

storehouse, and, which his rivals must confess, though their spleen should burst by reason of it, the head of our jurisprudence." Camden declared that "he had highly obliged both his own age and posterity;" and Fuller prophesied that he would be admired "while Fame has a trumpet left her, and any breath to blow therein."

Modern writers have treated him harshly. For example, Hallam, after saying truly that he was "proud and overbearing," describes him as "a flatterer and tool of the Court till he had obtained his ends." But he does not seem at all to have mixed in politics till, at the request of Burleigh, he consented to become a law officer of the Crown; and although, in that capacity, he unduly stretched the prerogative, he at no time betrayed any symptom of sycophancy or subserviency. From the moment when he was placed on the bench, his public conduct was irreproachable. Our Constitutional Historian is subsequently obliged to confess that "he became the strenuous asserter of liberty on the principles of those ancient laws which no one was admitted to know so well as himself; redeeming, in an intrepid and patriotic old age, the faults which we cannot avoid perceiving in his earlier life." In estimating the merit of his independent career, which led to his fall and to his exclusion from office for the rest of his days, we are apt not sufficiently to recollect the situation of a "disgraced courtier" in the reign of James I. Nowadays, a political leader often enhances his consequence by going into opposition, and sometimes enjoys more than ever the personal favor of the Sovereign. But, in the beginning of the 17th century, any one who had held high office, if forbidden "to come within the verge of the Court"—whether under a judicial sentence or not,—was supposed to have a stain affixed to his character, and he and those connected with him were shunned by all who had any hope of rising in the world.

Most men, I am afraid, would rather have been Bacon than Coke. The superior rank of the office of Chancellor, and the titles of Baron and Viscount, would now go for little in the comparison; but the intellectual and

¹ Rel. Spelm. p. 150.

² Britannia, Iceni, p. 351.

³ Worthies, Norfolk, p. 251.

⁴ Const. Hist. i. 455.

⁵ *Ib.* 476.