

Sir Thomas Hoby  
(1530-1566)

*The Courtyer of Baldessar Castilio*  
(1561)

PREFACE

Therefore the translation of Latin or Greeke authours, doeth not onely not hinder learning, but it furthereth it, yea it is learning it self, and a great staye to youth, and the noble ende to the whiche they oughte to applie their wittes, that with diligence and studye have attained a perfect understanding, to open a gap for others to folow their steppes, and a vertuos exercise for the unlatined to come by learning, and to fill their minde with the morall vertues, and their body with civyll condicions, that they maye bothe talke freely in all company, live uprightly though there were no lawes, and be in a readinesse against all kinde of worldlye chaunces that happen, whiche is the profite that commeth of Philosophy. And he said wel that was asked the question, How much the learned differed from the unlearned. 'So much' (quoth he) 'as the wel broken and ready horses, from the unbroken.' Wherefore I wote not how our learned men in this case can avoide the saying of Isocrates, to one that amonge soundrye learned discourses at Table spake never a woorde: 'Yf thou bee unlearned, thou dooest wiselye,' but yf thou bee learned, unwiselye,' as who should saye, learnyng is yll bestowed where others bee not profited by it. As I therefore have to my smal skil bestowed some labour about this piece of woorke, even so coulde I wishe with al my hart, profounde learned men in the Greeke and Latin shoulde make the lyke prooffe, and everye manne store the tunge accordinge to hys knowledge and delite above other men, in some piece of learnyng, that we alone of the worlde maye not bee styll counted barbarous in our tunge, as in time out of minde we have bene in our maners. And so shall we perchaunce in time become as famous in Englande, as the learned men of other nations have ben and presently are. And though the hardnesse of this present matter be suche, and myne unskylfulnesse to undertake this enterprise so greate, that I myghte with good cause have despaired to bringe to an ende it, that manye excellent wittes have attempted, yet coulde I not chouse but yelde to the continual requestes and often perswasions of many yong gentlemen, which have may chaunce an opinion that to be in me, that is not in deed, and unto whom in any reasonable matter I were skilfull in, neyther I coulde nor ought of duetie to wante in fulfilling their desire. Notwithstanding a great while I forbare and lingered the time to see if anye of a more perfect understanding in the tunge, and better practised in the matter of the booke (of whom we want not a number in this realm) would take the matter in hande, to do his countrey so great a benefite: and this

imagination prevailed in me a long space after my duetie done in translating the thirde booke (that entreateth of a Gentlewoman of the Courte) perswaded therto, in that I was enfourmed, it was as then in some forwardness by an other, whose wit and stile was greatly to be allowed, but sins prevented by death he could not finish it. But of late beeyng instantly craved upon a fresh, I whetted my stile and settled my self to take in hand the other three bookes (that entreat of the perfection of a Gentilman of the Court) to fulfill their petition in what I am able, having time and leyser thereto, the which I have done, though not in effect, yet in apparance and that in a great deale shorter time, then the hardness of the matter required. And where it shall not perhappes throughly please by reason my smalle understanding in the tung, and less practise in the matters herin contained, is not of force to give it the brightness and full perfection in this our tung that it hath in the Italian, it shal suffice yet that I have showed my self obedient in the respect a manne ought to have toward his betters and no more can they avoid the blame to charge me withall, then I to undertake it. Beside that, I have declared my good will and well meaning no less then if my cunning were greater, and could extend much farther. But paraventure the rudeness of this shall be an encouragyng of some other to give the onsett upon other matters with a better ripeness of style and much more aptness, and so shall this yet somewhat profite both wayes. But the estimation it must gete by your Honour, is the prinicpall cause that setteth it out, and maketh it worne with the handes of heedfull readers: for in case you cheerfullye receive it, men will reckon it good: yf you allow it, worthy to be practised: yf you commend it , woorthie to pass from hand to hand. Therefore emong the other good opinions men generally houlde of you, let it not be the least, that they may houlde also no less of this that you allowe and commende. And so shall you show undeserved kindness, I bounden dutie, and all others good will to imbrace and to welcome it out of Italy into Englande. And thus shall Castilio be esteemed such a one as he is in deede, and wexe familiar with all men, that of late was knowen of verie fewe, and so mangled wyth varietye of judgements, that he was (in a maner) maymed, and lost a good peece of his estimation. But in case jugementes now feint, or mine interpretation seeme not pithie but rude, not proper, but colde, there is no more imperfection in this *Courtier*, the in Cirus himself in the translation of Xenophon into the Italian or anie other tung, the one as necessarie and proper for a Gentilman of the Court, as the other for a king. And I shall desire my labour may so be taken well in worth, as I have endeoured my self to folow the very meaning and woordes of the Author, without being misled by fansie, or leaving out any percell one or other, wherof I knowe not how some interpreters of this booke into other languages can excuse themselves, and the more they be conferred, the more it will perchance appeere. Wherefore receive you this, as a token of my good will, and so receive it, that the frute, what ever it be, maye be acknowleaged at your handes: and you, pass the expectation of men in this, as in all other thinges, which, no doubt, is very great of you : and I, to acknoledge this

benefit, where my habilitie stretcheth to nothyng elles, shall at the least evermore wihse unto your Lordshipp longe lief, that you may go forwarde, as you do, in these beinninges, whiche promise a luckie ende, to the honour of yor self, comefort of your friendes, and forwardness of the commune weale of your countrey. Your L. most bounden,

THOMAS HOBY.