ninth year, pausing only to remark, that two years earlier, that is, in 1597, his celebrated Essays were first published. Although merely the skeleton of what they afterwards be­came, these compositions gained high reputation for their author, not only at home, but also on the continent.

After this, the first step in Bacon’s literary career, we approach what is the most painful task of his biographer, a dark page of his history, over which no ingenuity has ever been able to throw a veil thick enough to disguise its foulness. We have seen him the friend, the adviser, the grateful vassal of Essex ; we are now to behold him deserting his benefactor, assisting to destroy him, standing forth in the face of the world as his enemy and accuser. The philosopher’s latest biographer has pronounced his conduct in this matter to be honourable and praiseworthy ; and to his pages we must refer those who are curious to canvass ar­guments of which we are ourselves unable to discover the force. Bacon, unfortunately for himself, had lately risen much in royal favour, and been greatly trusted and employed. Accordingly, in the first stages of Essex’s decline, he had to act a double part,—now offering to his patron advices which were but seldom followed, now seeking excuses to pacify the queen's rising displeasure. His natural inclination for temporizing, the success which had hitherto attended his cautious policy, the honest wish to serve his generous friend,— all these reasons may have concurred in tempting him to embark in the dangerous channel. But the sunken rocks soon encompassed him, and shipwreck was unavoidable. Alienation either from Elizabeth or from Essex speedily appeared to be the necessary result of the position into which the parties were coming. Bacon had not the courage to take the nobler part, and place himself by the side of his falling friend, at the probable expense of all his worldly prospects. Suspicion and estrangement soon took the place of affectionate confidence ; and the trust reposed in him by the queen was purchased by the bitter consciousness that Es­sex regarded him as treacherous and hostile. A more de­grading task was yet to come The first trial of the earl, in reference to his conduct in Ireland, was determined upon ; and Bacon’s enemies asserted that he offered himself to act as one of the counsel for the prosecution. In that memoir in defence of his conduct which he wrote in the next reign, and which proves satisfactorily nothing but his own humi­liating consciousness of guilt, he states as to this matter what was doubtless the truth. It had been resolved that the proceedings against the rash earl should not be carried out to his destruction, but should only disarm and dis- courage him ; and, a hint being conveyed to Bacon that the queen had not determined whether he should be em­ployed professionally in the affair or not, he thought proper to address to her “ two or three words of compliment,” in­timating that if she would dispense with his services he would consider it as one of her greatest favours, but that otherwise he knew his duty, and would not allow any pri­vate obligations to interfere with what he owed to her majesty. All this was, he adds, “ a respect no man that had his wits could have omitted.” Bacon, in short, still wished to serve two masters ; but he had now placed him­self at the mercy of those from whom he had no forbearance to expect. The queen, suspicious and moody, was jealous of his attachment to Essex, and bent on compelling him to do het service unreservedly : her advisers, or some of them, were glad to have the odium of the earl's destruction shared with them by one so distinguished, who had. likewise, been the victim’s friend. It was intimated that Bacon’s services could not be dispensed with; but he tells us, (and he pro­bably repeats only what his masters tried to make him believe), that it was resolved his share in the prosecu­tion should be confined to matters which could not do his unfortunate patron any serious harm. Essex’s private cen­sure by the privy-council followed ; and, while he was com­mitted to custody-at-large, Bacon incurred, by his appear­ance against him, an obloquy of which his letters show him to have been painfully sensible. In a few months the earl’s open rebellion took place ; he was seized, and put upon his trial in February 1601, along with Lord South­ampton ; and on this occasion, when his life was at stake, Bacon again appeared as one of the counsel for the prose­cution, and delivered a speech of which there is extant an imperfect account. The language is harsh, but less so than addresses of the kind used to be in those days. The topics are oratorical, and, as it has been justly remarked, are less calculated for ensuring conviction (which indeed was cer­tain) than for placing the conduct of the prisoner in an odious light, and hardening the queen’s heart against him ; and, although it would be rash to judge of the real temper of the harangue without knowing more of its contents, yet what we possess contains much that cannot possibly be explained so as to do credit to the speaker. We know, like­wise, how the object of the attack received it. At one place Essex interrupted his treacherous friend, and called upon him to say, as a witness, whether he had not, in their confidential intercourse, admitted the truth of those excuses which he now affected to treat as frivolous and false. Essex was convicted ; and between his sentence and exe­cution, Bacon admits in his exculpatory memoir that he made no attempt to save him ; seeing the queen but once, as he says, and on that occasion venturing to do nothing further than pronouncing a few common-places on the blessed uses of mercy. But not even here was the disgrace to end, in which the timid man of the world had steeped himself. The act which had cost Elizabeth’s own heart so much, had also made her unpopular ; a defence of the royal policy in regard to Essex was thought necessary, and the pen that drew it up, under the direction of the queen’s advisers, was, we are grieved to find, no other than Bacon’s. The “ De­claration of the Practices and Treasons attempted and com­mitted by Robert Earl of Essex,” was printed, and is ex­tant : “ a performance,” says a late writer, “ in dcfence of which, in the succeeding reign, Bacon had not a word to say ; a performance abounding in expressions which no generous enemy would have employed respecting a man who had so dearly expiated his offences.” With this hu­miliating act of service we may consider Bacon’s public life under Elizabeth as closed.

The reign of her successor was, from its commencement, a more auspicious era for men of letters and philosophy, with whom James, amidst all his imbecility and cold-heart- edness, was not by any means ill fitted to sympathise. Ba­con’s learning was no longer open to sneers and contempt ; his uncle was dead ; his hunchback cousin, Robert Cecil, who soon became Earl of Salisbury, was kept in check by his hereditary prudence ; and Coke, who had insulted our phi­losophic lawyer grossly, as he insulted every one who was de­fenceless and Within his reach, was in a few years removed to the head of the court of common pleas. From the first hour of James’s reign, Bacon lost no opportunity of recommending himself to favour; but the first mark of it which he received, was orte of which he neither was nor could have been proud, and which, nevertheless, he thought proper to solicit. When the king called upon all persons possessing forty pounds a year in land to be knighted, or to compound for a dispensa­tion from the honour, one effect of this scheme for filling the royal coffers was, that three members of Bacon’s mess at Gray’s Inn appeared among the new knights. That love of external distinctions which was the fatal weakness of his nature, was called into play, and the philosopher was dis­concerted by the titles of his companions, beside whom he sat untitled. At the same time, likewise, he had, in his own words, “found out an alderman’s daughter, a handsome maiden, to his liking and the alderman’s daughter was likely to be more easily won if her admirer could offer her