

*Sir Francis Bacon's Letter to the Decipherer.*

Admits the mingling of the four great guides we use,

**Tell you in what disjointed and separate books**

**The secrets are laid up; and**

Thus by question and dialogue of compliment,  
And talking of the Alps and Apennines, the Perennean,  
And the River Poë, we will write a letter to your lordship.

One touch of nature makes the whole world kin.

Our second guide is the Latin word NATUS.”

“Your honor shall see now how I will work

Or confluence of materials carries along with it

The key of every story for the instruction

Of the decipherer. And as a sentence

Is but a cheveral glove to a good wit,

The wrong side may be quickly turned outward

And transposed to another meaning.

Therefore, let your own discretion be your tutor.

And suit the action to the word, and the word to the action,

With this special observance, that you match

Conjugates, parallels and relatives by placing

Instances which are related one to another

By themselves, and all the concordances

Which have a correspondence and analogy

With each other should be commingled with the connaturals.

And when you have collected a sufficient quantity

Of absolutely similar matter, by skilful handling

The proper collocation of things may be

Made out and disentangled.

First, then: Turn to the Mid Summer Night's Dream,  
And look into the speech of Bottom, wherein  
He is recounting his past complications,  
And see how, in his speech, he misplaces the scripture,  
Whereof you, sir, shall need but to read

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To see the manner of putting together  
Or separating the sense of the work; and it proveth,  
Simply and plainly, the ingenious means of writing  
Without creating suspicion."

"Your honor means this passage, do you not?  
'The eye of man hath not heard,  
The ear of man hath not seen,  
Man's hand is not able to taste,  
His tongue to conceive,  
Nor his heart to report,  
What my dream was.'"

"We do. And is it not legible?  
Can you not easily change the words from one end  
To another, and make it read right? Thus:  
'The eye of man hath not seen,  
The ear of man hath not heard,  
Man's hand is not able to report,  
His tongue to taste,  
Nor his heart to conceive  
What my dream was.'  
Next, my lord, turn to Love's Labour's Lost,  
And where the company of counterfeit actors  
Play before the queen, read the passage of wit  
Between them and the spectators.  
See how one of the auditors compounded the name  
Of one of the actors."

"I think this is the place:  
'Therefore, as he is an asse, let him go;  
And so adiew sweet Jude. Nay, why dost thou stay?'  
'For the latter end of his name.'  
For the asse to the Jude: Give it him, Jud-as away."



“You have it, sir. Now look into the  
Two Gentlemen of Verona, where Protheus and Speed  
In the second scene have argument, and to one another  
Speak these words:”

‘But what said she?’

‘I’

‘Nod-I. Why that’s noddy.

You mistook, sir; I said she did nod;

And you asked me if she did nod, and I say I.

And that set together is noddy.

Now you have taken the pains to set it together,

Take it for your pains.’

“Now see in the same play the singular skirmishings  
And attacks of Speed and Launce, when they first meet;  
And in their solemn foolishness you may read  
This triple conjunction:

‘Why then, how stands the matter with them?

Marry thus, when it stands well with him, it stands well with  
her.

What an asse art thou! I understand thee not.

What a block art thou that thou canst not;

My staffe understands me.’

‘It stands under thee indeed.’

‘Why, stand-under, and under-stand is all one.’

“And where they read the letter, if you look you may  
see this:

‘Item, she can sowe.

That’s as much as to say (can she so?)’

“Now then take the name of the great commander,  
Nerve and bone of our English fleet,  
When in the wide sea they overcame  
The knights of tawnie Spain. Fit the first and

“The basis of our device is the stage, and we  
Insert the titles of every play, and of all our books,  
Plainly about the keys, to prompt and instruct you.  
And if you will make a collection or catalogue  
Of them, they will serve to show you and the world  
(As you join them together) the threads, fibers, and links  
Of the chain, and our invention is, by the simple index  
Of our works, laid open without any great  
Or laborious art. Is this such a piece of study?”

“It must be confessed that this plan appears  
To be plain, and to answer my question. But to simply assert  
That it is true, is not enough. The world will scarcely  
Believe this without trial, and the vulgar people  
Will think that this single and simple collection  
Is too plain, and the simplicity of it will be  
Worse even than laborious examination. And your honor  
Must offer them instances which have  
Less likelihood either of accident, or  
The hand of man. I insist, because I would not have it  
Affirmed that I mixed the divisions together.”

“If a man disdain a plain thing because it is plain,  
And is foolishly attached to his own sagacity,  
Rather than to a laborious and sober inquiry of truth,  
Let him remember this, that the manner of men is to  
Overlook what lies before their feet in their search  
After truth. And inferior men, who assert the fabric  
Of this history has come together through fortuitous  
Concurrence or chance, and not by human skill, are  
Actuated by revenge, or the desire to appear wise to