but by intentions strictly honest;—that he was sacrificed by the king and the king's minion, although, if he had stood a trial, he could have obtained a full acquittal. This, we must venture to think, is a position which, if maintained to its whole extent, cannot be even plausibly defended. Neither, as we must also believe, is justice done by that other view, which has been stated more recently with such force and eloquence, that the case was one of gross bribery, gross and glaring even when compared with the ordinary course of corruption in these times ; a case so bad, that the court, anxious, for their own sakes, to save the culprit, dared not to utter a word in extenuation.@@1

The fact which possesses the greatest importance for the elucidation of this unfortunate story, is that which has been founded on so elaborately by Mr. Montagu, and lately il­lustrated further by another writer for a different purpose.@@2 The custom of giving presents was then general, not to say universal, in England. It extended much farther than the *épices* of the French parliaments ; for the gifts were not fix­ed in amount, nor, though always expected, were they re­cognised as lawful perquisites. The advisers of the crown received presents from those who asked for favours : the sovereign received presents from those who approached the throne on occasions of pomp and festivity. Both these im­proprieties were not only universal but unchallenged. Fur­ther, judges received presents ; and under certain condi­tions,—when, for instance, the giver had not been, and was not likely to be, a suitor in the judge’s court, or even when, though he had been a suitor, the cause was ended,—this dangerous abuse was scarcely less common than the other, and scarcely regarded in a more unfavourable light. That it was wrong, all men felt ; but we fear there were few in­deed, who, like Sir Thomas More, refused absolutely to profit by it. High as Coke himself stood for honesty, and well as he deserved praise for this (almost his only redeem­ing virtue), we doubt whether his judicial character could have emerged quite untainted from a scrutiny led by com­mon informers, discarded servants, and disappointed liti­gants, like that to which his unfortunate rival was subject­ed. Pure Bacon was not ; purer than he, several of his con­temporaries probably were ; but we believe him to have been merely one of the offenders, and very far indeed from being the worst, in an age when corruption and profligacy, senatorial, judicial, and administrative, were almost at the acme of that excess which an indignant nation speedily rose to exterminate and to avenge.

A comparison of the charges in detail, and of the evidence adduced, with Bacon’s articulate answers, as to the candour of which there is no reason to doubt, would really exhibit little or nothing which, after fair allowances are made for imperfect information and other causes of obscurity, would afford a distinct contradiction to the chancellor's own so­lemn averment, made in a letter to the king at an early stage of the investigation. “ For the briberies and gifts wherewith I am charged, when the book of hearts shall be opened, I hope I shall not be found to have the troubled fountain of a corrupt heart, in a depraved habit of taking rewards to pervert justice ; howsoever I may be frail, and partake of the abuses of the times." While he lay in the Tower, he addressed to Buckingham a letter containing these expressions : “ However I have acknowledged that the sentence is just, and for reformation sake fit, I have been a trusty, and honest, and Christ-loving friend to your lordship, and the justest chancellor that hath been in the five changes since my father’s time." This last sentence, indeed, when carefully weighed, will be found to contain more of truth than the writer himself perhaps intended. A judge not altogether unjust he may have been, if we compare him with his contemporaries ; but he was also a trusty, and trusting, and servile friend of the royal favourite, and of other men in power. He was a lover of the pomp of the world, to an extent highly dangerous for one who had but little private fortune, insufficient official remunera­tion, and habits which disqualified him for exercising a strict superintendence over the expenses of his household, or the conduct of his dependents generally. His emolu­ments as chancellor did not amount to three thousand pounds a-year ; and, immediately on his appointment, he had used vain endeavours to have the office put on a more independent footing. His servants habitually betrayed both him and the suitors ; but there can be no doubt that, con­tinually embarrassed in circumstances, he himself was only too glad to receive the customary gifts when they could be taken with any semblance of propriety. As to his confession, while we believe it to be true in every particular instance, we believe it also in its general admission of corruption ; but we likewise believe that the general admission ought to have been qualified by certain references, which would have established the truth of a remark made by Bacon in his hour of deepest suffering, that “ they upon whom the wall fell were not the greatest offenders in Israel.” And this, as we conceive it, was the danger which the court were so eager to avert, the danger which filled the king and Buckingham with such dismay. This was their reason for insisting that Bacon should sacrifice his own character, and abandon that line of defence which might not improbably have precipitated the revolution. Upon this assumption, their conduct throughout is intelligible and consistent; and, although one is reluctant to believe it, the assumption is not contradicted by any thing in the chancellor’s character. Lofty as may still have been his abstract notions of morality, his practical views were darkened and debased by his long servitude to public office in a corrupt age. The stain which, as he well knew, the sentence of the parliament would affix upon his name, may have seemed a light thing to one who was aware how the same brand might have been justly imprinted on almost every eminent name in the king­dom. And again, neither Bacon nor his master, nor those others who were the royal advisers, were able to compre­hend, in this instance, any more than elsewhere, the spirit which had already gone abroad. They did not anticipate the severity of the sentence pronounced by the House of Lords; still less did they anticipate (Bacon at least did not, nor perhaps did Williams) the universal indignation which was aroused by the fact that the highest judge in the realm had been displaced for bribery. The court gained its im­mediate purpose, in removing to a subsequent time the fatal struggle ; but there soon arrived the fulfilment of Bacon’s prophecy, that the successful attack on him would be but an encouragement and strengthening to those who aimed at the throne itself.

After his release from the Tower, Bacon, although strange­ly anxious to continue in London, was obliged to retire to his paternal seat of Gorhambury, near St. Albans. There he immediately commenced his History of Henry the Seventh, a work displaying but too unequivocal proofs of the deject­ed lassitude which had crept upon his mind. Early in next year he offered himself unsuccessfully for the provostship of Eton College, and proceeded with other literary undertakings. These included the completion of the celebrated treatise, “ De Augmentis,” an improvement of the older work on the Advancement of Learning. This was the last philosophical treatise which he published; although the few remaining years of his life were incessantly devoted to study and com­position, and gave birth to the New Atlantis, the Sylva Sylvarum, and other works of less consequence.

@@@1 Montagu's Life of Bacon, Works, vol. xvi. part 1. pp. 313—377, *note.* Edinburgh Review, vol. lxv. p. 50—63.

@@@, Edinburgh Review, No. 143, p. 38, 39. Life of Raleigh.