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THE AGE OF BACON.*

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AS we cast our eye back over the vista of the past, there are some events which loom up more conspicuously than others, events which have left a powerful impress not only on the age in which they transpired, but transmitted their influence down to succeeding generations. Like some peaks in certain mountain ranges, which overtop and surpass all others in grandeur and height, so do these events stand out more prominently than others in the same age, by reason of the powerful and widespread influence which they have exerted. The appearance of Francis Bacon may be regarded as one of the events which I have just described. His name stands associated in history with a system of philosophy which has been productive of inestimable blessing to the world. The grand, dis-

tinctive feature of that philosophy which he inaugurated was the prominence and importance which it gave to experiment and observation, as a means of advancing knowledge and discovering truth. The priceless blessings which have flowed down to us from that event, and the widespread influence which it has exerted, have had the effect of investing it with a great and lasting importance. The Reformation of the sixteenth century, which, like a surging tidal wave, swept over Europe, was an event which all regard as of great value. The glorious liberties which it secured, and the inestimable moral and spiritual blessings which it bequeathed, go to invest it with a transcendent importance and an abiding interest. Now, what the Reformation of the sixteenth century was in the spiritual sphere, the Reformation in the seventeenth was in the intellectual. The great work which Bacon did, the crown-

* Delivered before the Students of Pickering College.