C. Cuningham. See 'A New Life of Lord Bacon', *Baconiana* IV/14 (April 1906).

<sup>13</sup> State Paper Office. French Correspondence. (Spedding, *The Letters and the Life of Francis Bacon*, Vol.1, ch.1.)

<sup>14</sup> Spedding, *Letters and Life of Francis Bacon*, Vol. 1, ch.1, p8.

<sup>15</sup> i.e. as distinct from *de mense clericorum* ('to the clerk's table').

<sup>16</sup> Gray's Inn Law Terms & Vacations:-

- Michaelmas Term – from 1 October to 19 December
- Christmas (Dead/Mean) Vacation – from 20 December to 10 January
- Hilary Term – from 11 January to 31 March
- Lent Vacation – from 1 April to 24 April (Learning Vacation – 24 days)
- Trinity Term – from 25 April to 30 June

- Summer Vacation – July/Aug/Sept (Learning Vacation – 24 days – return early to Inn)

<sup>17</sup> Walter Devereux, 1st Earl of Essex, died at Dublin in September 1576, having sent a message to Philip Sidney from his death-bed expressing his desire that Philip should marry his daughter. Later his secretary wrote to Philip's father, Sir Henry Sidney, which seems to point to the existence of a definite understanding concerning such a marriage.

<sup>18</sup> The Earl of Leicester had had a suite of rooms in Durham House before he moved to Paget House in 1569.

<sup>19</sup> See Joy Hancox, *The Byrom Collection and the Globe Theatre Mystery*. (Jonathan Cape Ltd, 1997.) Joy Hancox's research indicates that it may have been the Tintern wireworks that produced the plates used to print the diagrams of the theatre designs found in the Byrom Collection, and also, later, the portrait of Shakespeare in the 1623 First Folio of Shakespeare's plays.

<sup>20</sup> Mentioned in letter from Nicholas Faunt to Anthony Bacon, 6 May 1583 (Lambeth Palace library MS 647, folio 150, part. 72)

<sup>21</sup> *Notes on the Present State of Christendom*, part of which was found amongst Bacon's papers and printed as Bacon's in the supplement to the 1734 second collection of manuscripts, *Letters and Remains of the Lord Chancellor Bacon*, studied and put together by Robert Stephens, the Historiographer Royal in the reign of William and Mary.

<sup>22</sup> The Pension of 21 November 1588. See Fletcher, Reginald, (ed.): *The Grey's Inn Pension Book 1569–1669*, vol. 1 (London: 1901), p.82-83.

<sup>23</sup> Francis Bacon kept his chambers at Gray's Inn until the end of his life. After his impeachment in May 1621, and when he was allowed to return to London, he retired to his chambers to write. On 8 November 1622 the chambers were leased to him alone for 40 years.

<sup>24</sup> *An Advertisement Touching the Controversies of the Church of England* was initially circulated in manuscript form. It was first printed as a separate pamphlet in 1640, and then by Dr. Rawley in *Resuscitatio* (1657). Spedding, 1, IV: 70-95.

<sup>25</sup> William Rawley, 'The Life of the Honourable Author,' *Resuscitatio* (1657).

<sup>26</sup> Francis Bacon, letter to Lord Burghley (c.1591): printed in Rawley's *Resuscitatio*, Supplement, p.95. Spedding, *Letters and Life of Francis Bacon*, Vol.1, ch.5, p.108.

<sup>27</sup> Francis Bacon, *Apology in Certain Imputations Concerning the Late Earl of Essex* (1604).

<sup>28</sup> Previous to this "extraordinary" appointment, the Counsel in Ordinary for the Crown had been composed of the Royal Sergeants and the Attorney and Solicitor General, and only these together with the Serjeants had previously been allowed to sit and act within the bar (the precincts of the court room reserved for the judge), while all other lawyers (i.e. utter or outer barristers) sat outside the bar and just in front of the general public.

<sup>29</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> Letter from Francis Bacon to the Queen, May 1593. Lambeth MSS. 649. 315. Spedding, *Letters and Life of Bacon*, Vol.1, ch.6, p.240.

<sup>31</sup> Mr. Lancaster and Mr. Betenham.

<sup>32</sup> In a letter from John Chamberlain to his friend Dudley Carlton, dated 28 June 1599, he writes:

"The Queen is given to understand that he [Essex] has given Essex house to Antonie Bacon, wherewith she is nothing pleased ; but as far as I heare it is but in lieu of 2000 l. he meant to bestow upon him, with a clause of redemption for that sum by a day." (Chamberlain's Letters. Cambridge Royal Historical Society Camden Series.)

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<sup>33</sup> Lady Walsingham was the widow of Sir Francis Walsingham and the mother of Frances, Countess of Essex.

<sup>34</sup> According to Bacon's *Ancilla Memoriae* of July 1608, he appears to have been living in "Fulwood's House" at that time, and valued his furniture there at £60. This fine London house, owned and occupied by Sir George Fulwood and his family, lay adjacent to Gray's Inn (part of its grounds was sold to Gray's Inn to form the Inn's south entry from Holborn). Francis' wife Alice would not have been allowed to live with him in Gray's Inn, so it would seem that, upon getting married, Francis and Alice set up their London home with the Fulwoods. The location of the house could not have been better from the point of view of Bacon being close to his chambers in Gray's Inn.

According to the *Ancilla Memoriae*, Bacon was then (July 1608) contemplating moving elsewhere, as there are entries to "inquire of the state of Arlington's House, and get it for a rent;" "to enquire of Bath House;" of Wanstead, etc. From these he selected Bath House, and in the entry regarding the furniture, *Fulwoods* is crossed out and *Bath* substituted.

Spedding, *Letters and Life of Francis Bacon*, Vol.4, ch.2, p.56.

<sup>35</sup> Also known as the London and Bristol Company.

<sup>36</sup> In 1910 Newfoundland issued a postage stamp commemorating the 'tercentenary' (1610-1910) of the establishment of the first colony. The stamp displays a portrait of "Lord Bacon" and describes him as "the guiding spirit in Colonization Scheme."

<sup>37</sup> Francis Bacon, *Natural History*.

<sup>38</sup> Francis Bacon, *Wisdom of the Ancients*, 'Diomedes or Zeal'.

<sup>39</sup> After Archbishop Thomas Tenison's death in 1715, the collection of Bacon's manuscripts was placed in Lambeth Library, where they may still be found today.

<sup>40</sup> Thomas Tenison, *Baconiana or Certaine Genuine Remains of Sir Francis Bacon* (1679).