

Library of English Classics

BACON



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The Essays
Colours of Good and Evil.
&
Advancement of Learning.

Of Francis Bacon

London
Macmillan and Co. Limited
New York: The Macmillan Company
1900

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BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

IN the absence of any law of copyright, literary pirates were active in the days of Elizabeth, lying in wait to secure for the printer manuscripts which were circulating among the authors' friends. Perhaps because about this time publishers were beginning to pay small sums for literary work, writers of any rank felt, or affected, some reluctance to appear in print, and to be printed against their will, and printed, moreover, from some imperfect transcript of a friend's copy, was a danger ever before their eyes. Its existence supplied them with a reason or excuse for publication which has now ceased to exist, and Bacon was one of those who availed himself of it. 'I do now,' he writes in the dedication to his brother Antony, 'like some that have an orchard ill neighboured, that gather their fruit before it is ripe, to prevent stealing. These fragments of my conceits were going to print: to labour the stay of them had been troublesome, and subject to interpretation; to let them pass had been to adventure the wrong they mought receive by untrue copies . . . therefore I held it best discretion to publish them myself, as they passed long ago from my pen, without any further disgrace than the weakness of the author.' Despite the metaphor of unripe fruit, the *Essays*, we note from this last sentence, had been written some time before, and it was rather their