

**LIFE OF SIR
WALTER RALEGH**

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Life of Sir Walter Raleigh by Louise Creighton

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LOUISE CREIGHTON

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44 Hear him debate of commonwealth affairs,
You would say it hath been all-in-all his study;
List his discourse of war, and you shall hear
A fearful battle render'd you in music.
Turn him to any cause of policy,
The Gordian knot of it he will unloose,
Familiar as his garter; that, when he speaks,
The air, a charter'd libertine, is still,
And the mute wonder lurketh in men's ears,
To steal his sweet and honey'd sentences."

SHAKSPERE, *Henry V.* Act i. Scene i.

PREFACE

MY object in this little book has been to gather round the person of Raleigh an account of the leading features of the age in which he lived, and by describing the events in which he took part, to show the work which Englishmen had to do in those days, and so briefly to tell the history of the time. I do not pretend to throw any new light upon any of the vexed problems connected with Raleigh's life. I have been much indebted to Mr. Edwardes's excellent collection of Raleigh's letters, and should like to refer anyone who wishes for further particulars about him to Mr. Edwardes's biography. For the general history I have followed mainly Ranke's *History of England*, Mr. S. R. Gardiner's *History of England, 1603 to 1616*, and his *Prince Charles and the Spanish Match*. Anyone anxious to know more of the history of James I cannot do better than study Mr. Gardiner's excellent and most interesting books. Raleigh's own account

of his voyages may be found in full either in the *Hakluyt Voyages* or in the Oxford edition of his works, where are also his political and other writings.

Schomburgh's edition of Raleigh's *Discovery of Guiana* gives the fullest and most accurate information, and to it I am indebted for my map of the Orinoco.

Mr. Spedding, in his *Life of Bacon*, vol. vi., treats at length of the circumstances which led to Raleigh's execution. The whole of the book is full of valuable information about the history of the time.

For the social history, Harrison's *Description of England*, at the beginning of Holinshed's *Chronicle*, and lately republished by the New Shakspeare Society, should be consulted. The *Sidney Papers*, and Sir Christopher Hatton's letters in Nicholas's *Life and Times of Sir C. Hatton*, give many amusing pieces of court gossip. A vivid picture of social life, and an interesting account of English literature under Elizabeth, will be found in Mr. J. R. Green's *History of the English People*.

INTRODUCTION

IT is not always the men who have done most round whom the most interest gathers. There are some men whose individual character has had such force, that the impression which they produced on those amongst whom they lived has been handed down to the generations that have come after, and they have been remembered more for what they were than for what they did. The secret of the fame gained by such men lies in the fact that they have summed up in themselves some phase of human thought, or the tendencies of an age full of varied enterprise, or perchance have given the impulse which first directed human activity into a new channel. It is amongst such men that we must rank Sir Walter Raleigh. He is one of those who were great rather for what they were than for what they did. And this is not because he did nothing. On the contrary, he did so many things that we should find it hard to say in which part of his career he showed the greatest

eminence. But the interest attaching to him will always lie in this, that he exhibits the tendencies of a great age, of an age when men were stirred to new vigour by a sudden burst of intellectual life.

The men who gathered round Elizabeth were great in many ways, great as statesmen, soldiers, sailors, explorers, poets, and scholars. There was plenty of work for them all to do, and Elizabeth knew how to incite them to do it. She could put the right man in the right place, and make him do his best there. She made herself one with her people, and the secret of her strength lay in the fact that they felt she had made their interests hers. The people gathered round their Queen; and in the dangers which threatened Queen and people from without, they learnt a new sense of national unity. To study Raleigh's character is to study the tendencies of his age. There was no field of activity then open to men into which he did not enter; there was no work undertaken in which he did not share. In an age remarkable for its varied forms of intellectual vigour, he represents with wonderful many-sidedness the different interests which then absorbed men's minds. Moreover, whilst sharing so busily in the present, he looked on to the future, and discerned the way in which his country could grow in wealth and power beyond what any one at that time dreamed of as possible.

Raleigh's mind delighted in far-reaching schemes. Envious of the wealth gained by Spain from her colonies, he wished to see his own country benefited in the same way. He realized the advantages that England would gain by planting offshoots of her power in the new countries, with seemingly infinite resources, which were being opened up to commerce. He saw that the position of England and the character of her people eminently fitted her for the work of extending her power into distant lands. He never ceased to urge this upon his countrymen; he spent all his own possessions and his own health and strength in doing what he could to help the first beginnings of colonization. He gave the first impulse to the work which was afterwards carried out by others, and which has helped so much to make the England of to-day.