

THE  
FAMOUS HISTORY  
OF THE LEARNED  
FRIAR BACON.



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HISTORY  
OF  
FRIAR BACON.

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CHAP. I.

*Friar Bacon's Parentage and Birth; and by what Means he became so great a Scholar. How the King sent for him from Oxford to shew him his Art; and in what strange Manner he pleased his five Senses: and the comical Pranks he played with a Courtier sent to fetch him.*

THE famous Friar Bacon, whose name has spread through the whole world, was born in Lancashire; his father's name was Ralph Bacon, and his name was Roger. From his infancy he was observed to have profound judgment, and a pregnant wit; and as he grew up he was a great reader of books, and very desirous of learning; which he took so fast, that in a few years his school-  
master

master could teach him no farther; and being about to send him home with commendations to his father, young Bacon, fearing the worst, he besought his schoolmaster to prevail with his father, if possible, that he might be sent to the University, where he had a great desire to learn the liberal arts and sciences.

His schoolmaster did not deny his request; and coming home with him, he took the old man aside, and told him, he had taught his son as far as he was able, and that he took it extremely well, and was desirous to improve it at the University; and he was really persuaded he would be but little cost to him, as he would soon become so great a proficient as must advance him to an eminent station.

The old man heard this with some indignation, but hid his anger until the schoolmaster was gone; then taking his son to task, said, How now, sirrah, have I not been at cost enough already, that you are itching to put me to more? Methinks I have given you learning enough to enable you to be constable or churchwarden of the parish, and far outdo those in that office, who can neither read nor write; let that suffice, the rest of your business for the future must be to learn horse language and whistle well; that you may  
dextrously

dexterously drive the plow and cart, and well manage sheep and oxen; for, sirrah, said he, have I any body else to leave my farm to but you? and yet you take upon you forthwith to be a scholar, and consequently a gentleman, for they profess themselves so; you live upon the fruit of other men's labour? Marry, go ye up Goodman-Two-Shoes, your Great Grandfather, Grandfather, and I, have thought it no scorn to dig and drive; and



pray what are you better than us?—Here, sirrah, take this whip and go to plow, or I shall so lace your fine scholarship that you had better this had never been mentioned to me.

Young

Young Bacon was much displeas'd and highly griev'd, but durst not reply, seeing his father in a passion.—This sort of living so very little agreed with his genius that in a short time he gave them the slip, and going to a monastery, and making his desires known to the superior, he kindly entertained him, and made him a brother of the society of Augustine Friars. There he profited so much, that in a short time he was sent to Oxford, where he soon grew so great a proficient, that his fame spread not only in the University, but all over England, and reached the King's ears, who, taking progress with his Queen and Nobles, was desirous to see him.—Being at a Nobleman's house about four miles from the city, he sent a gentleman of the bedchamber to desire Bacon to come to him. The courtier delay'd not his message, and finding Bacon at his study, did his errand. The Friar bid him make haste back, or he would be with his master before him.—At this he smiled, being well mounted, saying, Scholars and travellers may lie with authority.—Well, said Friar Bacon, to convince you, I will not only be there before you but shew you the cook-maid you lay with last. Well, said the gentleman, I suppose one is as true as the other. Away he rode thinking to be at the King's quarters in a short space, but a great mist arose so that he knew not which way to ride, and missing the road,  
 turned

turned down a bye lane, and rode over hedge and ditch, backwards and forwards till the charm was dissolved.

When the Friar came into the King's presence, he made his obeisance, and was kindly received by him. Then the King said, Worthy Bacon, having heard much of your fame, the cause of my sending was to be a spectator of the fine curiosities of your art. The Friar excused himself at first, but the King pressing it, and promising on his word that no harm would come to him, he bid every one keep silence, and then waving his magic wand, there presently ensued the most melodious music they had ever heard, which continued very ravishing half an hour. Then waving his wand, another kind of music was heard; and as they played a table was placed by an invisible hand, and richly covered with all the dainties that could be thought on. Then he bid the King and Queen draw near to partake of the provision, and thereupon the place was perfumed with all the sweets of Arabia. Then waving his wand again, came in Russians, Persians, and Polanders, clad with the finest furs and richest silks in the universe; which he bid them feel; and then the strangers all dancing after their fashion, vanished.

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In this Friar Bacon pleased their five senses; so that the King offered him money, but he refused, saying, he must not take it. However, the King gave him a jewel of great value, desiring him to keep it as a mark of his favour.—During this, the gentleman of the bedchamber came in puffing and blowing, all bemired and dirty, his face and hands scratched with bushes and briars.—The King asked him, Why he staid so long, and why he came in that condition?—Oh! the plague, said he, take Friar Bacon, and all his Devils, they have led me a dance to the endangering my neck; but the dog is here, I'll be revenged on him. Then he laid his hand upon his sword; but Bacon waving his wand, fixed it in the scabbard, that he could not draw it, saying, I fear not thy anger, thou hadst best be quiet, lest a worse thing befall thee. Then he told the King how he had given him the lie, when he told him he would be there before him. While he was thus speaking, in came the cook-maid, brought by a sprite to the window, with a spit and a roasted shoulder of mutton on it, being thus surprised as she was taking it up.—So wishfully looking about her, and seeing the gentleman, cried, Oh! my dear sweet Knight, are you here? Pray remember your promised linen and other necessaries for me; our pleasure has swelled, and I have but two months to reckon, so running towards him,

he



he turning aside, she was carried out of another window to her master's house.—This caused amazement and laughter, though the courtier was much ashamed and confounded to be thus exposed, still muttering the greatest revenge. But Friar Bacon told him, the best way was to put up with all, as he had verified both promises, and told him to have a care how he gave a scholar the lie for the future.

The King and Queen highly pleased at the entertainment, greatly commended his art; and then promised him their protection, took leave of him, returning to London, and he to Brazen-Nose college.



## CHAP. II.

*Friar Bacon puts a comical Trick on his Man Miles, who pretended Abstinence on Fast Days, concealing Victuals in his Pocket: he saves a Gentleman who had given himself to the Devil for a Sum of Money, and so put a Trick on the old Deceiver of Mankind.*

FRIAR BACON kept a man to wait upon him, who, though a simple, was a merry fellow: his name was Miles, and though his master and those of the order often fasted on set days, Miles loved his belly too well, and though outwardly he seemed to fast for compliance, he always kept a private reserve in the corner: which Bacon knew by his art, and resolved to put a trick upon him. It so happened on Good Friday a fast was held, and Miles seemed very devout; for when his master bid him take a bit of bread and a cup of wine, to keep him from fainting, he refused it, saying, He was a great sinner, and ought to do more than this, for his mortification, and to gain absolution, making a great show of sanctity, and how he was inclined to keep the fast. It will be well, said the Friar, I don't catch you tripping. Hereupon Miles went into his cell, pretending to pray, but indeed to eat a fine pudding  
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he had concealed. But he had no sooner put the end of it to his mouth, but it stuck there, he could neither eat it or get it out. The use of both his hands failed, and he was taken with a shivering all over; so that thinking he should die presently, he cried out for help; whereon Friar Bacon calling all his scholars together, he went to see what was the matter, and perceiving him in this condition, said, Now I see what a penitent servant I have got, who pretended to be so very conscientious he would not touch a bit of bread, yet privately would he have devoured two pounds of pudding to his breakfast.—He entreated him to dissolve the charm and deliver him, and he would never do so again. No, said the Friar, you shall do penance for this. So taking hold of the end of the pudding he led him out to the scholars, saying, Here is a queasy-stomached fellow, that would not touch a bit of bread. When they saw him in this plight, they laughed heartily; but Friar Bacon not contented, led him to the college gate, and fixing the end of the pudding to the bar, he left him there, with the following lines on his back:

This Friar Bacon's man, who vow'd to fast,  
 But in dissembling thus was caught at last.  
 The pudding more religion had than he,  
 Though he would eat, it would not down you see.  
 Then of hypocrisy pray all beware,  
 Lest like disgrace be each dissembler's share.

Miles was basely jeered and sported by both scholars and town's-people: but after four hours penance his master released him; and he ever kept the fast, not so much out of religion as fear, lest a worse trick should be put upon him.

While Friar Bacon flourished at Oxford, a young gentleman, by his prodigality, had run out his estate, and was much in debt; he grew exceeding pensive and melancholy, proposing to make an end of his miseries, and the scorns that were put on him by his former companions; so walking in the grove full of sorrow, he met an old man in good cloathing who saluted him, demanding the cause of his melancholy. At first he refused to tell him; but he urging it, and promising to assist him, if he wanted any thing; he said, I am in want; I want money to buy food, pay debts, and many things more; can you help me to enough to do it? I can, said the old man, on one condition. What is that? said the gentleman: if it be any thing tolerable I shall not refuse it; for I cannot be well worse than I am.— Why, said the other, the matter is not much; you shall only oblige yourself, when I have furnished you with money to do all you named, and when you have paid your creditors, to become obedient to me. Now the young man taking him for a usurer,  
and

and very rich, supposed this fetch was only a device to marry his daughter, or some kinswoman of his, consented. Upon this he bid him come next morning, where he would have the writings ready, and on signing he should have the money.—So they parted, and the gentleman delayed not coming, without asking advice, and was as punctually met, but when he saw the writing was in blood, he began to start; but the old man told him it was only a whim of his own to have it so, to distinguish it from other men's, and put his debtors more in mind to repay the money he had lent them. Upon this and the gentleman seeing store of gold, he believed him.—But, said he, shall I write with the same?—Oh, said the other, I'll prick your right vein; and so he did, whilst the gentleman found an unusual trembling and inward remorse in his mind: however, taking the bloody pen in his hand, he subscribed.

Then, telling all the money into the bag, he took his leave, and departed: but he laughed to think how he would find him out, since he had never asked him where he lived.

Soon after he summoned his creditors, paid them to a farthing, and recovered his esteem again. But as he was looking over  
the

the writings in his closet one evening, he heard somebody rap at the door, when opening it, he saw the party whom he had borrowed the money of holding the writing in his hand, telling him he was now come to demand him, and he must go with him; for to his knowledge he had paid his debts, and done what was agreed to.

The gentleman, wondering how he should know this so soon, denied it. Nay, replied he, deny it not; and thereupon, changing into a horrible shape, struck him almost dead with fear; for he then knew it was the Devil.—Then he said, if he did not meet him on the morrow with the money, he would come the next day and tear him to pieces. And said, if I do not prove what I say, you shall be at quiet; and so vanished in a flame of fire.

The gentleman seeing himself in this case, began to weep bitterly, and wished he had rather been contented in his sad condition, than to have taken such a desperate way to enrich himself, and was just at his wit's end.

Friar Bacon, knowing by his art what had passed came to comfort him; and, having heard the story, bid him not despair, but repent of his sins, and he would con-  
trive

trive a way to relieve him from his obligation. He said, Meet him at the time set, and I will be near: offer to put the decision of the matter to the next that comes by, which shall be myself; and I will find an infallible way to give it on your side.— Accordingly they met, and the Devil consented to put it to arbitration; then Friar Bacon appeared.

Lo! said the gentleman, here is a proper judge, this pious father shall determine it, and if it goes against me, you shall have liberty to do as you please. Content, said the Devil.

Both of them told their story, and the writings were produced, with the acquittances he had taken; for the Devil, contrary to his knowledge, had stolen them and the other writings belonging to the state.

The Friar well weighing the matter, asked the gentleman, whether he had paid the Devil any of the money he had borrowed of him? No, said he, not a farthing. Well, then, said he, Mr. Devil, his debts are not paid: you are the principal creditor; and according to the writing, you can lay no claim to him till his debts are discharged. How, now, replied the Devil, am I out-witted then? O, Friar, thou art a crafty knave.

knave. Hereupon he vanished in flames, raising a mighty tempest of rain, thunder and lightning; so they were wet to the skin before they got shelter. Then the Friar charged him never to pay the Devil a farthing, whatever shape or artifice he made use of, so he should not have any power over him.

The gentleman upon this, living a temperate frugal life, grew very rich, and leaving no issue behind him, bequeathed his estate to Brazen - Nose College, because Friar Bacon, a member of it, had delivered him from so great and imminent danger.







## CHAP. III.

*Friar Bacon frames a Brazen Head*

FRIAR BACON being now a profound proficient in the Art of Magic, and many other sciences, contrived with one Friar Bungey, who was his pupil, to do something memorable for the good of their country; and many things they cast in mind. At last they remembered that England had often been harassed and invaded by the Romans and other nations, at several times, to the great effusion of blood; and should any thing be contrived to prevent this they should raise a lasting monument to their immortal names.

Bacon upon this concluded to frame a Head of Brass, and if by their art they could make it speak, and answer their demands, they would require that all the sea-girt shores of England and Wales be walled with brass, and brazen towers raised on the frontiers of Scotland to hinder the incursions of the hardy Scots.

They

They laboured to do this by art, but could not; wherefore they conjured up a sprite, to inquire of the infernal council, whether it might be done or not? The sprite, however, was unwilling to answer, if Bacon had not threatened by his charms to bind him in the Red Sea, and make him the sport of wrecking whirlwinds.

Terrified by this menace, he answered, That he could not tell him positively, but must inquire of Lord Lucifer; hereupon they granted him two days for an answer, and accordingly he returned the following: If they would watch carefully for two months it should speak in that time; but the certain time should not be known to them; and then if they heard it, and made their demands, what they desired should be answered.

At this they much rejoiced, and then watched by turns very carefully for six weeks, when no voice was uttered. Being at length quite tired out, and broken for want of their natural rest, they concluded that some other might watch as well as them, while they refreshed themselves with repose; and call them when the head began to speak, which would be time enough; and this was a secret, they did not care to have  
it

it known, till they saw what they could make of it.

Bacon proposed his man Miles, and Bungey approved him, so he was called, and told the nature of the head, and what was intended by it, giving him a strict charge, as soon as ever he heard it speak to awake them.

For that, said he, master, let me alone, I warrant you I shall do your business for you effectually, never fear it. So he got a long sword to guard himself, and also a tabor and pipe, to play and keep himself awake, if any drowsiness should overtake him.

The charge being given him, and he thus accoutred, the Friars went to rest in the next room within call. Miles upon this began to pipe and sing merrily.

While this merriment passed, after a sad noise, like thunder almost spent, the head spoke distinctly these two words—**TIME IS.**—O, O! said Miles, is this all the news you can tell me? Well, Copper Nose, has my master taken all this pains about you, and you can speak no wiser? Dost think I am such a fool to break his sweet slumber  
for

for this? No, speak wiser, or he shall sleep on. Time is, quotha! Why I know time is, and that you shall hear, Goodman Kettle,

*Time is for some to gain,  
Time is for some to lose,  
Time is for some to hang,  
But then they do not chuse.*

Hear you this, Goodman Copper Nose, we scholars know what Time is without thy babbling; we know when Time is to drink good sack, eat well, kiss our hostess, and run on the score; but the time to pay them indeed is but seldom.

While he continued thus merrily discoursing, a noise began like the former, and the head said, TIME WAS.—Well, said Miles, this blockish head is the greatest piece of nonsense my master ever troubled himself about. How would he have laughed had he been here to hear it thus prattle so simply! Therefore, thou brazen-faced ass, speak wiser, or I shall not trouble my head to wake him. Time was, quotha! Thou, ass, thou—and so you shall hear; for I find my master has watched and tutored you to fine purpose—

*Time was when thou a kettle  
Wast wont to hold good matter,  
But Bacon did thee spoil  
When he thy sides did batter.*

Aye,

Aye, aye, and Time was for many other things; but what of that good Mr. Brazen-face? I see my master has placed me here on a foolish account. I think I had as good go to sleep too, as stay watching here to no purpose.

While he thus scoffed and taunted, the head spoke a third time, and said, **TIME IS PAST**; and then with a horrible noise fell down and broke in pieces. On this ensued lamentable cries, lightning, flashes of fire, and rattling of thunder, which awakened the two Friars; in they came in great disorder, found Miles rolling on the floor in a stinking condition, almost dead with fear, and the head lying scattered in a thousand pieces about the room. Having brought him to his senses, they demanded how this came. Nay, said Miles, the Devil knows better than I, for when it fell it gave a bounce like a great cannon.—O, wretch, said Bacon, trifle not with my patience: did you hear it speak, varlet! answer to that—Why, truly, said Miles, it did speak, but it was very simply, considering how long you had been tutoring it; for I could have taught a jack-daw to have spoke better in two days; for it only said **TIME IS**.—O villain! said Bacon hadst thou called me then, all England had been walled with brass, to my immortal

tal fame.—Then, continued Miles, about half an hour after it said, **TIME WAS**.—O, wretch! cried Bacon, my anger burns against thee; hadst thou but called me then it might have done what I desired.—Then, said Miles, it said, **TIME IS PAST**, and so fell down with that horrible noise which has now awakened you, and made me, I am sure, befoul myself: and since here is so much to do about Time, I think it is time for me to retire and clean myself.—Well, villain, said Bacon, thou hast lost all our cost and pains by thy foolish negligence.—Why, said Miles, I thought it would not have stopped, but that when it began it would have gone on and told me some pretty story, or commanded me to have called you, and I would have done it; but see the Devil is a cunning sophister; for all hell could not furnish brass and tinkers enough to do the work, and therefore he has put this trick upon you, to get off from his promise.—How, said Bacon, do you play the buffoon now you have done me this great injury? Sirrah, because you think that the head spoke not enough to induce you to call us, you shall speak less for two months space; and so he struck him dumb till the end of that time, and would have punished him worse, had not Bungey taken compassion on the fellow's simplicity and persuaded him from it.

And

And thus ends the history of that famous Friar Bacon, who would have done a deed to make his fame ring in all ages to come, had it not been for the simplicity of his man Miles.

THE END.



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