

OXFORD WORLD'S CLASSICS



Francis Bacon: The Major Works

培根随笔集

Francis Bacon [英国] 弗朗西斯·培根 著

Francis Bacon: The Major Works

培根随笔集

Francis Bacon [英国] 弗朗西斯·培根 著

图书在版编目 (CIP) 数据

培根随笔集 = Francis Bacon: The Major Works:
英文 / (英) 弗朗西斯·培根 (Francis Bacon) 著.
— 南京: 译林出版社, 2017.5
(牛津英文经典)
ISBN 978-7-5447-6887-0

I. ①培… II. ①弗… III. ①英语—语言读物②随笔
—作品集—英国—中世纪 IV. ① H319.4: I

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字 (2017) 第 051544 号

Francis Bacon: The Major Works was originally published in English in 2008.
This reprint is published by arrangement with Oxford University Press.

著作权合同登记号 图字: 10-2014-198 号

培根随笔集 [英国] 弗朗西斯·培根 / 著

责任编辑 於 梅
责任印制 董 虎

原文出版 Oxford University Press, 2008
出版发行 凤凰出版传媒股份有限公司
译林出版社
出版社地址 南京市湖南路1号A楼, 邮编: 210009
电子邮箱 yilin@yilin.com
出版社网址 <http://www.yilin.com>
经 销 凤凰出版传媒股份有限公司
排 版 南京展望文化发展有限公司
印 刷 江苏凤凰通达印刷有限公司
开 本 652 毫米 × 960 毫米 1/16
印 张 54
插 页 2
版 次 2017年5月第1版 2017年5月第1次印刷
书 号 ISBN 978-7-5447-6887-0
定 价 78.00 元

版权所有·侵权必究

译林版图书若有印装错误可向出版社调换。

订购热线: 025-86633278 质量热线: 025-83658316

FRANCIS BACON THE MAJOR WORKS

FRANCIS BACON was born in London in 1561, the sixth and youngest son of Sir Nicholas Bacon, the second most important counsellor to Queen Elizabeth. After attending Trinity College Cambridge, Bacon took up a career in law, soon gaining respect as a legal adviser and becoming an MP in his twenties. He spent his whole life in public service, reaching the highest legal offices: Solicitor-General, Attorney-General, Lord Keeper, Lord Chancellor, and being created successively Baron Verulam and Viscount St Alban. In his spare time Bacon studied natural philosophy and a wide variety of other subjects, pursuing an ambitious scheme to reform the whole of human learning. His *Essays*, *Advancement of Learning*, and *New Atlantis* have assured him a distinguished place in English literature. He died in 1626, having caught a chill experimenting with the refrigeration of food.

BRIAN VICKERS, educated at St Marylebone Grammar School and Trinity College Cambridge, has been Professor of English Literature and Director of the Centre for Renaissance Studies at the ETH Zurich since 1975. He has written extensively on Francis Bacon, on Renaissance science and philosophy, and on classical rhetoric. He edited Bacon's *History of the Reign of King Henry VII* (1998) and *Essays* (1999, Oxford World's Classics). His other books include *Towards Greek Tragedy* (1973), *In Defence of Rhetoric* (1988), *Returning to Shakespeare* (1989), and *Appropriating Shakespeare: Contemporary Critical Quarrels* (1993). In 1996 he received the Litt. D. from Cambridge University, and in 1998 was elected a Corresponding Fellow of the British Academy.

OXFORD WORLD'S CLASSICS

For over 100 years Oxford World's Classics have brought readers closer to the world's great literature. Now with over 700 titles—from the 4,000-year-old myths of Mesopotamia to the twentieth century's greatest novels—the series makes available lesser-known as well as celebrated writing.

The pocket-sized hardbacks of the early years contained introductions by Virginia Woolf, T. S. Eliot, Graham Greene, and other literary figures which enriched the experience of reading.

Today the series is recognized for its fine scholarship and reliability in texts that span world literature, drama and poetry, religion, philosophy and politics. Each edition includes perceptive commentary and essential background information to meet the changing needs of readers.

PREFACE

Originally this selection from Bacon was intended to include many of his scientific works, which formed the basis of his fame in the seventeenth century, and which have been positively revalued in recent times (see Further Reading, § 7). However, these were mostly written in Latin, then the international scholarly language, and the English translations by Francis Headlam and James Spedding in the standard edition on which this selection is based (that produced by James Spedding, R. L. Ellis, and D. D. Heath between 1857 and 1874) are sometimes inconsistent and anachronistic in rendering key concepts. That deficiency could be corrected by selective re-translation, but as I worked on annotating the texts I realized that I was having to evolve two different types of annotation: one for the translated texts in Victorian English, directed to explaining the scientific concepts and argument, and a quite different one for Bacon's original Elizabethan and Jacobean English writings, which turned out to require a large amount of basic semantic and philological explication. The contrast between these two modes of annotation became so extreme that I found myself in effect editing two different books; so I decided to leave the scientific works for some other occasion and devote this volume solely to Bacon's writings in English.

This change of plan, while delaying its publication for several years, meant that I could now give a much wider coverage of Bacon's English writings than any single volume has yet attempted. In addition to the obvious major works, the *Advancement of Learning* (1605), the *Essays* of 1625, and the posthumously published *New Atlantis*, I could include the earliest version of the *Essays* (1597), selections from the 1612 *Essays*, and those important and neglected early proto-dramatic court entertainments that he produced in the 1590s. But I could also include representative examples of his writings in politics, law, and theology, not reprinted since Spedding's time. For the first category, politics, I have chosen to illustrate Bacon's independence as a counsellor, his ability to make a rational analysis of a given situation, rather than simply telling his superiors what they wanted to hear. My selection includes his plea for civil tolerance, *An Advertisement touching the Controversies of the Church of England* of c.1589-91 (pp. 1 ff.), which criticizes the policies of both the reformers and the Established Church, and his justification of Queen

Elizabeth's foreign and domestic policies in the concluding speech *Of Tribute*, 1592 (pp. 22 ff.). These two pieces were produced in a more-or-less private capacity as an independent adviser, and I balance them with two legal works deriving from his official position as Attorney-General: first, his *Charge touching duels* of 1614 (pp. 304 ff.), which spells out the attitude of the government—or indeed any responsible member of society—to that source of conflict and waste; secondly, his *Charge against Somerset* of 1616 in the notorious Overbury poisoning case (pp. 314 ff.), an example of Bacon's legal rhetoric which, for reasons explained in the notes, was deliberately subdued on this occasion. Most of Bacon's professional writings on jurisprudence are too technical for the general reader, but these two speeches can be appreciated without such professional knowledge.

For the third subject area, theology, where Bacon wrote not as an expert but as a well-informed layman, I have chosen excerpts from the *Religious Meditations* (1597), which link up with his secular writings on ethics, and the important *Confession of Faith* (c.1602), a unique document which shows the extent to which Bacon's Protestant (Calvinist) inheritance infused the whole of his work, including natural philosophy. Finally, I have even found room for his poems and verse translations of the Psalms.

Reprinting these little-known works will, I hope, help readers appreciate the range and diversity of Bacon's work. However, it brought with it three further requirements. First, the need to provide some background information if these texts were to be properly understood. Few readers, other than specialists, have a working knowledge of ecclesiastical controversies in the 1590s, or Calvinist theology, or the legal status of duelling; so, in the head-notes below I have tried to give the necessary minimum context for us to understand Bacon's choice of position within the range of options then available. From Bacon's hundreds of surviving letters (still neither fully identified nor edited), I have included three which record crucial stages in his life: that to Burghley in 1592 (p. 20), announcing his intention to devote himself to the advancement of intellectual enquiry; that to King James in 1621 (p. 326), in the middle of the political crisis which resulted in him being deprived of all public offices; and another letter of the following year to his lifelong friend Lancelot Andrewes (p. 328), showing Bacon resigned to a new existence outside public life, and devoting all his energies to intellectual activities. Annotating these letters also allowed me to sketch in parts of Bacon's biography

that have been badly misinterpreted since the Victorian age, particularly the circumstances surrounding his removal from office. Since these misrepresentations, many of them malicious, continue to blacken Bacon's reputation and distract attention from his real achievements as a public servant and philosopher, it is a matter of some urgency to re-create the complex political situation in which he found himself. Meeting these demands has resulted in head-notes that are longer and more detailed than those in other volumes in this series, but Bacon's life and works interpenetrated to a much greater extent than other writers, most of whom were not leading public figures.

The second requirement needed before these writings could be properly understood was to provide more help at the basic level of vocabulary. Bacon's English is in many ways as rich, and as remote from our own, as Shakespeare's. But whereas Shakespeare's plays have been edited over and over again for nearly three hundred years, building up a massive reservoir of linguistic annotation, responsive to every shade of meaning and restoring many lost allusions to contemporary social life or intellectual fashions, Bacon has so far received only one serviceable edition of his writings, that by Spedding, which did not attempt detailed annotation. In effect, but two of his works, the *Essays* and (to a lesser extent) the *Advancement of Learning*, have ever been edited with the attention to detail lavished on Shakespeare's plays. Other editors in this series have been able to refer readers to excellent modern editions (the Twickenham Pope, William Ringler's edition of Sidney's *Poems*) for further information and annotation, but I have had to provide this service myself, to the best of my abilities, drawing on the marvellous *Oxford English Dictionary*. As I explain in the head-note to the *Notes* (p. 493), many of Bacon's words have totally changed their meaning since he wrote, and not to be aware of their intended sense means that readers would receive at best a vague impression, if not a completely misleading one. Inevitably, then, there are more notes than in other volumes in this series, but, as I discovered when reading closely, modern readers need more linguistic information for Bacon's rich and complex texts than they do for writers nearer in time, and who did not work in so many different fields.

Finally, this volume differs from others in this series in the amount of secondary literature cited. Here again Bacon is a special case, for the fact that his output was so many-sided means that specialists in one area may be ignoramuses in another, and important similarities (and differences) within his work go unnoticed. This may be one

reason why no solid tradition of commentary and criticism has yet established itself. I have cited relevant studies as often as I could, particularly those dealing with Bacon's debt to classical and Renaissance writers. Paradoxical though it may seem for such a famous author, we actually know very little about Bacon's sources, and are thus in no position to evaluate his individuality or originality. I hope that this modest edition may serve as a rallying-point for old and new readers, stimulating fresh enquiry.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The miniature by Nicholas Hilliard, now at Belvoir Castle, Grant-ham, is reproduced by kind permission of His Grace the Duke of Rutland. (For the history of this painting see Roy Strong in the *Burlington Magazine*, 106 (1964), 337.)

I am most grateful to the Kodama Memorial Library of Meisei University, Tokyo, for supplying me with a microfilm of their manuscript of *Of Tribute*, and for permission to use it as the basis of my edition. This manuscript volume previously belonged to Peter Beal, whose *Index of English Literary Manuscripts* has proved a milestone in research for so many authors, including Bacon. At one point Dr Beal made for me a transcript of the second speech, 'In Praise of Knowledge', and had hoped to transcribe the whole work, but was in the event unable to do so. Luckily, Dr Henry Woudhuysen, of University College London, was able to step in, using his extensive experience with Elizabethan manuscripts to provide me with a transcript of the Kodama MS and a collation of the other two manuscripts, on the basis of which I have made my own edition. I accept full responsibility for editorial decisions.

I thank *Huntington Library Quarterly* for allowing me to base my edition of Bacon's *Advice to Fulke Greville on his Studies* on the transcript made by Vernon F. Snow in his essay, 'Francis Bacon's Advice to Fulke Greville on Research Techniques', *HLQ* 23 (1960), 369-78.

My understanding of Bacon's *Confession of Faith* has been immeasurably increased thanks to the collaboration of a former colleague from my Cambridge days, Basil Hall, who went on to become Professor of Ecclesiastical History at the University of Manchester, and subsequently Fellow and Dean of St John's College Cambridge. Basil put his great knowledge of sixteenth-century Protestant theology freely at my disposal, not only reading and commenting on Bacon's text but critically examining several drafts of my annotation, making many constructive suggestions. His sudden death in October 1994, shortly after I had completed the manuscript, was a grievous loss.

My understanding of Bacon's *Advertisement touching the Controversies of the Church of England* owes a great deal to Patrick Collinson, Regius Professor of Modern History, University of Cambridge, and Fellow of Trinity College: not just to his extensive publications on

Elizabethan religion but also to the happy coincidence that we both took part in the Folger Institute conference on Richard Hooker in August 1993. In his paper on 'Hooker and the Establishment' Professor Collinson made a convincing identification of Richard Bancroft as one of the unnamed targets attacked by Bacon; he subsequently allowed me to quote from that paper, and kindly criticized a draft of my introduction to this treatise.

Michael Kiernan, who is editing the *Advancement of Learning* for the Clarendon Press, looked at my text and annotations, and helped improve them. The general editor, Professor Sir Frank Kermode, has read much of this book and offered characteristically shrewd and helpful suggestions. None of these colleagues is, of course, responsible for errors and failures of understanding that remain.

For help in tracking down some of Bacon's more obscure Latin quotations I am particularly indebted to Mr Frank Gerber of the University of Zurich. Other colleagues who helped here include Professors Hermann Tränkle (Zurich), Michael Winterbottom (Oxford), and Tony O'Rourke and Jamie Robinson (Chadwyck-Healey Ltd., Cambridge), and Luc Jocqué of the editorial board *Corpus Christianorum* (Brepols, Bruges). Despite all our efforts, a few quotations have eluded us, and I would be glad to receive any identifications and corrections.

At Oxford University Press I thank Judith Luna for her patient forbearance over what must have seemed an inordinately long period, as I drastically changed the volume's contents, and kept breaking off to fulfil other commitments. For copy-editing I am once again grateful to Alice Park for her eagle-eyed scrutiny of the typescript, which has eliminated many errors and inconsistencies, and to Elizabeth Stratford and her staff for most scrupulous proofreading.

My greatest debt is to my assistant, Dr Margrit Soland, who has worked on this edition for several years, presiding over many changes in its make-up, and showing remarkable patience and cheerfulness at all times. Her meticulous care for detail has been of enormous help, and to her this edition is warmly and gratefully dedicated.

B.V.

Zurich

October 1994

INTRODUCTION

I

Francis Bacon, the glory of his age and nation, the adorning and ornament of learning, was born in York House, or York Place, in the Strand, on the two and twentieth day of January, in the year of our Lord 1561. His father was that famous counsellor to Queen Elizabeth, the second prop of the kingdom in his time, Sir Nicholas Bacon, knight, lord-keeper of the great seal of England; a lord of known prudence, sufficiency, moderation, and integrity. His mother was Anne, one of the daughters of Sir Anthony Cooke (unto whom the erudition of King Edward the Sixth had been committed); a choice lady, and eminent for piety, virtue, and learning; being exquisitely skilled, for a woman, in the Greek and Latin tongues. These being the parents, you may easily imagine what the issue was like to be; having had whatsoever nature or breeding could put into him. (*Works*, i. 3)¹

So begins the first biography of Bacon, written in 1657 by William Rawley, his chaplain, and editor of various posthumously published works. It is a good beginning, to the life as to the biography, yet the privileges of birth and place did not work out as gloriously as they promised. Educated at first at home, Bacon went up to Trinity College Cambridge in April 1573, where he was under the special care of the Master, John Whitgift, subsequently Archbishop of Canterbury. Due to the outbreak of plague Bacon had only been in residence for thirty-two months when he decided to leave Cambridge at Christmas 1575, just before his fifteenth birthday, but he had seen enough of the academic curriculum, he told Rawley later, to conceive a strong dislike for Aristotelian philosophy as then taught. After university the next step in the training for a public career would have been to go to one of the Inns of Court, and Bacon was duly admitted to Gray's Inn (where his father had been trained) in June 1576. But a better opportunity of gaining political experience arose, and in September he was sent by his father, the second most important statesman in England, to serve with Sir Amias Paulet, the Queen's ambassador to France. Bacon stayed with him from 1576 to 1579, presumably studying statecraft and performing routine diplomatic duties.

¹ All references to Bacon's *Works* are to the edition produced by James Spedding and others in 14 vols. (London, 1857-74), comprising the 'Philosophical Works' (vols. i-v), the 'Literary and Professional Works' (vi-vii), and the *Letters and Life* (viii-xiv).

The first set-back to Bacon's career occurred on 22 February 1579, when his father suddenly died. Bacon was the second son of a second marriage, thus the youngest of six sons. Sir Nicholas had settled estates on the first five, and was in the course of doing so for his youngest when he died. With no position, no land, and no income, Bacon returned to England and took up the law as a profession, advancing with remarkable speed, graduating from Gray's Inn in 1582, becoming Benchler in 1586, Reader (a lecturer entrusted with expounding the law) in 1588, and Double Reader in 1600, an extraordinary honour for one so young. At the same time he began his parliamentary career in 1581, as member for Bossiney in Cornwall, and he was to sit in every parliament from then until he was expelled from office in 1621. While Bacon is celebrated today as a writer and a natural philosopher (or scientist, as we should say), for the main part of his life he was constantly occupied with the law (he lived for long periods in Gray's Inn, and played a full part in its activities), and with public affairs at a high level. Legal and political works came from his pen without interruption throughout his life; indeed, amazing though it may seem, Bacon's scientific, philosophical, and literary works were the product of his spare time, evenings, weekends, above all the vacations from the law terms, or when parliament was not sitting.

As a lawyer, parliamentarian, and politician Bacon was an expert in several fields, not surprisingly, perhaps, given his enormous industry and his family background. Bacon's father served both Henry VIII and Queen Elizabeth I, who made him a knight, a Privy Counsellor, and Lord Keeper of the Great Seal; his uncle, Sir William Cecil, later Lord Burghley, was for many years the most powerful politician in England. Through both sides of the family Bacon was connected with influential figures in Tudor humanism (Sir John Cheke, Roger Ascham) and with many others who put their great learning to the service of the state as teachers and counsellors. The ideology of the *vita activa*, the dedicating of one's energies *pro bono publico*, runs all the way through Bacon's career. Yet his life illustrates peculiarly poignantly the fundamental uncertainties of such a career. The theorists urged all able men to go to the court and serve the monarch: but neither Queen Elizabeth nor James I took much notice of unappointed counsellors. The political courtier was doomed to years of writing notes of advice which the monarch might not even read, and to the practice of the baser arts of ingratiation and flattery. Many of Bacon's letters record the unavoidable, but ignoble and pathetic

attempts to catch the eye of people in power, and in those addressed to James I's favourite George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, it is impossible not to feel that Bacon wasted his abilities on a man in every way his inferior. 'The rising unto place is laborious', he wrote in one of his *Essays*, 'and by pains men come to greater pains; and it is sometimes base; and by indignities men come to dignities' (*Works*, vi. 399 f.)— or not, as the case may be.

It was in his parliamentary career that Bacon suffered his second set-back. The Queen may have ignored advice, but she certainly did not ignore criticism. In the Parliament of 1593 Bacon opposed what seemed to him, and to many other members, an excessive tax raised over too short a period. The vote went against Bacon, but the Queen was furious, denying him access and reducing him to an abject suitor (*Works*, viii. 214–41). This piece of plain-speaking cost him his hopes of advancement to the leading legal offices, Solicitor-General and Attorney-General, where his lifelong rival Sir Edward Coke moved up the ladder in front of him. Yet the Queen continued to employ him in various legal capacities, and accepted some of his writings which expounded or defended the government position. In the 1580s and 1590s Bacon had become attached to the Earl of Essex, advising his patron on several political issues, and writing letters and speeches on his behalf. Bacon's advice was always sensible, yet it had little effect on Essex, who pursued a violent course and finally attempted to raise a rebellion against the Crown. Easily defeated, he was formally prosecuted, and ironically enough, after years of neglect the Queen made use of Bacon for the prosecution and in writing the official account (*Works*, ix. 247–321), an affair which inevitably damaged his reputation and caused him to publish a self-defence (*Works*, x. 139–60). While some critics will always regret that Bacon put his loyalty to England first, they should also consider what the rule of Essex would have represented.

Under King James, Bacon's merits were recognized more quickly. Knighted in 1603, he became King's Counsel in 1604, Solicitor-General in 1607, Attorney-General in 1613, a Privy Counsellor in 1616, Lord Keeper in 1617, Lord Chancellor in 1618. Having more than emulated his father in public office, he excelled him in rank, being elevated to the House of Lords as Baron Verulam in 1618, and created Viscount St Albans in 1621. Although the promotion was remarkable, it was well earned, for Bacon was celebrated by his contemporaries for his forensic skills, his memory of cases and procedure, and his capacity to grasp all the complexities of the issue

at stake. He was particularly in demand as a reporter of complicated parliamentary proceedings, where his clear thinking showed at its best. As the leading legal officer he took part in many state prosecutions for treason, including, alas, that of Sir Walter Raleigh (*Works*, xiii. 379 ff.), and played a major part in the trials following the murder of Sir Thomas Overbury. As one reads through the five volumes of Spedding's monumental *Letters and Life* devoted to this period, it is clear that Bacon was always in the thick of the most important public business. Yet he was still only a tool of James, and the image that comes across is, rather like Eliot's 'Prufrock', of one 'Deferential, glad to be of use': conscientious, yet always implementing others' policy.

In only two areas could Bacon lead an independent existence. One was as a scientist planning to reform natural philosophy, and even though the pressure of public work between 1612 and 1620 almost extinguished his scientific activities, the period between 1603 and 1610 had been tremendously productive, and he had assembled enough material then, and developed his ideas sufficiently far to be able to publish in 1620 the beginnings of what he called a *Great Instauration*, designed to put the whole of natural philosophy on a new footing. But even here the first part, he announced, was not yet written, and the second part, the *Novum Organum*, although it is one of the works by which he became famous, is itself only a fragment of what he had planned. As the 'uomo universale' of the English Renaissance, Bacon was paying a high price for maintaining the *vita activa* on so many fronts.

The other area where Bacon was largely independent of crown policy was as a judge. As state prosecutor he necessarily expressed official attitudes, but in his own court—that of Chancery, set up as a court of appeal against injustices perpetrated by other courts—he could administer the law according to his knowledge and beliefs. He did so with some authority, as we can see both from the tone of his official speeches and from the comments of his contemporaries. He was also remarkably efficient as a judge in clearing off huge backlogs of business in a short time, and he gave fair judgments. Yet here occurred the third and biggest set-back of his career: in 1621 he was accused of corruption, found guilty by the House of Lords, dismissed from parliament and from all offices, temporarily imprisoned in the Tower, fined £40,000, and banned from coming within the verge (the radius of twelve miles around the court). Some two years earlier Bacon had taken presents from two men whose cases had been tried

in his court: his decision was not affected by the presents, in fact it went against both suitors, so that he cannot be accused of perverting justice.² Also, his offence has to be seen against the norms of his society, where men in power (who received no official salaries) habitually sold offices to suitors and accepted lavish presents, indeed expected and depended on them. Bacon was unfortunate in that a scandal earlier that year had aroused a wish among opponents of the government to purge corruption in public places; he was unfortunate in thus giving a weapon to enemies of the government, who located the disgruntled suitors and encouraged them to denounce him; and he was unfortunate in that both James and Buckingham coolly sacrificed him in order to preserve their own positions. In effect Bacon was the scapegoat of a parliamentary opposition group bent on punishing several widespread abuses, from which many public figures profited, particularly the widely detested favourite Buckingham (see below, pp. 695 ff.). Bacon was careless, naïve, and foolish in accepting the gifts, and he was morally wrong to do so. No one would wish to deny that he was at fault, even though a comparable inquiry into the rest of the English ruling class would have removed many men from office.

Bacon's fall was an enormous physical and mental shock for him, and it darkened his reputation for centuries. Yet in removing him at one go from the ever-increasing demands of public office it also liberated him for his own work. The five years of life remaining saw an enormous output in the most varied fields: history, poetry, the essay, a collection of apophthegms (witty sayings), and above all natural philosophy. It is to this period that we owe the *Essays* in their final revision, the *New Atlantis*, and the *History of Henry the Seventh*, three English works which no other writer of that century was capable of producing and which would alone guarantee his place in English literature. To this period also belong the major scientific works, written in Latin, which were intended to comprise the *Historia Naturalis et Experimentalis*; also the vast *Sylva Sylvarum*, written in English, a curious compound of borrowings from other men's books and of his own experiments and observation. It was in the pursuit of an experiment that he died, the amateur scientist being finally caught in a professional role. As John Aubrey recorded it:

Mr. Hobbes told me that the cause of his Lordship's death was trying an Experiment; viz. as he was taking the aire in a Coach with Dr. Wither-

² See Daniel R. Coquillette, *Francis Bacon* (Edinburgh, 1992, in the series 'Jurists: Profiles in Legal Theory').

borne . . . towards High-gate, snow lay on the ground, and it came to my Lord's thoughts, why flesh might not be preserved in snow, as in Salt. They were resolved they would try the Experiment presently. They alighted out of the Coach and went into a poore woman's house . . . and bought a Hen, and made the woman exenterate [disembowel] it, and then stuffed the body with Snow, and my Lord did help to doe it himselfe. The Snow so chilled him that he immediately fell so extremely ill that he could not return to his Lodging . . . but went to the Earl of Arundel's house at High-gate where they putt him into . . . a damp bed that had not been layn-in about a yeare before, which gave him such a colde that in 2 or 3 dayes . . . he dyed of Suffocation.³

He died on 9 April 1626, and was buried, as he had requested, in St Michael's church at St Albans, where his mother lay.

II

For indeed to write at leisure that which is to be read at leisure matters little; but to bring about the better ordering of man's life and business, with all its troubles and difficulties, by the help of sound and true contemplations—this is the thing I aim at. (Francis Bacon to Isaac Casaubon, 1609: *Works*, xi. 147)

Bacon's writings have long enjoyed a firm place in English literature. The qualities that continue to attract readers—a powerful intellectual grasp, analytical penetration, a mastery of the expressive resources of language, the ability to adapt style to subject-matter and purpose—have been celebrated by many distinguished writers, from Ben Jonson and Abraham Cowley to Dr Johnson and Pope, Coleridge and Hazlitt, De Quincey, Shelley, and Ruskin.⁴ Bacon's high standing in the English literary canon seems assured, yet it rests on a strange paradox, namely that he never wrote a single piece of 'pure' literature. Everything that he ever produced was dedicated to his lifelong goal of improving the amount and quality of knowledge available to mankind, so as to alleviate the miseries of human existence. As he wrote in his programmatic letter to Burghley in 1592 (echoing Cicero's prescription for the perfect orator), 'I have taken all knowledge to be my province; and if I could purge it of two sorts of rovers [distracting influences] . . . I hope I should bring in industrious observations, grounded conclusions, and profitable inventions and

³ *Aubrey's Brief Lives*, ed. O. L. Dick (London, 1958; Penguin Books, 1962), 124.

⁴ See Brian Vickers, *Francis Bacon and Renaissance Prose* (Cambridge, 1968), ch. 8, 'Judgments of Bacon's Style' (pp. 232–61). For other literature on Bacon's reception and reputation from the 17th to the 19th centuries see Further Reading, §6.