

Thomas Bodley

*The Life of Sir
Thomas Bodley,
written by himself*

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PREFACE

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AS what is known of Sir Thomas Bodley's early life is derived from the short sketch "written by himself," which is reprinted here, it is unnecessary to speak of that period at any length.

Of "worshipful parentage;" brought as a small boy in Geneva under the teachings of men like Chevallier, Beroald, Calvin, Beza, and Robert Constantine; educated later at Oxford, where he passed many years both as student and lecturer; an accomplished linguist through years of travel and residence in foreign countries, he was well adapted to a career of diplomacy, and was selected by Queen Elizabeth for many state embassies, which he recounts with naïve pride. He seems to have conducted these embassies with tact and ability, but they are almost forgotten, while Sir Thomas will always be remembered for the library which bears his name, at whose door he "set up his staff" when, tired of statecraft, he withdrew from public life, determining still to "do the true part of a profitable member of the state."

His own account of his life ends here, with the wish that the library itself may show how well he has sped in his endeavours. And who could wish a nobler monument!

"It is surely unnecessary," says old Anthony à Wood, "to repeat the praise of such a man as Thomas Bodley, a man whose name will perish only with that of his country. The obligations which literature owes to the exertions of this individual can only be estimated by those who have opportunity as well as occasion to consult the inestimable