

THE  
FAMOUS HISTORY  
OF THE  
*Learned Friar Bacon.*

GIVING

A particular ACCOUNT of his Birth,  
and Parentage, with the many Wonderful  
Things he did in his Life-time, to the  
amazement of all the World.



GLASGOW,  
PRINTED BY J. AND M. ROBERTSON,  
[NO. 18.] SALTMARKET,  
1807.

THE FAMOUS

## H I S T O R Y

O F T H E

## LEARNED FRIAR BACON.

## C H A P. I.

*Friar Bacon's Birth and Parentage, and by what means he came to be so great a Scholar. How the King sent for him from Oxford, and in what wonderful Manner he pleased the King's five Senses: Also the comical Pranks he play'd with a Courtier sent to fetch him.*

**T**HE famous Friar Bacon (whose name has spread through all the world) was born in Lancashire; his Father's name was Ralph Bacon, and his name Roger. From his infancy he was observed to have a profound pregnant wit; as he grew up, a great reader of books, and desirous of learning, which to admiration he took so fast, that his school-master could teach him no further; and being about to send him home with commendations to his father, he fearing the worst, humbly besought him to pre-

vail, if possible, with his father, that he might be sent to the university, where he had a desire to go to learn the liberal sciences.

His school-master denied him not his request, but went home with him, and taking the old man aside, told him, he had learned his son as far as he was able, that he took it in extremely well, and was willing to improve it at the university; and that he was verily persuaded, by the promptness he perceived in him, if he would be at a little charge with him there, he would be so great a proficient, as would advance him to an eminent station.

The old man heard this with some indignation, but conceal'd his anger till the school-master was gone; and then taking his son to task, said, "How now, firrah! Have I not been at cost enough already, but are you itching to put me to more? Methinks I've given you such learning as to enable you, in time, to be a Constable or Church-warden of the parish, and far out-do those in the office, that can neither read nor write; let that suffice: As for the rest of your business for the future, it is to learn horse-language, and whistle well, that you may be dextrous in driving the plough and cart, and managing the sheep and oxen; or firrah! continued he, Have I any body else to leave my farm to but you, and yet you take upon you, forsooth, to be a schc-

lard, and consequently a gentleman; for they all profess themselves so, though never so beggarly, living lazily, and eating up the fat of other men's labours. Marry-gaup! Goodman Two-shoes, your great-grandfather, your grandfather, and I, have thought it no scorn to dig and delve; and pray what better are you than us? Here, firrah! Take this whip, and go with me to plough, or I'll so lace your fine scholardship, that you had better this had never been mentioned to me.

Young Bacon was much displeas'd, and highly griev'd, but durst not reply, knowing his father to be a very hasty, choleric old man; however, this sort of living so little agreed with his sprightly genius, that in a short time he gave him the slip; and going to a monastery, and making his desires known to the superior, he kindly entertain'd him, and made him a brother of the Augustin friars. There he profited so much, that in a few years he was sent to Oxford to study at their charge; where he soon grew such a proficient, that his fame soon spread, not only in the university, but also over all England, and came to the ears of King Edward the Third, who then reigned. And he taking a progress with his Queen and nobles, was desirous to see him, and have an experiment of his art; so that being at a nobleman's house, within four miles of the city of Oxford, he sent a gentleman



of his bed-chamber, to desire him to come to him. The Knight delayed not the message; and finding him at his study, did his errand. The Friar told him he would be with his Majesty, and bid him make haste, or he should be there before him. At this he smiled, being well mounted, saying, "Scholars and travellers might lye by Authority." Well, said Friar Bacon, to convince you, I will not only be there before you, ride as fast as you can, but I will there shew you the cook-maid you lay with last, tho' she is now busy dressing the dinner at Sir William Bolton's an hundred miles distance from this place. Well, said the gentleman of the bed-chamber, "I doubt not but one will be as true as t'other;" so mounting, rode laughing away, and thinking to be at the King's quarters in a short space, he spurred his horse violently: But suddenly a mist arose, that he knew not which way to go; and missing the way, he 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 did him obeisance, and was kindly welcomed by him. Then said the King, Worthy Bacon, having heard much of your fame, the cause of my sending for you, was to be a spectator of some fine curiosities in your art. The Friar excused at first; but the King pressing it, promised on his royal

word, no harm should come to him, he bid all keep silence, and waving his magic-wand, there presently, to their great amazement ensued the most melodious music they had ever heard, which continued very ravishing for near half an hour. Then waving his wand, another kind of music was heard, and presently dancers in antic shapes, at a masquerade, entered the room; and having danced incomparably well, they vanished. Waving his wand the third time, louder music was heard; and whilst that played, a table was placed by an invisible hand, richly spread with all the dainties that could be thought of: Then he desired the King and Queen to draw their seats near, and partake of the repast he had prepared for their Highnesses; which, after they had done, all vanished. He waved the fourth time, and thereupon the place was perfumed with all the sweets of Arabia, or that the whole world could produce. Then waving the fifth time, there came in Russians, Persians, and Polanders, dressed in the finest soft fur, silks, and downs of rare fowls, that are to be found in the universe, which he bid them feel; and then the strangers having danced after their own country fashion, vanished.

In this sort Friar Bacon pleased their five senses, to their admiration and high satisfaction; so that the King offered him money, but he refused it, saying, He could not take it: However, the King pressed on him a

jewel of great value, commanding him to wear it as a mark of his favour. Whilst this was doing, the gentleman of the bed-chamber came in puffing and blowing, all bemired and dirty, and his face and hands scratched with the bushes and briars. The King at this sight, demanded why he staid so long? and how he came in that condition? O plague, said he, take Friar Bacon, and all his devils! they have led me a fine dance, to the endangering of my neck.—But is the dog here!—I'll be revenged on him!—Then he laid his hand on his sword, but Bacon waving his wand, charmed it in his scabbard, (so he could not draw it out) saying, I fear not your anger; 'tis best for you to be quiet, lest a worse thing befall you: Then he told the King how he gave him the lye, when he told him he would be there before him.

Whilst he was thus speaking, in came the cook-maid, brought by a spirit, at the window, with a spit and a roasted shoulder of mutton on it, being thus surprized, as she was taking it from the fire; and wishfully staring about her, and spying the gentleman, she cry'd, O my sweet knight, are you here! Pray, Sir, remember you promised to provide linen and other necessaries for me; our stolen pleasures have swelled, and I've two months to reckon: And hereupon she ran towards him, to embrace him; but he turning aside, she was carried out

at another window to her master's house a gain.

This was the cause of both amazement and laughter, though the gentleman was much ashamed and confounded to be thus exposed, still muttering revenge; but Friar Bacon told him, his best way was to put up with it all, since he had verified both his promises, and bid him have a care how he gave a scholar the lye again.

The King and Queen well-pleas'd with the entertainment, highly commending his art, and promising him their favour and protection, took their leave of the Friar, returning to London, and he to his studies at Brazen-Nose-College.



## C H A P. II.

*How Friar Bacon put a comical trick upon his man Miles, who pretending abstinence on a fast-day, concealed victuals in his pocket and eat in a corner.*

**F**R I A R Bacon kept a man to wait on him, who, though but a simple fellow yet a merry droll, and full of waggeries; his name was Miles; and tho' his master and those of the order often fasted on set days Miles loved his guts too well to pinch them; and though outwardly he seem'd to fast for compliance, he always kept a private re



erve to eat in a corner, which Bacon knew by art, and resolved to put a trick upon him. It so happened on Good-Friday in Lent, a strict fast was held, and Miles seemed very devout; for when his master bid him, however, take a bit of bread, and a sip of wine, early in the morning to keep him from fainting, he refused it, saying, he was a great Sinner and therefore ought to do more than this for his mortification, and to gain absolution, making a great many pretences of sanctity, and how well he was inclined to keep the holy fast. 'Tis well, said the Friar, if I catch you not tripping; hereupon Miles went to his cell, pretending to pray but indeed to eat a fine pudding he had concealed; which he had no sooner put into his mouth at one end, but it stuck there: He could neither eat it, nor get it out. The use of his hands failed, and he was taken with a shivering all over, so that thinking he should have died presently he cried piteously out for help: whereupon Friar Bacon, calling the scholars together, went in to see what was the matter; and perceiving him in that plight, said smiling, Now I see what a penitent servant I have, who was so conscientious he would not touch a bit of bread, but would willingly have devoured two pounds of pudding to have broke his fast. He piteously entreated him to dissolve the charm, and deliver him, and he would never do so again.

Nay, 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, see, here's a queasy stomached fellow that would not touch a bit of bread to-day! When they saw him in this plight, they all fell heartily a laughing; but Friar Bacon, not so contented, led him to the College-gate, and by enchantment fixed the end of the pudding to the bar, he was made so fast to it as if it had been by a cable-roppe, and on his back were placed these lines.

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

Miles all the while was jeered and sported with by all scholars and town's people, but after some hours penance; his master dissolved the charm, and released him; and he ever after kept the fasts, not so much out of religion, as for fear that a worse trick should be put upon him.

## C H A P. III.

*How Friar Bacon saved a Gentleman who had sold himself to the Devil for money, and put a trick upon the old deceiver of mankind.*

**W**HEN Friar Bacon flourished at Oxford, a young gentleman, by his prodigality, having run out his estate, and involved himself in debt, grew exceeding pensive and melancholy, purposing to make himself away, in order to put an end to his miseries, and the scorns that were daily put upon him by his former companions, being also utterly cast off by his friends; so walking by a wood-side, full of sorrow, he met, as he thought, an old man in good clothing, who saluted him, and demanded the cause of his melancholy, and why he walked so solitary. At first he refused to tell him as thinking he could do him no good; but the other urging it, promised to assist him if he wanted any thing: he said, I am in want. I want fine clothes as I used to have; I want money to buy food, pay debts, redeem my mortgaged land, and many things more: can you help me to enough to do it? I can, said the old man, on one condition. What's that? said the gentleman: if it be any thing tolerable I shall not refuse it; for I cannot be well worse, or in greater hardship than I am now. Why, said

the other, the matter is not so much; you shall only oblige yourself, when I have furnished you with money to do all you have named, and you have paid every one you owe a farthing to, to become obedient to me, and be disposed of at my pleasure. Now the young man taking him for an Usurer, and very rich, supposed this obligation was only a fetch to marry his daughter, or some kinswoman of his, which he could be well contented to do, not doubting to have a good portion, and therefore scrupled not to do as he desired. Upon this he bid him meet him the next morning about the same time, when he would have the writing 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 in blood, he was startled a little; but the old man told him, it was only a whim of his own to have it so written to distinguish it from other men's, and put his debtors more in mind to repay the money he lent them. Upon this speech, and the gentleman's seeing a store of gold and silver brought by three or four of whom he supposed to be servants, he believed it. But how, said he, shall I write with the same? O, said he, let me see; I'll prick your right vein; which he did whilst the gentleman found an unusual trembling, and an inward remorse in his



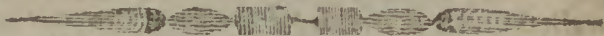
mind: however, taking the bloody pen in his hand he desperately subscribed and sealed the writing. Then telling the money into a cloak-bag, he laid it on his horse, and they, with much ceremony, took leave of each other. The gentleman laughed in his sleeve to think how he would find him out, seeing he had not asked, nor himself told him, where he lived.

Soon after he summoned all his creditors, paid them to a farthing. redeemed his land, went gallant, and recovered his esteem in the world: but one evening as he was looking over his writings in his closet, he heard somebody rap at the door; when opening it, he saw the party he had borrowed the money off, with the writing in his hand, who told him, he was now come to demand him, and he must now go along with him; for, to his knowledge, he had paid his debts and done whatever was agreed to. The gentleman, wondering how he should know this so soon, denied it. Nay, replied he fiercely, deny it not, for I'll not be cheated of my bargain: and thereupon changed into a horrible shape, struck him almost dead with fear; for now he perceived it was the Devil. Then he told him, if he did not meet on the morrow in the same place he had lent him the money, he would come the next day, and tear him to pieces; and, says he, if I prove not what I say, you shall be quiet. And so vanished out of the

window in a flash of flame, with horrible bellowings. The gentleman, seeing himself in this case, began to weep bitterly, and and wished he had been contented in his sad condition, rather than have taken such a desperate way to enrich himself; and was almost at his wits-end.

Friar Bacon, knowing by his art what had past came to comfort him; and having heard the whole story, bid him not despair, but pray, and repent of his sins, and he would contrive to shew the Devil a trick that should release him from his obligation. This greatly comforted the gentleman, and he promised to do whatever the Friar should order him. Then, says he, meet at the time appointed, and I will be near to offer to put the decision of the controversy to the next that comes by, and that shall be myself; and I will find a way infallibly to give it on your side. Accordingly he met, and the Devil consented to put it to arbitration. Then Friar Bacon appearing, Lo, said the gentleman, here's a proper judge: this learned Friar shall determine it: and if it goes against me you have free liberty to do with me as you please. Content, said the Devil. Then each of them told their story, and the writing was produced, with all the acquittances he had taken; for the Devil, contrary to his knowledge, had stolen them and the other writings belonging to his Estate, out of his closet. The Friar, weigh-

ing well the matter, asked the gentleman, whether he had paid the Devil any of the money he borrowed of him. No, replied he, not one farthing. Why then, said he, Mr. Devil, his debts are not discharged; you are his principal creditor, and according to this writing, can lay no claim to him till every one of his debts are discharged. How! how! replied the Devil, am I outwitted then? O, Friar, thou art a crafty knave! and thereupon vanished in a flame, raising a mighty tempest of thunder, lightning and rain: so that they were wet thro' before they could get shelter. Then Bacon charged him, he should never pay the Devil a farthing of his debt, whatever shape he came in, or artifice he used to wheedle him out of it, and then he could have no power over him. The gentleman on this, living a temperate frugal life, grew very rich, and leaving no children at his death bequeathed his estate to Brazen-Nose-College, because Friar Bacon, a member of it, had delivered him from so great a danger of body and soul.



## C H A P. IV.

*How Friar Bacon framed a Brazen Head, which by Enchantment was to speak: by that means all England had been walled*

*with brass, if the folly of his man Miles, who was set to watch the Head, had not disappointed it, not timely calling his master to answer it; for which he was struck dumb many days.*

**F**RIAR 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 his country, and many things they cast in their minds: at last they remembered that England had often been harrassed and invaded by the Romans, Saxons, Danes, Normans, and other nations at sundry times, to the great effusion of blood, and often alteration of the constitution of governments; and if any thing might be contrived to prevent the like for the future, they should thereby raise a lasting monument to their names.

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

They laboured to do this by art, but could not; so they conjured up a spirit, to enquire of the infernal council, whether it



might be done, or not. The spirit however was unwilling to answer till Friar Bacon threatened with his charms to bind him in chains in the Red-Sea, or to a burning rock, and make him the sport of wrecking whirlwinds.

Terrified by this means, he said, of himself he could give no answer, but must enquire of his lord Lucifer. They granted him two days for an answer, accordingly he returned this. "If they for two months would carefully watch the head, it should in that time speak, but the certain time should not be known to them; and then if they did hear it, and made some demands, what they required should be answered."

At this they much rejoiced, and watched by turns very carefully for six weeks, and no voice was uttered: At length tired out, and broken for want of their natural rest, they concluded some other might watch as well as they, till they refreshed themselves in repose, and call them when the head began to speak, which would be time enough; and because this was a secret, they did not care for having it known till they saw what they could make of it. Bacon thereupon proposed his man Miles, and Bungey approved of it; so they called Miles, told him the nature of the brazen head and what was intended, by giving him a strict charge, on his life, to awake them as soon as ever he heard it speak.

For that, master, said he, let me alone; I warrant you I'll do your business effectually, never fear it. So he got him a long sword by his side and a tabor or pipe to play, and keep him awake if any drowsiness, or the like, should overtake him.

The charge being given, and he thus accoutered, the two Friars went to rest in the next apartment. Miles then began to pipe and sing songs of his sweethearts and frolics.

Bessy that is so frolic and gay,  
Like a cat she loves with her tail to play;  
Though sometimes she'll pant and frown,  
All's well if you lay her down.

She'll never say nay, but sport and play;  
O Bessy to me is the Queen of the May:  
For Margery she is peevish and proud;  
Come fiddlers then, and scrape the crowd.

Whilst his merriment passed, after a hoarse noise, like thunder almost spent, the head spoke distinctly, Time is. O ho! says 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 thou think I am such a fool to break his sweet slum for this? no, speak wiser, or he shall sleep on. Time is, quotha! why I know time is, and that thou shalt hear, goodman kettle jaws.

Time is for some to gain,  
Time is for some to lose  
Time is for some to hand,  
But then they cannot choöse.

Time is to go a score,  
Time is when one should pay;  
Time is to reckon too,  
But few care for that day.

Time is to graft the horn,  
Upon another's head;  
Time is to make maid's bellies swell;  
Oh then 'tis time they're wed.

Hearest thou this goodman copper-nose? we scholars know when time is, without thy babbling: we know when time is to drink good sack, eat well, kiss our hostesses, and run on the score. But when time is to pay them, is indeed but seldom.

Whilst thus he merrily discoursed, about half an hour after, the same noise began as before and the head said, Time was. Well, said Miles, this blockish head is the foolish-est thing my wife master ever troubled himself about. How would he have laughed, had he been here, to hear it prat so simply! therefore thou brazen faced ass, speak wiser, or I shall ne'er trouble my head to awake him, time was, quotha! thou ass thou! I know that, and so thou shalt hear; for I find my master has watched and tutored thee to a fine purpose.

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

Time was when conscience dwelt  
 With men of each vocation;  
 Time was when lawyers did not thrive  
 So well by men's vexations.

Time was when charity  
 Was not deny'd a being:  
 Time was when office kept no knaves;  
 That time was worth the seeing.

Ay, ay, and time was for many other things: But what of that, goodman brazen-face? I see my master has placed me here on a very foolish account: I think I'd as good go to sleep too, as to stay watching here to no purpose. Whilst he thus scoffed and taunted, the head spoke a third time, and said, Time is past; and so, with a horrible noise, fell down and broke to pieces: whereupon ensued lamentable shrieks and cries, flashes of fire, and a rattling as of thunder, which awaking the two Friars, they came running in, in great disorder, found Miles rolling on the floor, in a stinking pickle, almost dead with fear, and the head lying shattered about the room in a thousand pieces. Then having brought him to his senses again, they demanded how this came. Nay, the Devil knows better than

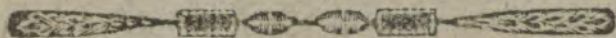


I, said Miles: I believe he was in this plaguy head; for when it fell, it gave a bounce like a cannon. Wretch that thou art! said Bacon, trifle not with my impatience! didst thou hear it speak? varlet! answer to that.

Why truly, said Miles, it did speak; but very simply, considering you have been so long a tutoring it; I protest I could have taught a jackdaw to have spoke better in two days. It said, Time is. Oh, villain! says Bacon, hadst thou called me then, all England had been walled with brass, to my immortal fame. Then, continued Miles, about half an hour after, it said, Time was. Oh, wretch! how my anger burns against thee; had you but called me then, it might have done what I desired. Then, said he, it said, Time is past, and so fell down with the horrible noise that waked you, and made me, I'm sure, befoul my breeches; and since here's so much to do about time, I think it's time for me to retire and clean myself. Well, villain! says Bacon, thou hast lost all our cost and pains by thy foolish negligence. Why, said Miles, I thought it would not have stopped when it once began, but would have gone on and told me some pleasant story, or have commanded me to have called you, and I should have done it; but I see the Devil is a cunning sophister, and all Hell would not allow him tinkers and brass enough to do the work, and therefore has put this trick upon us to

get off from his promise. How, slave! said the Friar, art thou at baffoonry, now thou hast done me this great injury? firrah! because you think the head spake not enough to induce you to call us, thou shalt speak less in two months space, and with that, by enchantment, he struck him dumb to the end of that time, and would have done worse, had not Bungey had compassion on the fellow's simplicity, and persuaded him from it.

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



## REMARKABLE ANECDOTES.

**T**HERE is a remarkable story related of Sir Christopher Wren, who being chosen surveyor of the royal works to King Charles II. soon after his restoration, and being called upon to prepare a plan for the reparation only of St. Paul's cathedral, which he was afterwards employed to rebuild; before he would rashly venture to expose his judgement upon paper in a matter of such importance, in which the great Mr. Inigo Jones had been engaged before him, thought it prudent to take a survey of

the works of the best masters abroad, and accordingly, obtained his Majesty's leave to travel for a few months. While he was at Paris, he was taken ill with a feverish disorder, made but little water, and had a pain in his reins; he sent for a physician who advised him to be bled, and ordered him some proper medicines for a pleuritic fever, with which the physician thought him dangerously attacked; but having an aversion to bleeding, he put off that operation for a day longer, and in the night dreaming that he was in a place where palm-trees grew, and that a woman in a romantic habit reached him dates; though he found himself much worse in the morning, yet he sent for dates; and eating plentifully of them, from the very moment they entered his stomach he thought himself better, and without any other medicine speedily recovered.

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ANOTHER story of this kind, I shall beg leave to relate. In March, 1736, a young woman at Bristol being taken ill of the small pox, her mother attended her during her illness; her father was a clergyman, more than twenty miles from the city. One night, her sister, who was at her father's, being in bed, heard the voice of her mother lamenting the death of her daughter. This much surpris'd her, knowing

that her mother was then as far off as Bristol. When she arose in the morning, her father seeing her look much concerned asked her what was the matter with her; she replied, I believe my sister Molly is dead; for this night I heard the voice of my mother lamenting her death. Says the father, I heard the same myself, and her voice seemed to me to be in my study. Soon after, the same morning, came a messenger with tidings of her death. The deceased was brought to her father's to be buried, and after the funeral, her mother relating the manner of her daughter's illness, and that as soon as her daughter was dead, she being weary with watching, and tired for want of sleep, lay down in her clothes, and dreamed that she was with them telling her grief for the loss of her daughter. This surprized them; and asking the time, it appeared to be much the same in which they heard her voice.

F I N I S.

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G L A S G O W,  
PRINTED BY J. & M. ROBERTSON,  
[No. 18.] SALTMARKET,  
1807.