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THE LIFE OF
 S^T THOMAS BODLEY,
 THE HONOURABLE
 FOUNDER OF THE PUBLIC
 LIBRARY IN THE UNIVERSITY
 OF OXFORD.

Written by Himselfe.



James

OXFORD, 9th

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 the UNIVERSITY. 1647.

To the READER.



WHEN the Great Restorer of Learning, our Munificent Benefactor, Sir THOMAS BODLEY, made the happy Exchange of the troubles of this life, with the Glories of a better; The University, according to the greatnesse of his merits, and their losse, in solemne grieffe and sadnesse, attended at his Obsequies. But lest the uncharitable censure of the world should apprehend our thankfulness buried in the same grave with him, and cold as his dead ashes, in that we pay no after tribute to so engaging a desert; We bring to the Altar of Eternity that part of him which yet, and ever must survive. A Monument freed from the lawes of time and ruine; Supported with the vigour of that name, which hath a seminall strength within it selfe, to make whole volumes live. But lest the judging and severer eye, viewing the nakednesse of this relation, may thence despise the poorenesse of our endeavour: That I may speake the worke above all scorne, above all praise; it was his Owne. Nor durst we call that draught in question, which felt the hand of so exact a Master; but with awe lookt on it, as on the fabrique of an ancient Temple, where the ruine furthers our Devotion; and gaudy ornaments doe but prophane the

sad religion of the place. 'Tis true, it savours not the language of our age, that hath the Art to murder with a smile, and fold a curse within a prayer, but speakes the Rhetoricke of that better world, where vertue was the garbe, and truth the complement. Those actions are of low and empty worth, that can shine ouely when the varnish of our words doth gild them over. The true Diamond sparkles in its rocke, and in despiight of darkenessse makes a day. Here then you shall behold Actions with the same integrity set downe, as they were first perform'd. A History describ'd, as it was liv'd. A Councillour that admitted still Religion to the Cabinet: and in his active aimes had a designe on Heaven. A spirit of that height, that happinesse, as in a private fortune to out-doe the fam'd magnificence of mighty Princes: whil'st his single worke cloud the proud fame of the Ægyptian Library; and shames the tedious growth o'th wealthy Vatican. I know how hard a taske 'twill be to perswade any to copy out from this faire patterne; however we cannot yet so farre despaire of ingenuity, as not to expect even from th' unconcern'd disinteressed Reader, a cleare esteeme and just resentment of it. If we gaine but this, we shall in part rest satisfied: In an age so wholly lost to vice, conceiving it a great degree of vertue to confesse the lustre of that good which our perverse endeavours still avoyde.

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THE LIFE OF SIR THO.
MAS BODLEY.



Was borne at Exeter in Devonshire the second of March, 1544. descended both by Father and Mother of worshipfull parentage. By my Fathers side, from an antient Family of Bodley, or Bodleigh of Dunscombe by Creditor; and by my Mother, from Robert Hne Esquire, of Ottery Saint Mary, nine miles from Exeter; my Father in the time of Queen Mary, being noted and knowne to be an enemy to Popery, was so cruelly threatned, and so narrowly observed, by those that maliced his Religion, that for the safeguard of himselfe and my Mother, who was wholly affected as my Father, he knew no way so secure, as to fly into Germany: where after a while

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he found meanes to call over my Mother, with all his children and family, whom he settled for a time at *Wesell* in *Cleveland*, (for there, as then, were many English, which had left their Country for their conscience, and with quietnesse enjoyed their meetings and preachings;) and from thence we removed to the Towne of *Frankfort*, where was in like sort another English Congregation. Howbeit we made no long tarrance in either of those two Townes, for that my Father had resolved to fixe his abode in the City of *Geneva*, where, as farre as I remember, the English Church consisted of some hundred persons. I was at that time of twelve yeares age, but through my Fathers cost and care, sufficiently instructed to become an Auditour of *Chevalerius* in Hebrew, of *Berealdus* in Greeke, of *Calvin* and *Beza* in Divinity, and of some other Professours in that Vniversity, (which was newly then erected) besides my domesticall teachers, in the house of *Philibertus Saracenus*, a famous Physitian in that City, with whom I was boarded: where *Robertus Constantinus*, that made the Greeke *Lexicon*, read *Homer* unto me. Thus I remained there two
yeares

yeares and more, unill such time as our Nation was advertised of the death of *Queene Mary*, & succession of *Elizabeth*, with the change of Religion, which caused my Father to hasten into *England*, where he came with my Mother, and with all their family, within the first of the *Queene*, and settled their dwelling in the City of *London*. It was not long after, that I was sent away from thence to the Vniversity of *Oxford*, recommended to the teaching and tuition of Doctour *Humfrey*, who was shortly after chosen the chiefe Reader in Divinity, and President of *Magdalen Colledge*; there I followed my studies till I tooke the degree of Batchelour of Arts, which was in the yeare, 1563. within which yeare I was also chosen Probationer of *Merton Colledge*, and the next yeare ensuing admitted Fellow. Afterwards, to wit in the yeare, 1565. by speciall pertivasion of some of my fellowes, and for my private exercise, I undertooke the publique reading of a Greeke lecture, in the same Colledge Hall, without requiring or expecting any stipend for it; Neverthelesse it pleased the Fellowship of their owne accord to allow me soone after foure markes by the
B 2 yeare,

yeare, and ever since to continue that Lecture to the Colledge. In the yeare of our Lord 1566. I proceeded Master of Arts, and read forth at yeare in the Schoole-streets Naturall Philosophy; after which time, within lesse then three yeares space, I was wonne by intreaty of my best affected friends, to stand for the Proctourship, to which I and my Colleague, Master *Beaublecke* of *Exeter* Colledge, were quietly elected in the yeare 1569. without any competition or countersuite of any other. After this for a long time, I supplied the office of the University Oratour, and bestowed my time in the study of sundry faculties, without any inclination to profesie any one above the rest, in so much as at last I waxed desirous to travell beyond the Seas, for attaining to the knowledge of some speciall moderne tongues, and for the encrease of my experience in the managing of affaires, being wholly then addicted to employ my selfe, and all my cares, in the publique service of the State. My resolution fully taken I departed out of *England* Anno 1576. and continued very neare foure yeares abroad, and that in sundry parts of *Italy*, *France*, and *Germany*. A good
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while after my returne, to wit, in the yeare 1585. I was employed by the Queene to *Fredericke* Father to the present King of *Denmarke*, to *Julius* Duke of *Braunswicke*, to *William* Landgrave of *Hesse*, and other German Princes: the effect of my message was, to draw them to joine their forces with hers, for giving assistance to the King of *Navarre* now *Henry* the fourth King of *France*. my next employment was to *Henry* the third, at such time as he was forced by the Duke of *Guise* to fly out of *Paris*; which I performed in such sort, as I had in charge with extraordinary secrecy: not being accompanied with any one servant (for so much I was commanded) nor with any other Letters, then such as were written with the *Queenes* owne hand, to the King, and some selected persons about him; the effect of that message it is fit I should conceale. But it tended greatly to the advantage, not onely of the King, but of all the Protestants in *France*, & to the Dukes apparent overthrow, which also followed soon upon it. It so befell after this, in the year 88. that for the better conduct of her Highnesse affaires in the Provinces united, I was thought a fit person

to reside in those parts, and was sent thereupon to the *Hague* in *Holland*, where according to the contract that had formerly past, betweene her Highnesse and the States, I was admitted for one of their Councell of Estate, taking place in their Assemblies next to Count *Maurice*, and yeilding my suffrage in all that was proposed. During all that time what approbation was given of my painefull endeavours by the Queene, Lords in *England*, by the States of the Country there, and by all the English Souldiery, I referre it to be notified by some others relation; sith it was not unknowne to any of any calling, that then were acquainted with the State of that government. For at my first comming thither, the people of that Country stood in dangerous termes of discontentment, partly for some courses that were held in *England*, as they thought, to their singular prejudice, but most of all in respect of the insolent demeanour of some of her Highnesse Ministers, which onely respected their private emolument, little weighing in their dealing what the Queene had contracted with the States of the Country; whereupon was conceived a mighty feare

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on every side, that both a present dissolution of the Contract would ensue, and a downright breach of amity betweene us and them. Now what meanes I set a foot for redresse of those perils, and by what degrees the state of things was reduced into order, it would require a long treatise to report it exactly; but this I may averre with modesty and truth, and the Country did alwaies acknowledge it with gratitude, that had I not of my selfe, without any direction from my Superiours, proceeded in my charge with extreame circumspection, as well in all my speeches and proposalls to the States, as in the tenour of my letters that I writ into *England*, some suddaine alarme had beene given, to the utter subversion and ruine of the State of those Provinces: which in processe of time must needs have wrought in all probability, the self-same effect in the state of this Realme. Of this my diligence and care in the managing of my business, there was, as I have signified, very speciall notice taken by the Queene and State at home, for which I received from her Majesty many comfortable Letters of her gracious acceptance: as withall from that time forward

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I did never receive almost any set instructions how to governe my proceedings in her Majesties occasions, but the carriage in a manner of all her affaires was left to mee and my direction. Through this my long abience out of *England*, which wanted very little of five whole yeares, my private estate did greatly require my speedy returne, which when I had obtained by intercession of friends, and a tedious suite, I could enjoy but a while, being shortly after enjoyned to repaire to the *Hague* againe. Neverthelesse upon a certaine occasion to deliver unto her some secret overtures, and of performing thereupon an extraordinary service, I came againe home within lesse then a Twelve-moneth: and I was no sooner come, but her Highnesse embracing the fruit of my discoveries, I was presently commanded to returne to the States with charge to pursue those affaires to performance, which I had secretly proposed; and according to the project which I had conceived, and imparted unto her, all things were concluded and brought to that issue that was instantly desired, whereupon I procured my last revocation. Now here I can not choose
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but in making report of the principall accidents that have fallen unto me in the course of my life, but record among the rest, that from the very first day I had no man more to friend among the Lords of the Councill, then was the Lord Treasurer *Burleigh*: for when occasion had beene offered of declaring his conceit as touching my service, he would alwaies tell the Queen (which I received from her selfe & some other ear-witnesses) that there was not any man in *England* so meet as my selfe to undergoe the office of the Secretary. And sithence his sonne, the present Lord Treasurer, hath signified unto me in private conference, that when his father first intended to advance him to that place, his purpose was withall to make me his Colleague. But the case stood thus in my behalf: before such time as I returned from the Provinces united, which was in the yeare 1597. and likewise after my returne, the then Earle of *Essex* did use mee so kindly both by letters and messages; and other great tokens of his inward favours to me, that although I had no meaning, but to scale in my mind my cheifest desire and dependance upon the
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Lord *Burleigh*, as one that I reputed to be both the best able, and therewithall the most willing to worke my advancement with the Queene, yet I know not how, the Earle, who sought by all devises to divert her love and liking both from the Father and the Son (but from the Sonne in speciall) to withdraw my affection from the one and the other, and to winne mee altogether to depend upon himselfe, did so often take occasion to entertaine the Queene with some prodigall speeches of my sufficiency for a Secretary, which were ever accompanied with words of disgrace against the present Lord Treasurer, as neither she her selfe, of whose favour before I was throughly assured, tooke any great pleasure to preferre me the sooner, (for she hated his ambition, and would give little countenance to any of his followers) and both the Lord *Burleigh* and his Sonne waxed jealous of my courses, as if under hand I had beene induced by the cunning and kindnesse of the Earle of *Essex*, to oppose my selfe against their dealings. And though in very truth they had no solid ground at all of the least alteration in my disposition towards ei-

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ther of them both, (for I did greatly respect their persons and places, with a settled resolution to doe them any service, as also in my heart I detested to be held of any faction whatsoever) yet the now Lord Treasurer, upon occasion of some talke, that I have since had with him, of the Earle and his actions, hath freely confessed of his owne accord unto me, that his daily provocations were so bitter and sharpe against him, and his comparisons so odious, when he put us in a ballance, as he thought thereupon he had very great reason to use his best meanes, to put any man out of hope of raising his fortune, whom the Earle with such violence, to his extreame prejudice, had endeavoured to dignifie. And this, as he affirmed, was all the motive he had to set himselfe against me, in whatsoever might redound to the bettering of my estate, or increasing of my credit and countenance with the Queene. When I had throughly now be-thought me, first in the Earle, of the slender hold-fast that he had in the favour of the Queene, of an endlesse opposition of the cheifest of our States-men like still to waite upon him, of his perillous, and feeble, and uncertain

C 2 advice,

advice, as well in his owne, as in all the causes of his friends: and when moreover for my selfe I had fully considered how very unwardly these two Counsellours were affected unto me, (upon whom before in cogitation I had framed all the fabrique of my future prosperity) how ill it did concur with my naturall disposition, to become, or to be counted either a stickler or partaker in any publique faction, how well I was able, by God's good blessing, to live of my selfe, if I could be content with a competent livelyhood; how short time of further life I was then to expect by the common course of nature: when I had, I say, in this manner represented to my thoughts my particular estate, together with the Earles, I resolved thereupon to possesse my soule in peace all the residue of my daies, to take my full farewell of State employments, to satisfie my mind with that mediocrity of worldly living that I had of my owne, and so to retire me from the Court, which was the epilogue and end of all my actions and endeavours of any important note, till I came to the age of fifty three. Now although after this, by her Majestie's direction, I was often called to the
Court

Court, by the now Lord Treasurer, then Secretary, and required by him, as also divers times since, by order from the King, to serve as Embassadour in *France*; to goe a Commiffioner from his Highnesse, for concluding the truce betweene *Spaine* and the *Provinces*, and to negotiate in other very honourable employments, yet I would not be removed from my former finall resolution, inso much as at length, to induce me the sooner to returne to the Court, I had an offer made me by the present Lord Treasurer (for in processe of time he saw, as he himselfe was pleased to tell me more then once, that all my dealing was upright, faithfull, and direct) that in case I my selfe were willing unto it, he would make me his associate in the Secretaries office; And to the intent I might beleive that he intended it *Bonâ fide*, he would get me out of hand to be sworn of the Counsell. And for the better enabling of my state to maintaine such a dignity, whatsoever I would aske, that might be fit for him to deale in, and for me to enjoy, he would presently sollicite the King to give it passage. All which perswasions notwithstanding, albeit I was often assaulted by him,
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in regard of my yeares, and for that I felt my selfe subject to many indispositions, besides some other private reasons which I reserve unto my selfe, I have continued still at home, my retired course of life, which is now methinks to me as the greatest preferment that the State can afford. Onely this I must truly confesse of my selfe, that though I did never repent me yet of those and some other my often refusalls of honourable offers, in respect of enriching my private estate, yet somewhat more of late I have blamed my selfe, & my nicety that way, for the love that I beare to my Reverend Mother the Vniversity of *Oxford*, and to the advancement of her good, by such kind of means as I have since undertaken. For thus I fell to discourse and debate in my mind, that although I might find it fittest for me, to keep out of the throng of Court contentions, & addressse my thoughts & deeds to such ends altogether, as I my selfe could best affect; yet withall I was to think, that my duty towards God, the expectation of the world, my naturall inclination, & very morality, did require, that I should not wholly so hide those little abilities that I had, but that in some measure, in one kind or other,

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I should doe the true part of a profitable member in the State: whereupon examining exactly for the rest of my life, what course I might take, and having sought (as I thought, all the waies to the wood) to select the most proper, I concluded at the last to set up my Staffe at the Library doore in *Oxford*; being throughly perswaded, that in my solitude and surcease from the Commonwealth affaires, I could not busy my selfe to better purpose, then by reducing that place (which then in every part lay ruined and wast) to the publique use of Students; For the effecting whereof, I found my selfe furnished in a competent proportion, of such foure kindes of aides, as unlesse I had them all, there was no hope of good successe. For without some kinde of knowledge, as well in the learned and moderne tongues, as in sundry other sorts of scho-lasticall literature, without some purse-ability to goe through with the charge, without very great store of honourable friends to further the designe, and without speciall good leisure to follow such a worke, it could but have proved a vaine attempt, and inconsiderate. But how well I have sped in all my endeavours, and how full provision I have made for the benefit and ease

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of all frequenters of the Library, that which I have already performed in sight, that besides which I have given for the maintenance of it, and that which hereafter I purpose to adde, by way of enlargement to that place (for the project is cast, and whether I live or dye it shall be, God willing, put in full execution) will testifie so truly and abundantly for me, as I need not be the publisher of the dignity and worth of mine owne Institution. *Written with my owne hand Anno 1609. December the 15.*

THO: BODLEY.

Thus farre our Noble Author of himselfe. Who like to the first Pen-man of the sacred history, seemes to survive his grave, and to describe unto us his owne death. For having finished that great worke which future times shall ever honour, never equall, he yeilded to his fate. As being unwilling the glory of that deed should be deflowr'd by the succession of an act lesse high then it. On the 29th of January in the yeare, 1612. his pure Soule attain'd the freedome of its owne divinity: leaving his borrow'd earth, the sad remainder of innocence and frailty, to be deposited in Merton Colledge: Who had the happinesse to call his Education hers, and to be intrusted with so deare a Pledge of immortality.

FINIS.