

generally known, left the character and attainments of the author shrouded in a kind of mysterious obscurity. About a century ago, however, his *Opus Majus* was published¹ by Dr. S. Jebb, principally from a manuscript in the library of Trinity College, Dublin; and this contained most or all of the separate works which were previously known to the public, along with others still more peculiar and characteristic. We are thus able to judge of Roger Bacon's knowledge and of his views, and they are in every way well worthy our attention.

"The *Opus Majus* is addressed to Pope Clement the Fourth, whom Bacon had known when he was legate in England as Cardinal-bishop of Sabina, and who admired the talents of the monk, and pitied him for the persecutions to which he was exposed. On his elevation to the papal chair, this account of Bacon's labors and views was sent, at the earnest request of the pontiff. Besides the *Opus Majus*, he wrote two others, the *Opus Minus* and *Opus Tertium*; which were also sent to the pope, as the author says,² 'on account of the danger of roads, and the possible loss of the work.' These works still exist unpublished, in the Cottonian and other libraries.

"The *Opus Majus* is a work equally wonderful with regard to its general scheme, and to the special treatises with which the outlines of the plan are filled up. The professed object of the work is to urge the necessity of a reform in the mode of philosophizing, to set forth the reasons why knowledge had not made a greater progress, to draw back attention to the sources of knowledge which had been unwisely neglected, to discover other sources which were yet almost untouched, and to animate men in the undertaking, by a prospect of the vast advantages which it offered. In the development of this plan, all the leading portions of science are expounded in the most complete shape which they had at that time assumed; and improvements of a very wide and striking kind are proposed in some of the principal of these departments. Even if the work had had no leading purpose, it would have been highly valuable as a treasure of the most solid knowledge and soundest speculations of the time; even if it had contained no such details, it would have been a work most remarkable for its general views and scope. It may be considered as, at the same time, the *Encyclopedia* and the *Novum Organon* of the thirteenth century.

¹ *Fratri Rogeri Bacon Ordinis Minorum Opus Majus ad Clementem Quartum, Pontificem Romanum, ex MS. Codice Dublinensi cum aliis quibusdam collato nunc primum edidit S. Jebb, M.D. Londini, 1733.*

² *Opus Majus, Præf.*