

But we lawyers remember another scene in which Coke appeared to more advantage—a moment when he nobly cast to the winds the honors and emoluments of office, and all the benefits to be derived from royal favor, at a time when royal favor and royal resentment were well-nigh omnipotent. When James I., called in those days the “Solomon of the North,” having resolved to finish the work of subjecting the English people to slavery, so nearly accomplished by the Tudors, and having the twelve judges on their knees before him, asked them whether in the future they would not refuse to decide anything adverse to the royal prerogative, upon which eleven of them answered in a chorus “Yes;” in that critical juncture Sir Edward Coke, forgetting to chop Latin, and talking as good Anglo-Saxon as ever yet man spoke, answered with sublime simplicity, and in words that are immortal: “When the case happens I shall do that which shall be fit for a judge to do.” We remember too, how, when obsequious deference to kingly power was almost universally prevalent, after years of striving against adverse circumstances, he at last got through the Parliament that “Petition of Rights” which finally stayed the exactions of the Stuarts, and placed English liberty upon an imperishable foundation. Remembering these things, remembering also that Coke’s is still the greatest name in the history of our jurisprudence, that he has been quoted a hundred times where any other judge or law writer has been quoted once, recalling also the fine expiatory discipline of Lady Hatton,—we are disposed to forgive him all his sins.

Coke, who had resolved to know nothing but the law, and the common law at that, and Bacon, who had taken all knowledge for his province, seemed to have been born to be enemies. Coke often scoffed at the wide and miscellaneous learning of Bacon, who in his turn was exasperated by the narrowness and bigotry of Coke. It was not difficult to make an enemy of Coke; but Bacon was an agreeable person, learned, witty, wise, an entertaining and instructive companion, a forcible and persuasive speaker, by temperament bland, affable, charitable, liberal and conciliatory. Excepting Coke it would seem that he never hated anybody; but the gratuitous insults and contumely publicly and repeatedly bestowed on him by Coke finally stirred up in him a sentiment of hatred that was foreign to his tolerant nature, a feeling of hostility that afterwards never slept. They were