WHAT ACTUALLY HAPPENED

The following account of Francis Bacon's fall from grace is excerpted from: "The Secret History of Francis Bacon and the Secret Shake-Speare" by Alfred Dodd (1941). As you can see from the opening, there was at the time, amongst those in the know, an awareness that FB was the son of the Queen and was entitled to a claim on the throne.

Note, in particular, the relationship between the key players Coke, Buckingham and then, later Williams - who covets FB's position as Lord Chancellor. Sir Coke was a competitor of FBs in the legal world and the House of Commons who nearly always came off second best when he was up against FB in either forum. Each of these three receive their karmatic dues in full. Note also that none of the 'bribes' were paid directly to FB but in the 'ordinary way' through the court - as these were the funds that paid the wages and costs of the court. While those with judgments against them were encouraged to appeal, not one of his 8,798 decisions was reversed - the greatest possible testament to the veracity of his legal mind. Dixon's observations (highlighted) are those of a barrister.

Finally, you will notice references to certain pieces by Shakespeare that reflect FB's predicament.

GBW

James of Scotland comes to the Throne, and, at the age of forty-three, " Mr. Francis " is made into Sir Francis, with a batch of other knights.

Two years later he marries " a mother's child," some thirty years his junior, named Alice Barnham, the daughter of a London Alderman. His union to a Commoner indicates to James' Counsellors that he has abandoned any possible Tudor Rights or Claims to the Crown.

All this time he is known as the straightest man in the House of Commons by all the Freeholders of England. At James' first Parliament he is returned by two constituencies—always a rare honour. It is a signal tribute to virtue and ability.

At the age of forty-six he sets his foot on the first rung of the ladder. He is made Solicitor General. He rapidly becomes Clerk to the Star Chamber, President of " The Verge," a new Court to deal with offences within twelve miles of the King's residence. At fifty-one he is made Attorney General, and then, successively, Lord Keeper, Lord Chancellor, a Peer of the Realm.

He holds the office of Lord Keeper for three years, and, at the age of sixty years, he is created Viscount St. Alban.

Yet within three months after receiving this honour, England's greatest Chancellor fell—a catastrophe so surprisingly dramatic that its equal can only be found in the terrible tragedies of a Shake-speare.

It is a tangled tale of the time in which deceit, hypocrisy and corruption were rampant at Court—when Public Offices of State were put up for auction to the highest bidder—when the proudest nobles in the land trembled at the nod of a young upstart named Villiers, the Favourite of King James, afterwards created the Duke of Buckingham.

Elizabeth was frugal. James and his Favourite were personally wasteful and extravagant. To secure monies, they exploited certain trades by creating them monopolies, using two men named Mitchell and Mompesson, a brother-in-law to Buckingham, as their agents. They were mercilessly oppressive and filled the jails in London with their victims who had infringed the monopolies.

In those days Officers of the State received their income not from the Crown but from free gifts and unfixed fees of suitors. Lord St. Alban was the head of the Chancery Court. To maintain this vast office, with its army of servants, he only received from the Crown £80 per annum. His income was derived from suitors who were expected to make a gift to the Court after their cases were heard.

The Leader of the House of Commons was Sir Edward Coke. His nature was the very antithesis of Lord St. Alban's in every respect. Throughout his life, Coke had been his bitterest enemy. He was a coarse man, narrow-minded, venomous, mean-souled and utterly unscrupulous. He had an active ally, a paid agent named Churchill, a man whom Lord St. Alban had dismissed because of his frauds on clients using the Chancery Court.

The moment Parliament was called together to vote monies to the Crown, it proceeded to impeach Mitchell and Mompesson for their extortions on behalf of the King and Buckingham. One fled the country. The other was imprisoned in the Tower.

The Commons then proceeded to question the legality of the Monopolies created by the Crown. The King, to evade the difficulty, explained that he thought he had a right inherent so to do because of the advice of his Law Officers—the " Referees "—and that he had been misled by them.

The Chairman of the Law Officers was Lord St. Alban. At the very meeting of the Referees called to deal with this point, he had advised the Crown to forego at least the most hurtful of the imposts. When the vote was taken Lord St. Alban actually voted against their continuance. The majority voted that the King had the inherent right to impose them. As the head of the Council, Lord St. Alban was technically responsible for its decision.

On the explanation of the King—which had the direct effect of shifting the blame on to the shoulders of another, his Minister—the House of Commons at once proceeded to attack the Lord Chancellor, who was thus placed in the false position of defending something technically legal with which he personally disagreed.

Coke, an old Parliamentarian, well knew how to direct the storm in an Assembly of fiery, inexperienced Members, who naturally looked to him for guidance in methods of procedure. His lieutenant was Sir Lionel Cranfield, an equally unscrupulous man who had amassed wealth by sheer roguery. Like Coke and Mompesson, he was related to Buckingham. Like Coke, he despised Francis Bacon's intellectual genius and his moral uprightness. These men were resolute, naturally, to save their benefactor, Buckingham. They were equally determined to find a scapegoat to satisfy the House of Commons in Lord St. Alban.

At their suggestion committees were appointed to deal with the matter of the Crown's legal right to create such monopolies and also to inquire into the abuses of procedure in the Courts of Law.

The moment the Committees are appointed Coke shows his hand. The "suborned Informer," Churchill, who has been promised re-instatement in the Chancery Court if he can only rake up sufficient evidence against the Lord Chancellor, lays a formal complaint that the Chancellor has been guilty of taking bribes and perverting justice in the Chancery Division.

The Committee reports the two alleged cases to the House of Lords who form themselves into a tribunal to collect evidence and also to try the offender. They act as prosecutors and judges. At once an anomalous position is created.

Shocked at the charges which he knows to be untrue, Lord St. Alban's health breaks. He takes to his bed, a sick man. He writes the Peers asking them to suspend judgment until he can call his own witnesses, produce rebutting evidence, instruct Counsel, until he knows the definite charges, is fit to attend to details. He asks for permission to cross-examine and the usual legal privileges attendant on a High Court action. Though ill, he makes active preparation for the defence, knowing that he has clean hands and a pure heart and can riddle the charges.

Unknown to him, the charges accumulate. There are twenty-two in all—expanded to twenty-eight counts.

The King becomes alarmed. The temper of the House of Commons is such that he knows if the Chancellor be acquitted, the House will turn on his Favourite—probably himself, with possibly disastrous consequences. Coward as he is, he seeks the advice of a cleric named Williams, who covets the Chancellor's Office. He and Buckingham urge the King to ask Lord St. Alban to abandon his defence, to plead " Guilty " in general terms, promising him to extend the Kingly prerogative to annul, later, whatever sentence be passed, by a full " Pardon." Their advice is *to command Lord St. Alban as the King*, if necessary, *to submit to his Will and to plead " Guilty."*

The King, full of fears of red ruin and revolution, sees the Lord Chancellor. He begs and implores him to submit lest the Throne be jeopardised. He makes all sorts of specious promises. At last—as King to Servant—he commands him to enter a general plea of " Guilty " to the charges.

The Lord Chancellor submits—

" Oh ! From what Power hast thou this Powerful Might,
With Insufficiency my heart to sway,"

are the words he writes afterwards of this interview. From his point of view, the King, in his Office as King, can do no wrong. He has, therefore, no free personal choice. The King carries his submission of guilt to the House of Lords, where it is announced by the Prince of Wales. The Lords are stunned at the bare news. For many minutes there is a dead silence.

But the Buckingham—Coke—Cranfield gang, armed with fore-knowledge, have laid their plans. Their enemy is helplessly in the trap. Their friends in the Upper House, to humiliate him, demand that he pleads " guilty " to *each particular charge.*

There is no way of escape. He cannot draw back. He receives the details for the first time. He writes " Guilty " and leaves his notes on each case.

" Excusing *their* sins more than *their* sins are,"

is the Sonnet line referring to his comments. They are sufficient to absolve him in the eyes of posterity from such trumped-up charges.

Coke presses that he should be executed and talks of precedents to justify such an act. He is, however, fined, imprisoned, stripped of his Office. Four Lords wait upon him—the same named four (contrary to history, for there were only two Lords) mentioned in the Shakespearian Play who wait on Wolsey—to relieve him of the Great Seal.

Dean Williams gets the Lord Chancellorship. Buckingham's crimes are forgotten until a later period when he is " knifed " to the joy of the nation. Churchill is reinstated in his office at the Chancery Court. Cranfield is given additional honours and wrings Lord St. Alban's home out of him to be passed on to Buckingham.

The triumph of evil is complete.

" Truth for ever on the scaffold, Wrong for ever on the Throne,
Yet that scaffold sways the future ; And behind the dim Unknown,
Standeth God within the Shadow, Keeping watch o'er all His own."

The truth is. . .Lord St. Alban pleaded guilty to technical carelessness only, not to crime ; carelessness on the part of his servants who had bought their freeholds from his predecessor and whom he could not discharge ; carelessness, too, when he was new to the office, his registrars, his secretaries, his clerks.

In the first four terms, so heavy were the arrears of work through his predecessor's illness, that he made no less than 8,798 orders and decrees, freeing more than 35,000 suitors from the law's uncertainties.

Despite every vindictive effort and microscopic research by his enemies, nothing could be alleged against him during the last two years of his administration. The errors only occurred within the first twelve months, during his entry into a new office, when he was toiling at the bench and could not properly supervise his subordinates—a paltry twenty-two cases of technical carelessness ! It is amazing there should be no more.

Not a single gift was given by a suitor that did not pass in the ordinary way through the Court by Clerk or Registrar. Not one gift is proved to have perverted justice.

Hepworth Dixon sums up the position after exhaustively going into each item in these words :—

> " Thus after the most rigorous scrutiny into his official acts, and the official acts of his servants, not a single fee or remembrance can by any fair construction be called a bribe : not one was given on a promise : not one in secret : not one is alleged to have corrupted justice."

After his Fall, his enemies were in power. Dissatisfied suitors were encouraged to obtain reversal of his judgments. The fact emerges that though there were many attempts to set aside his verdicts, not one was reversed. They stand sound in law and sound in fact. That in itself is sufficient to acquit Francis Bacon from the common verdict passed by elementary history text-books.

A ruined man socially and politically, " poor and penniless " financially, he turns to his literary work—his dream children. Within five years, he turns out work after work of prose philosophy and numerous secret volumes. He compiles the Shake-speare Folio. He completes his personal poems—"Shake-speare's Sonnets"—and issues them privately to his "Sons" ("Ad Filios"). He lives long enough to see Coke a disgraced man—a virtual prisoner in his own home; Cranfield in the Tower for swindling the State; Churchill again under sentence for fraudulent tricks; Dean Williams stripped of the Great Seal he coveted. His enemies fall like rotten apples.

One of his servants, Bushell, before he died—years after these events—leaves this written confession:—

> "I most ingenuously confess that myself and others of his servants were the occasion of exhaling his virtues into a dark eclipse which grieves my very soul that so matchless a Peer should be lost by such insinuating caterpillars, who in his own nature scorn'd the least thought of any base, unworthy or ignoble act."

Against all Francis Bacon's traducers I simply set one witness—a man who knew him—a man who wrote when the shadows of the grave were closing upon him—a man who wrote these words deliberately: HONEST BEN JONSON, the Editor of the Shake-speare Folio:—

> "He hath filled up *all numbers* and performed that in our tongue which may be compared or preferred to insolent Greece or haughty Rome. He stands as the mark and acme of our language. . . . In his adversity I ever prayed that God would give him strength, for greatness he could not want: Neither could I condole in word or syllable for him as knowing no accident could do harm to *virtue* but rather help to make it manifest."

Note the significance of these words. Ben Jonson does not say Lord St. Alban possessed virtues, but that *he was VIRTUE*—the living embodiment of VIRTUE.

Such contemporary testimony is more valuable than all the mendacious calumnies of men who slander greatness three hundred years afterwards, men who write venially not knowing all the facts, men of mediocre judgment and less ability, or men whose only distinction is the cheap notoriety of publicists whose mark has always been the fair, the pure, the virtuous.

> " I was the justest judge," he writes, " that was in England these last fifty years. When the book of all hearts is opened, I trust I shall not be found to have the troubled fountain of a corrupt heart. I know I have clean hands and a clean heart. I am as innocent of bribes as any born on St. Innocents' Day."

He leaves this significant note of his interview with the King :—

> " The law of nature teaches me to speak in my own defence. If, however, it is absolutely necessary, the King's Will shall be obeyed. I am ready to make an *OBLATION* of myself to the King in whose hands I am as clay tobe made a vessel of honour or dishonour."

The reader can hear in this passage the echo in the Canopy Sonnet, 136 (CXXV),

" And take thou my *Oblation*, poor but free...
Which is not mixed with seconds...
But mutual render, *only me for thee...*"

In Ben Jonson's eulogy—found in his note-book after his decease—he specifically declares that *Francis Bacon is HE that hath filled up all NUMBERS.* This directly meant versification in Elizabethan days, sonnet, madrigal, blank verse, even cypher numbers. He uses exactly the same phrase that he applied to " Shake-speare " when he edited the Great Folio of Plays. He is simply telling posterity—in his note-book significantly entitled " Discoveries "—by his privately written record, that Francis Bacon is " Shake-speare."

The Latin eulogies published after his death prove conclusively that many scholars of the period regarded him as the greatest poet of all time. They prove that when he wrote to his friend Davies admitting that he was a " concealed poet," it was well known among the disciples of the Rosicrosse and Masonry that he was not only a Poet but regarded as a martyr for his King and connected with the Tudor Rose.

One writer calls him " Thou good martyr, no sad fate hath ever been sadder when thou fellest beneath the dire cloak of another." The Rector of King's College says : " He wrote stories of Love more refined which still do interpret Great Bacon's Muse with a vigour choicer by far than the Nine Muses fabled in story."

" To his magical fingers rang out the lyre strings ; learning, too, thrilled at his touch. Oh, thou barren Tribunal (the House of Lords) that robbed the Famed of its Greatness," is the testimony of one writer. Another declares : " None who survive him can marry so sweetly Themis the Goddess of Law to Pallas the Goddess of Wisdom. . . Mourn, then, ye Muses."

R.C. of Trinity College writes : " Thou wert born of Minerva ! Muses, now pour forth your waters in loud lamentations perennial ! Thou the nerve centre of genius and the jewel most precious of letters concealed."

Robert Ashley of the Middle Temple says : " Part of thy works truly lie buried." Another writer has a reference to the Rose of Tudor : " In thy page Noble Bacon unite thy *Two Roses*."

He is variously called the " Master of Fable," " the Noble Day Star of the Muses," " the Tenth Muse," " the Learned Apollo," the " Leader of the Great Band of Muses," and " Phoebus' own Chorister."

One writes : " Thou madest the Muses Immortal." " Bacon the King of the Muses," declares Thomas Randolph of Trinity College.

A very enigmatical utterance is one by Henry Oakly : " He is gone. The word suffices for our grief : *That he is dead we say not*."

These Latin eulogies are very voluminous and are packed with classical allusions. To the eternal discredit of orthodox Scholarship and popular Biographers of the Macaulay-Church School, they are suppressed and the ordinary student of the Elizabethan Era is totally unaware of their existence. They reveal an unexpected angle of vision into Francis Bacon's Life, Character and Literary

Work. They testify that his contemporaries knew that he was a *Great Poet*, the *Victim* of a despicable plot.

Harold Bayley, in "The Shake-speare Symphony," says :—

> "The impression created by these Eulogies and other contemporary allusions to Francis Bacon is that the writers were possessed of some momentous secret which they were eager to impart, but were vowed not to reveal."

Mr. Bayley's judgment is profoundly accurate. He wrote wiser than he knew. The writers were simply loyal to Francis Bacon's last request in "Shake-speare's Sonnets." They were pledged by enfolded messages on the penal sign of the Third Degree in Masonry not to reveal his Birth, Life and Death Secrets until "some time be past. . ." until his Secrets could safely be made known to another generation without detriment to other individuals or to the State.

Yet, as I have said, Francis Bacon never wrote any poetry *openly* save one or two translations of the Psalms. Beyond ten short Essays, he never wrote anything over his own name until he was forty years of age—"The Advancement of Learning," the first great work of English prose to be written in the language apart from Hooker's "Ecclesiastical Polity."

Is it reasonable to suppose that this great genius never created a single work for publication until late in middle life ? Can we credit that these Latin Scholars did not know what they were talking about when they associate him so pointedly with the Muse of Poetry ? Did not Ben Jonson, the poet Laureate, know the precise meaning of the word "NUMBERS" when he applied it with such deadly significance to the literary work of Sir Francis Bacon ? Who are most likely to know the truth of the Elizabethan Era : Scholarly witnesses, cognisant of his literary and personal secrets, Masons and Rosicrucians, or modern textual critics (!) of the "uninstructed world" ?

There is only one possible answer to such a question.

Yet men like Sir Sidney Lee, Prof. Nicholl, Dean Church and J. M. Robertson, say that Francis Bacon was not a poet, when his very prose bubbles over with the poetic spirit. It makes ordinary common-sense stand aghast at such utter foolishness !

Such modernists wrap Truth with the dark clouds of Error ; facts are distorted and made to fit ; and they trade on our lack of knowledge—largely, I fear, for personal, social and financial reasons—regarding the Tudor and Stuart era. Instead of enlightening the public on vitally essential circumstances, these are either shelved, ignored or misshapen. And it is left largely to amateurs to sift the false from the true.

No pen can adequately portray the pathos of the closing years of Francis Bacon's life. Think of the struggles of the old man—weary, worn, sad, ruined. His income stopped, his creditors pressing him—conscious that he stands before the bar of posterity as a convicted criminal. Does he whimper or whine ? Neither ! He bends all his energies for a final spurt. He has lost much with time that he would fain recover ages hence. Under the greatest difficulties he pours out work after work—works of Philosophy openly, the Great Shakespearian Folio secretly. He will not allow the reputation of " Shakespeare " to be tarnished by his personal disgrace.

Then he publishes his little book of personal Sonnets—the key to the greatest literary problem of all time. It is " onlie sold to Brothers." He knows that some day the Revelation of his Personality will be made manifest.

They are published on the cheapest (fort vilain papier) paper. He is at his last gasp... But Francis Bacon is Francis Bacon still...

Listen to the old man...in the sere and yellow leaf, smothered beneath the rotten smoke of base, contagious clouds, playing the closing notes on the Great Organ of Life...music beyond the music of viols sobbing to a close adown the corridors of Time.

" This time of year thou mayst in me behold
When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang
Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,
Bare ruin'd choirs where late the sweet birds sang. . ."

Can you read these lines unmoved ? Does not the lump come into the throat—the tear into the eye—all unbidden ?

And unless we are greatly mistaken, this broken genius, our Francis, our Shake-speare, was entitled to wear the English Crown.

There are four contradictory accounts of his death. There is no account of his funeral. Whether he really died on Easter Sunday, 1626, or whether he simply died to the world which had used him so ill, going into secret exile like an Eremite, we do not know.

Ring down the curtain ! In the theatre of a man's life, only God and the angels are the privileged spectators.

Let me commend to you that wonderfully symbolic poem which Lee and Robertson do not understand—the last poem that Shake-speare wrote, in a volume published by the Rosicrosse Society entitled " Love's Martyr," which simply means the Poet's Martyr. The leading writers of the age contributed to this book of poems. The poem contributed by Shake-speare was entitled " The Phœnix and the Turtle." It typifies the self-immolation, death and *resurrection of a Poet.* It contains the prophetic suggestion that after the black crow of slander has gone among the generations of men for three hundred years the Poet will rise once more revealing his personality to his countrymen. The same suggestion is to be found in Francis Bacon's Will. . ." my *NAME* to mine own countrymen after some time be past."

In ancient mythology the crow was regarded as the symbol of longevity, its age being reckoned at three hundred years according to Pliny. Listen :

" And thou treble-dated Crow,
That thy sable gender mak'st,
With the breath thou giv'st and tak'st,
'Mongst *[*]our* mourners shalt thou go."

In those four lines can be seen with imaginative eye the generations of men and women who play their little parts on the stage of life ; the breath of birth ; the stillness of death...vulgar scandal circling round the Poet's name for three hundred years...

The poem, which is the quintessence of Platonic philosophy, tells of two birds who sacrifice themselves voluntarily that a nobler creation may arise from their ashes ultimately.

The Phœnix represents the creative, poetic impulse ; the Turtle, the physical form of the exterior, mental man. The two are ONE.

" Hearts remote, yet not asunder...
Either was the other's mine...
And between them LOVE did shine...
Reason in itself confounded,
Saw *division* grow together
Till it cried, ' How true a twain
Seemeth this concordant ONE.' "

There you get the outer meaning of the poem... Francis Bacon the creative artist and Francis Bacon the man of the world. Behind that aspect is the deep Platonic significance of Shadow and Reality.

The ashes of the twain—in the poem-story—are placed in a Funeral Urn... And the *Urn is a symbol for something else*...

What is the Urn ?

The Sonnets of Shake-speare.

They contain the ashes of a dead reputation...of a dead personality. They have lain hidden for three hundred years.

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[*] " Our Mourners " = the Rosicrosse and Masonic Brotherhoods.