

the Star Chamber. In a suit with Sir Edward Fisher he had expended his whole fortune, and, at last, Bacon's predecessor gave judgment in his favour. But no sooner was Bacon himself in the Chancellor's shoes than, without assigning any reason, he reversed the order of the court, and left the unhappy suitor just where he had stood at the beginning of the suit, only that now he was a beggared man. Wraynham appealed to the king for justice, and in his appeal used the language of truth and of desperation. Instead of finding redress, he found himself in prison first, and before the Star Chamber afterwards.

In piteous language he told the story of his suit. He had seen his land taken from him by his rich antagonist; six-and-forty orders and twelve reports had been made in the course of the proceedings, and after motions, hearings, and re-hearings, fourscore in number, and an expenditure of something like £3,000, his costly victory had been cancelled with a stroke of the Chancellor's pen. "And with this," he added, "did accompany many eminent miseries likely to ensue upon myself, my wife, and four children, so that we that did every day give bread to others must now beg bread of others, or else starve."

Then uprose a learned serjeant, Crew by name, who eloquently discoursed upon the Chancellor's virtues and incorruptibility, "For," said Serjeant Crew, "thanks be to God, he (the Chancellor) hath always despised riches, and set honour and justice before his eyes." The judges assented effusively to this view, and, as Wraynham had not been fined enough already, they fined him heavily again. Of course, he could not pay; so he went to gaol.

It was just two years after this vindication of justice and morality that Bacon gave into Parliament, under his own hand, a list of the bribes he had received while holding the seals and keeping the king's conscience. And in that list was entered a bribe received from this very Sir Edward Fisher, Wraynham's opponent in the suit referred to!

One must have a very grim sense of humour, or a sense of very grim humour, to joke in a charnel-house, and for pretty much the same reasons jokes of the lighter sort have never flourished in Chancery. Still, now and again, even in the comparatively "old days," the sounds of merriment was heard in the presence of the Chancellor himself. There was, for example, the famous case about the Patent Hair Brushes, in which Lord Eldon