

Let this Book, Intituled, *The History of the* ROYAL SOCIETY *of* LONDON, *for the improving of* Natural Knowledge, *be Printed.*

WILLIAM MORRICE.





THE  
HISTORY  
OF THE  
ROYAL SOCIETY  
OF  
L O N D O N,  
For the Improving of  
NATURAL KNOWLEDGE.

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By *THO. SPRAT*, D. D. late Lord  
Bishop of *ROCHESTER*.

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The THIRD EDITION Corrected.

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( )



TO THE  
**K I N G.**

S I R,



*F all the Kings of Europe, Your Majesty was the first, who confirm'd this noble Design of Experiments, by Your own Example, and by a publick Establishment. An*  
Enter-

## The Epistle Dedicatory.

*Enterprife equal to the moſt renown'd  
Actions of the beſt Princes. For,  
to increaſe the Powers of all Man-  
kind, and to free them from the Bon-  
dage of Errors, is greater Glory  
than to enlarge Empire, or to put  
Chains on the Necks of conquer'd Na-  
tions.*

*What Reverence all Antiquity  
had for the Authors of natural Dif-  
coveries, is evident by the diviner  
Sort of Honour they confer'd on  
them. Their Founders of philoſo-  
phical Opinions were only admir'd  
by their own Sects: Their valiant  
Men and Generals did ſeldom riſe  
higher than to Demy-Gods and He-  
roes: But the Gods they worſhip-  
ed with Temples and Altars, were  
thoſe who instructed the World to  
plow, to ſow, to plant, to ſpin, to  
build Houſes, and to find out new  
Countries. This Zeal indeed, by  
which*

## The Epistle Dedicatory.

*which they express'd their Gratitude to such Benefactors, degenerated into Superstition; yet has it taught us, that a higher Degree of Reputation is due to Discoverers, than to the Teachers of speculative Doctrines, nay even to Conquerors themselves.*

*Nor has the true God himself omitted to shew his Value of vulgar Arts. In the whole History of the first Monarchs of the World, from Adam to Noah, there is no mention of their Wars, or their Victories: All that is recorded is this, they liv'd so many Years, and taught their Posterity to keep Sheep, to till the Ground, to plant Vineyards, to dwell in Tents, to build Cities, to play on the Harp and Organs, and to work in Brasses and Iron. And if they deserv'd a sacred Remembrance, for one natural or mechanical*

## The Epistle Dedicatory.

cal Invention, *Your Majesty will certainly obtain immortal Fame, for having establish'd a perpetual Succession of Inventors.*

I am,

May it please Your Majesty,

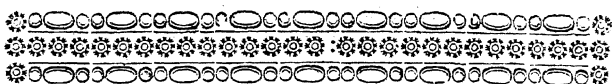
Your Majesty's most humble,

and most obedient

Subject and Servant,

THO SPRAT.





TO THE  
ROYAL SOCIETY.

I.



*HILOPHY, the great and only Heir  
Of all that human Knowledge which has bin  
Unforfeited by Man's rebellious Sin,  
Though full of Tears He do appear,  
(Philosophy, I say, and call it, He,  
For whatso'er the Painter's Fancy be,  
It a male Virtue seems to me)  
Has still been kept in Non-age till of late,  
Nor manag'd or enjoy'd his vast Estate:  
Three or four thousand Tears one would have thought,  
To Ripeness and Perfection might have brought  
A Science so well bred and nurst,  
And of such hopeful Parts too at the first.  
But, oh! the Guardians and the Tutors then,  
(Some negligent, and some ambitious Men)  
Would ne'er consent to set him free,  
Or his own natural Powers to let him see,  
Lest that should put an end to their Authoritie.*

II.

*That his own Business he might quite forget,  
They' amus'd him with the Sports of wanton Wit,  
With the Deserts of Poetry they fed him,  
Instead of solid Meats t' encrease his Force;  
Instead of vigorous Exercise, they led him  
Into the pleasant Labyrinths of ever-fresh Discourse:  
Instead of carrying him to see  
The Riches which do hoarded for him lye*

*In Nature's endless Treasury,  
 They chose his Eye to entertain  
 ( His curious, but not covetous Eye )  
 With painted Scenes, and Pageants of the Brain.  
 Some few exalted Spirits this latter Age has shown,  
 That labour'd to assert the Liberty  
 ( From Guardians, who were now Usurpers grown )  
 Of this old Minor still, captiv'd Philosophy ;  
 But 'twas Rebellion call'd to fight  
 For such a long oppressed Right.  
 Bacon at last, a mighty Man, arose,  
 Whom a wise King and Nature chose  
 Lord Chancellor of both their Laws,  
 And boldly undertook the injur'd Pupils Cause.*

### III.

*Authority, which did a Body boast,  
 Though 'twas but Air condens'd, and stalk'd about,  
 Like some old Giant's more gigantic Ghost,  
 To terrify the learned Rout  
 With the plain Magic of true Reason's Light,  
 He chac'd out of our Sight,  
 Nor suffer'd living Men to be misled  
 By the vain Shadows of the Dead : (tome fled ;  
 To Graves, from whence it rose, the conquer'd Phan-  
 He broke that monstrous God which stood  
 In midst of th' Orchard, and the whole did claim,  
 Which with a useless Scythe of Wood,  
 And something else not worth a Name,  
 ( Both vast for Shew, yet neither fit  
 Or to defend, or to beget ;  
 Ridiculous and senseless Terrors ! ) made  
 Children and superstitious Men afraid.  
 The Orchard's open now, and free ;  
 Bacon has broke that Scare-crow Deity ;*

*Come*

*Come, enter, all that will,  
 Behold the ripened Fruit, come gather now your Fill.  
 Yet still, methinks, we fain would be  
 Catching at the forbidden Tree,  
 We would be like the Deity,  
 When Truth and Falshood, Good and Evil, we  
 Without the Senses Aid within our selves would see;  
 For 'tis God only who can find  
 All Nature in his Mind.*

IV.

*From Words, which are but Pictures of the Thought,  
 (Though we our Thoughts from them perversly drew)  
 To Things, the Mind's right Object, he it brought:  
 Like foolish Birds to painted Grapes we flew;  
 He sought and gather'd for our Use the true;  
 And when on Heaps the chosen Bunches lay,  
 He press'd them wisely the mechanic Way,  
 Till all their Juice did in one Vessel join,  
 Ferment into a Nourishment Divine,  
 The thirsty Soul's refreshing Wine.  
 Who to the Life an exact Piece would make,  
 Must not from others Work a Copy take;  
 No, not from Rubens or Vandike;  
 Much less content himself to make it like  
 Th' Ideas and the Images which lye  
 In his own Fancy, or his Memory,  
 No, he before his Sight must place,  
 The natural and living Face;  
 The real Object must command,  
 Each Judgment of his Eye, and Motion of his Hand.*

V.

*From these and all long Errors of the Way,  
 In which our wandering Predecessors went,  
 And like th' old Hebrews many Tears did stray,*

*In Desarts but of small Extent,  
 Bacon, like Moses, led us forth at last,  
 The barren Wilderness he past,  
 Did on the very Border stand  
 Of the blest promis'd Land,  
 And from the Mountain's Top of his exalted Wit,  
 Saw it himself, and shew'd us it.  
 But Life did never to one Man allow  
 Time to discover Words, and conquer too;  
 Nor can so short a Line sufficient be  
 To fathom the vast Depths of Nature's Sea:  
 The Work he did we ought t' admire,  
 And were unjust if we should more require  
 From his few Tears, divided 'twixt th' Excess  
 Of low Affliction, and high Happiness:  
 For who on Things remote can fix his Sight,  
 That's always in a Triumph, or a Fight?*

VI.

*From you, great Champions, we expect to get  
 These spacious Countries but discover'd yet;  
 Countries where yet instead of Nature, we  
 Her Images and Idols worship'd see:  
 These large and wealthy Regions to subdue,  
 Though Learning has whole Armies at Command,  
 Quarter'd about in every Land,  
 A better Troop she ne'er together drew.  
 Methinks, like Gideon's little Band,  
 God with Design has pickt out you,  
 To do these noble Wonders by a few:  
 When the whole Host he saw, they are (said he)  
 Too many to o'ercome for me;  
 And now he chuses out his Men,  
 Much in the way that he did then:  
 Not those many whom he found  
 Idly extended on the Ground,*

To

*To drink with their dejected Head  
The Stream, just so as by their Mouths it fled:  
No, but those few who took the Waters up,  
And made of their laborious Hands the Cup.*

VII.

*Thus you prepar'd, and in the glorious Fight  
Their wondrous Pattern too you take :  
Their old and empty Pitchers first they brake,  
And with their Hands then lifted up the Light.  
Io! Sound too the Trumpets here !  
Already your victorious Lights appear ;  
New Scenes of Heaven already we espy,  
And Crowds of golden Worlds on high ;  
Which from the spacious Plains of Earth and Sea,  
Could never yet discover'd be  
By Sailors or Chaldeans watchful Eye.  
Nature's great Works no Distance can obscure,  
No Smalness her near Objects can secure.  
You've taught the curious Sight to press  
Into the privatest Recess  
Of her imperceptible Littleness.  
She with much stranger Art than his who put  
All th' Iliads in a Nut,  
The numerous Work of Life does into Atoms shut.  
You've learn'd to read her smallest Hand,  
And well begun her deepest Sense to understand.*

VIII.

*Mischief and true Dishonour fall on those  
Who would to Laughter or to Scorn expose  
So virtuous and so noble a Design,  
So human for its Use, for Knowledge so Divine.  
The Things which these proud Men despise, and call  
Impertinent, and vain, and small,*

*Those*

*Those smallest Things of Nature let me know,  
Rather than all their greatest Actions do.  
Whoever would deposed Truth advance  
Into the Throne usurp'd from it,  
Must feel at first the Blows of Ignorance,  
And the sharp Points of envious Wit.  
So when by various Turns of the celestial Dance,  
In many thousand Tears  
A Star, so long unknown, appears,  
Though Heaven it self more beauteous by it grow,  
It troubles and alarms the World below,  
Does to the Wise a Star, to Fools a Meteor show.*

IX.

*With Courage and Success you the bold Work begin;  
Your Cradle has not idle been:  
None e'er but Hercules and you could be  
At five Years Age worthy a History.  
And ne'er did Fortune better yet  
Th' Historian to the Story fit:  
As you from all old Errors free  
And purge the Body of Philosophy;  
So from all modern Follies He  
Has vindicated Eloquence and Wit.  
His candid Stile like a clean Stream does slide,  
And his bright Fancy all the way  
Does like the Sun-shine in it play;  
It does like Thames, the best of Rivers, glide,  
Where the God does not rudely overturn,  
But gently pour the crystal Urn,  
And with judicious Hand does the whole Current guide.  
H'as all the Beauties Nature can impart,  
And all the comely Drefs without the Paint of Art.*

A. COWLEY.



A N  
ADVERTISEMENT  
TO THE  
R E A D E R.



*THE Reader is entreated to take Notice, that much of this Discourse was written and printed above two Years before the rest: For this Cause, in the first and second Books, he may chance to find some Expressions, that by reason of the difference of Time may seem not well to agree with the last: But those having pass'd the Press so long ago, were out of my Power of changing them; and therefore I will refer it to his Kindness to do it for me.*

*I must also acquaint him, that in the Title of my Book I have taken a Liberty, which may be liable to Exception: I have call'd it a History of the Royal Society; whereas the first Part wholly treats of the State of the Ancient*