Sir Nicholas left but a scanty fortune ; and his son Fran­cis, the youngest of a large family, found himself obliged, in his twentieth year, to devise the means of earning a livelihood. One would have thought powerful friends could not have been wanting to one who, besides his own acknowledged merit, had it in his power to urge the long and honourable services of his father, while his uncle was the prime minister of the kingdom. Of the patronage which thus seemed to be at his command, Bacon attempted to avail himself, desiring to obtain such a public employment as might enable him to unite political activity in some de­gree with literary study. But his suit was received neglect­fully by the queen, and harshly repulsed by his kinsman. Although all the causes of this conduct may not be dis­coverable, a few lie at the surface. The lord-keeper had, in the later years of his life, lost the royal favour. Burleigh, besides his notorious contempt for men of letters, had to pro­vide for sons of his own, to whom their accomplished cou­sin might have proved a dangerous rival. From the Cecils, indeed, Bacon never derived any efficient aid, till he had forced his way upwards in spite of them ; and there arc evi­dent traces of jealousy and dislike in the mode in which he was treated both by the old treasurer, and by his second son, Robert

Obliged therefore to betake himself to the law, Bacon was admitted at Gray’s Inn, where he spent several years ob­scurely in the study of his profession, but with increasing practice at the bar. The friendship of his fellow lawyers, earned by his amiable disposition and his activity in the affairs of the society, bestowed on him offices in his inn of court ; but his kinsmen were still cold and haughty. Lord Burleigh continued to write him letters of reproof ; and Robert Cecil, already a rising statesman, sneered at spe­culative intellects, and insinuated their unfitness for the business of life. In 1590, when Bacon was in his thirtieth year, he was visited for the first time with court-favour, re­ceiving then an honorary appointment as queen’s counsel extraordinary ; and to this was added a grant of the re­version of a clerkship in the star-chamber, which did not become vacant for eighteen years. But the lawyer’s heart was not in his task. His brilliant professional success, and the awakening friendship of his relations, merely suggested to him renewed attempts to escape from the drudgery of the bar. His views are nobly expressed in a letter which he addressed to the lord-treasurer the year after his ap­pointment.@@1 We linger with melancholy pleasure over these abortive efforts made by one of the finest and most capacious of intellects to extricate itself from that labyrinth of worldly turmoil, in which its owner was destined to pur­chase rank and splendour at the expense of moral degrada­tion and final ruin.

We are henceforth to behold Bacon actively engaged in political life, as well as in the duties of his profession. Two parties then divided the court, equally remarkable in dif­ferent ways on account of those who headed them. Bur­leigh was the chief of the queen’s old counsellors, on whom, amidst all her caprices, she always had the prudence to rely for the real business of the state: the young and gay, those who aspired to be ranked as the personal friends or adorers of the withered sovereign of hearts, were led by the high- spirited and imprudent Earl of Essex. To the party of this nobleman Bacon decidedly attached himself, and soon in­deed shared with his own elder brother Anthony, the earl’s most private confidence. Valuable advisers were they to their rash patron ; and a valuable servant of the nation did Francis Bacon bid fair to become, when, in No­vember 1592, he entered parliament as one of the knights of the shire for Middlesex. His first speech, in February following, contained an urgent pleading for improvements in the law ; in another address, delivered in March, he re­sisted, with exceeding boldness as well as force of reason, the immediate levying of an unpopular subsidy to which the House had already consented. The young lawyer’s exposition of unpleasant truths gave deep offence to the queen. His uncle and the lord-keeper were both commis­sioned to convey to him the assurance of the royal displea­sure ; and the two humble, nay, crouching letters of apo­logy, still extant, in which he entreated those ministers to procure his pardon, did not forebode much independence in his subsequent conduct. We do not, indced, again hear Bacon named as a champion of popular rights.

In the year 1594, Sir Edward Coke being made attorney- gencral, the solicitorship became vacant ; and Bacon’s ap­plication for the office was strenuously supported by Essex. But all efforts were in vain. The powerful kinsmen were colder than ever towards one who had chosen another pa­tron. The lord-keeper, Puckering, acted in a manner which drew on him a spirited rebuke from the candidate. The queen hesitated, coquetted, told Essex that his friend, though witty, eloquent, and in some branches learned, was a showy lawyer rather than a profound one. After a de­lay of many months, the place was given to a plodding serjeant ; and Bacon’s generous patron, vexed at the disap­pointment of his hopes, sought to console both him and himself by a gift equally munificent and delicate. Bacon received from him an estate at Twickenham, worth about eighteen hundred pounds. The present, in all likelihood, came very seasonably ; for he appears to have been already involved in those pecuniary embarrassments from which he was never afterwards completely able to extricate him­self. He was obliged to sell the land which Essex had given him ; two years later he was arrested in the street for a debt of three hundred pounds ; and among the Lord Chan­cellor Ellesmere’s papers, recently published, there is a cu­rious acknowledgment, granted in 1604, for a pledge in se­curity of an advance of fifty pounds to him. These rea­sons offer the only apology for the addresses which, about the time of his arrest, he paid to a wealthy and shrewish widow, who, fortunately for him, preferred his professional brother and personal enemy, Sir Edward Coke. In the meantime, his legal reputation continued to increase, and his parliamentary exertions were unremitted, though alto­gether free from that independence which had once cha­racterized them. We thus trace Bacon down to his thirty-

@@@, “ I wax now somewhat ancient : one-and-thirty years is a great deal of sand ill the hour-glass. My health, I thank God, I find confirmed, and I do not fear that action shall impair it; because I account my ordinary course of study and meditation to be more pain­ful than most parts of action are· I ever bear a mind, in some middle place that I could discharge, to serve her majesty; not as a man bom under Sol that loveth honour, nor under Jupiter that loveth business, for the contemplative planet carrieth me away wholly; but as a man bom under an excellent sovereign, that deserveth the dedication of all men's abilities. . . . Again, the meanness of my estate doth somewhat move me ; for, though I cannot accuse myself that I am either prodigal or slothful, yet my health is not to spend, nor my course to get. Lastly, I confess that I have as vast contemplative ends, as I have moderate civil ends ; *for I haut taken all knowledge to be my province;* and, if I could purge it of two sorts of rovers,—whereof the one with frivolous disputations, confutations, and verbosities, the other with blind experiments, and auricular traditions and impostures, have committed so many spoils,—I hope I should bring in industrious observations, grounded conclusions, and profitable inventions and discoveries ; the best state of that province. This, whether it be curiosity, or vain glory, or nature, or (if one take it more favourably) philanthropia, is so fixed in my mind, as it cannot be removed. . . . *And if your lordship will not carry me on,* I will not do as Anaxagoras did, who reduced himself with contemplation into voluntary poverty : but *this 1 will do,—I will sell the inheritance that I have, and purchase some lease of quick revenue, or some office of gain, that shall be executed by deputy ; and so give over all care of service, and became some sorry bookmaker, or a true pioneer in that mine of truth, which, he said, lay so deep."—* (Cabala, p 18. Bacon's Works, vol xii. p. 6, 7. Montagu's edit.)