

Bartholomew Clerke
(1537?-1590)

DEDICATION OF HIS LATIN TRANSLATION OF
CASTIGLIONE, *IL CORTEGIANO*
TO THOMAS SACKVILLE
[1571]

At your request, most noble hero, I have finally translated Castiglione's four famous books from Italian into Latin, acting as both translator and orator, keeping the same meanings with words suited to our way of speaking. In this task I did not translate word for word, but kept intact the character of the words and their force. Although I began on the thirteenth of November (1570), and although interrupted by that mission you so worthily discharged among the French in Holland, and by our Parliament of which I am a member, I finished the whole thing in six months, driven by necessity rather than by my own inclination. Seeing that the work was completed in so short a time, I have all the more need of your encouragement, your favour, and your patronage. For it is possible that many things in this book have been scamped because of haste or passed over by lack of attention. But whether this be so or not, I am still in danger of calumny and insult from many ill-natured persons (but these are, perhaps, not the most qualified in the world). For although the opinion of learned and qualified people is favourable and even friendly, there are others (who are morose and unfriendly in an attempt to appear knowledgeable) who say that one passage smells of Seneca, another of Caesar, another of Livy, when they have never seen Seneca or run into Caesar or Livy. Others, young and rash, will run to the concordance of Cicero compiled by Nizolius, and any expression of mine they fail to find listed there they will condemn as unciceronian. Yet if Cicero himself had lived in our times and tried to translate Castiglione, he could have used the new approach to words and expressions that, in discussing his translation of Demosthenes and Aeschines, he freely laid claim to. So those who always by literary custom weigh Cicero in the scales of Nizolius do him less than justice: imitation of Cicero does not consist merely in the right choice of words, but also in a characteristic weight and rhythm in the sentence.

For me a Ciceronian is not one who runs every day for guidance to Nizolius, but one who can remake Nizolius from his own resources if he is completely destroyed. Not that I

wish to be seen as disapproving of Nizolius (for on no occasion do I reject a person I do not yet know), but, because I see that his book nourishes many minds with its matter, I do not so much disapprove of Nizolius (whose industry and reputation I respect), as despise the Nizolians. However, I will not attribute something to Cicero, even if I seem to owe it to him, only on my own judgement, to give the impression that I think that he alone is to be imitated on all occasions. For it can happen that his turn of phrase will obviously lack energy in drama; or, when we make jokes in colloquial language, his manner will be too solemn and his manner too grand. Therefore (and this is his own advice), in the first case I follow dramatists, in the second historical writers. Indeed, my attitude is this: I love Casear, I admire Livy, but for Cicero (if he still drew breath) I would die. However, I do not wish to be so bound to one of these authors that I can not, at times, take something from Seneca. I know that his sentences are concise and extremely clipped, but his meaning is the most subtle of any. And if an expert were to reshape him with features characteristic of Cicero, he would lose something of his inspiration. So he who binds me to Cicero when I wish to treat things that are as foreign to Cicero as to myself, does me injury, and is almost my executioner. And in these books there is a great deal of such things.

You see, my noble Lord, how many passages I have framed in imitation of ancient writers. I have acted like this to demonstrate to you how much I suffer from those who seek nothing but words proper to Cicero in this book. And if they shower insults and jibes on me, I shall ask not only the honour of your protection, but also your active help. And if you give it to me (and of this I have every confidence as you suggested this task to me), as always you will both honour our friendship and draw considerable profit to yourself, as you renew your acquaintance with this book, which you first came to know deeply in the groves of Academe, by commenting and writing on it.

Farewell, and may God grant you fortune in everything and blessedness hereafter.
