

- Francis Bacon

Degree - II (English Hons)
Paper - IV Unit - A

Francis Bacon is more a philosopher and moralist than an essayist. Yet Bacon wrote essays because the form suited him in various ways. He had a wide range of knowledge, than still he was thrifty in his matter and manner. Therefore, the form of essay was most handy for his purpose. He adopted this form and his essays became the receptacles for his detached thoughts and dispersed meditation. They are packed with sound thoughts and high morals.

Viewed from above mentioned points Of Studies proves a representative essay of Bacon. It contains sound ideas and practical advice. The art of success among men is the subject of his essays. This one, too, is not an exception. It contains valuable advice for the readers as to what should be their approach to study. We find Do's and Don't in it. According to the essayist, we should not spend too much time over studies, it is endless. We should not read too much to make our language and speech ornamental as it would be snobbishness. Like foolish scholars we should not be guided by our bookish knowledge in our action and judgement.

We should not simply hate or admire books. We should not read the books discriminately. On the other hand, we should read properly because studies improve our nature and develop our abilities. They give us pleasure, effective speech and business acumen. It is a well read man who gives sound plans and general advice. But to get the best fruits of studies we must combine them with experience. We should also acquire wisdom from the observation of the world of man and nature. Wisdom alone teaches us to put studies to the best side. Bacon further says that the practice of reading, writing and conversation makes a wise perfect. Reading stuffs a man with ideas and information. Conversation makes him prompt active and ready witted and writing makes his ideas indefinite and concrete. But deficiency in any of these things may be made up in other ways. Hastily Keil says that appropriate studies can remove all mental defects, just as proper exercise removes all physical maladies. The whole essay is serious and argumentative. The points are logical and sound. There is high moral seriousness in the essay. The essayist's only purpose here is to teach and to please, so there is no place for wit and humour in the essay. It is too witty to be chatty or conversational. The grace, the intimate line and personal touch, the lightness and

case that accounts for the popularity of Lamb's essay, it totally lacks here. But Bacon is not to be blamed for this as his motive is altogether different. Dissemination of practical wisdom is his end. Of Studies serves this end.

The essayist is usually thrifty in all the use of his thoughts and words. He indicates no taste for verbosity. His ideas are scantily dressed in pithy sentences. As a result, many of his sentences are current as proverbs. For example,

Reading maketh a full man, conference a ready man and writing an exact man.

The sentences are ~~not~~ nearly all short and crisp. Each sentence can be expressed in a paragraph. Bacon wrote mostly in Latin and we find Latin phrase even in this essay. He did not entertain good opinion regarding the worth of English language. His essays are models of prose writing of his time.

It compared with that of Lamb, Of Studies would be regarded as a slightly inferior essay. But the comparison will be unjust. Bacon & Lamb belonged to two different schools.

Of Studies remains ^{one} of the most celebrated essays of its type.

By -

Dr. Mithlesh Kumar Maingi
 Dept. of English
 J. N. College, Madhubani.