BACONIAN PARAPHRASES*

THE RIGHT HON. SIR THOMAS WHITE

I. ESSAY ON TRUTH

Truth! What is Truth? the jesting Pilate asked
And would not stay for Answer.   Some there be
Who count it bondage to infix belief;
Alike in thought and action they affect
Freedom of Will; nor is it pains men take
In finding Truth that bring the Lie in favour;
Nay, many love the Lie for its own Sake;
For Truth is like the naked light of day
That showeth not the mummeries of the world,
Its masques and triumphs as doth candlelight;
Truth is like Pearl which showeth best by day
But doth not match in price with Diamond
Which always showeth best in varied lights.
Truth teacheth that the Sovereign Good of man
Lies in its quest, its knowledge, its belief,
And Heaven will surely come upon the Earth
When turn men's minds upon the Poles of Truth.
Why is the attribution of a Lie
Deemed such an odious charge?   'Tis but to say
That those who lie are only brave towards God
And craven cowards towards their Fellow-men.

II. ESSAY ON ADVERSITY

Prosperity's good things are to be wished,
Adversity's admired.   This is true:—
Prosperity hath for virtue Temperance,
Adversity's virtue is stern Fortitude,
Which Morals hold the more Heroical.
Prosperity is the Blessing of the Old,
Adversity of the Newer Testament
Which carrieth more God's favour and Goodwill
With revelation of his Grace to Men.

*Written to illustrate the facility with which Bacon's prose drops into
Elizabethan blank verse.—EDITOR.

Job's deep afflictions have been pictured more
By labouring pencil of the Holy Ghost
Than all the joys of prosperous Solomon.
Prosperity is not without its Fears,
Nor is Adversity devoid of Hopes,
As seen in tapestry and embroideries
Whereon a lively Scene more pleasing shows
Imposed upon a dark and solemn ground
Than doth dark Work of melancholy Theme
Upon a lightsome ground; so may we judge
From Pleasures of the Eye those of the Heart.
Prosperity ofttimes discovereth Vice,
Adversity Virtue; as all precious Odours
Become more fragrant when incensed and crushed.