

**THE LIFE OF SIR
THOMAS BODLEY
WRITTEN BY HIMSELF**

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The Life of Sir Thomas Bodley Written by Himself by Thomas Bodley

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THOMAS BODLEY

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SIR THOMAS BODLEY

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Privately reprinted for JOHN LANE
and his friends. CHRISTMAS 1894.

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INTRODUCTION

IN sending out to my friends this reprint of the rare little *Life of Sr Thomas Bodley*, 'written by himselfe,' my motive for selecting this particular work for the purpose will be sufficiently obvious to them: what may be likely to cause more speculation would, however, be unaccounted for without this prefatory note—viz., my reasons for selecting Bodley as the patron saint of my business.

I have always been in doubt whether the writing of a great book or the capacity
to

to appreciate it were the finest thing in the world; but I am convinced that next in importance after the writing and the appreciating is the publishing of it. It was this which led me to regard the starting of a publishing business as a thing to be achieved sooner or later.

In July 1887, in company with my friend Mr. W. R. Wilson of the British Museum, I was one day at an exhibition in the Rembrandt Head Gallery in Vigo Street; and, casually asking the proprietor, Mr. Dunthorne, if he knew of any cosy little corner where a book-shop would be in fit setting, he at once rejoined that the premises in the same street, where he had originally hung up the sign of the Rembrandt Head, were vacant, and that he would be pleased to show them to me. I saw them, liked them, and at once made up my mind that here was the spot I had been looking for. 'It should have a sign,' I mused: Mr. Dunthorne's had captivated me. The inspiration waited on the wish: it should
be

be *The Bodley Head*. Bodley, the most pious of founders! Who could so fittingly be enshrined as patron? Besides, Bodley was one of the most notable worthies of Devon, my native county, and had I needed a contributory motive, this would have been an ample one.

Mr. C. Elkin Mathews was then in business at Exeter; and as we had already arranged that when opportunity offered itself we should join forces, he came to London at once in response to my summons, saw and liked the place as much as I did. The premises were taken in Mr. Mathews' name, for I was not at first to take an active part, and we walked away discussing the future.

'It should have a sign,' I said, 'and I have thought *The Bodley Head* is what it should be.' 'The very same idea was in my own mind,' answered my partner, fresh from Exeter, Sir Thomas Bodley's birthplace; and consumed as he was at the time with that passion for old literature which would,
Exeter

Exeter even apart, have made the coincidence perfectly natural. So *The Bodley Head* it became.

In 1888 I made the acquaintance of Mr. Richard Le Gallienne, and in 1889 introduced him to Mr. Mathews, with the result that there shortly appeared the first book with the imprint of *The Bodley Head*, Mr. Le Gallienne's first published book, *Volumes in Folia*.

Many others followed it, and in February 1892 it seemed desirable that our partnership should be indicated in the style of the firm, and that I should devote the whole of my time to the business.

About two years and a half later our seven years' partnership attained its term, and from October 1st 1894 we have been working apart.

By mutual arrangement, for our separation was of a perfectly cordial character, the sign of *The Bodley Head* was transferred to my new offices opposite.

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except the illustrations, though many interesting facts might be gleaned; but although later on occasion may present itself, here, it appears to me, such additions would be out of place.

JOHN LANE.

The Bodley Head,
CHRISTMAS 1894.