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The History Of The Life Of M. Tullius Cicero

Middleton, Conyers

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[Dedication.]

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TO the RIGHT HONORABLE
JOHN LORD HERVEY,

Lord Keeper of His Majesty's Privy Seal.

MY LORD,

THE public will naturally expect, that in choosing a Patron for *the Life of CICERO*, I should address myself to some person of illustrious rank, distinguished by his parts and eloquence, and bearing a principal share in the great affairs of the Nation; who, according to the usual style of Dedications, might be the proper subject of a comparison with the Hero of my piece. Your Lordship's name will confirm that expectation, and Your character will justify me in running some length into the parallel; but my experience of your good sense forbids me the attempt. For Your Lordship knows what a disadvantage it would be to any character, to be placed in the same light with that of CICERO; that all such comparisons must be invidious and adulatory;

and that the following History will suggest a reason in every page, why no man now living can justly be compared with him.

I do not impute this to any superiority of parts or genius, peculiar to the Ancients; for human nature has ever been the same in all ages and nations, and owes the difference of it's improvements, to a difference only of culture, and of the rewards proposed to it's industry: where these are the most amply provided, there we shall always find the most numerous and shining examples of human perfection. In old *Rome*, the public honors were laid open to the virtue of every Citizen; which, by raising them in their turns to the command of that mighty Empire, produced a race of Nobles, superior even to Kings. This was a prospect, that filled the soul of the ambitious, and roused every faculty of mind and body, to exert its utmost force: whereas in modern states men's views being usually confined to narrow bounds, beyond which they cannot pass, and a partial culture of their talents being sufficient to procure every thing, that their ambition can aspire to, a great genius has seldom either room or invitation to stretch itself to it's full size.

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You see, my Lord, how much I trust to your good nature, as well as good sense, when in an *Epistle dedicatory*, the proper place of Panegyric, I am depreciating your abilities, instead of extolling them: but I remember, that it is a History, which I am offering to Your Lordship, and it would ill become me, in the front of such a work, to expose my veracity to any hazard: and my head indeed is now so full of antiquity, that I could wish to see the dedicatory style reduced to that classical simplicity, with which the ancient writers used to present their books to their friends or Patrons, at whose desire they were written, or by whose authority they were published: for this was the first use, and the sole purpose of a *Dedication*; and as this also is the real ground of my present address to Your Lordship, so it will be the best argument of my Epistle, and the most agreeable to the character of a Historian, to acquaint the public with a plain fact, that it was Your Lordship, who first advised me, to undertake *the Life of CICERO*; and when from a diffidence of my strength, and a nearer view of the task, I began to think myself unequal to the weight of it, Your Lorship still urged and

exhorted me to persist, till I had moulded it into the form, in which it now appears.

THUS far Your Lordship was carried by *that love for CICERO*, which, as one of the *best Critics* of antiquity assures us, is the undoubted proof of a true taste. I wish only, that the favor, which you have since shown to *my English CICERO*, may not detract from that praise, which is due to Your love of the *Roman*: but whatever censure it may draw upon Your Lordship, I cannot prevail with myself to conceal, what does so much honor to my work; that, before it went to the Press, Your Lordship not only saw and approved, but as the sincerest mark of Your approbation, corrected it. It adds no small credit to the History of POLYBIUS, that he professes to have been assisted in it by SCIPIO and LÆLIUS; and even TERENCE's style was made the purer, for it's being retouched by the same great hands. You must pardon me therefore, my Lord, if, after the example of those excellent Authors, I cannot forbear boasting, that some parts of my present work have been brightened by the strokes of your Lordship's pencil.

It was the custom of those *Roman Nobles*, to

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spend their leisure, not in vicious pleasures, or trifling diversions, contrived, as we truly call it, *to kill the time*; but in conversing with the celebrated Wits and Scholars of the age: in encouraging other people's learning, and improving their own: and here Your Lordship imitates them with success, and for love of letters and politeness may be compared with the Noblest of them. For your house, like theirs, is open to men of parts and merit; where I have admired Your Lordship's agreeable manner of treating them all in their own way, by introducing questions in literature and varying them so artfully, as to give every one an opportunity, not only of bearing a part, but of leading the conversation in his turn. In these liberal exercises You drop the cares of the Statesman; relieve Your fatigues in the Senate; and strengthen Your mind, while You relax it.

ENCOMIUMS of this kind, upon persons of Your Lordship's quality, commonly pass for words of course, or a fashionable language to the Great, and make little impression on men of sense, who know learning, not to be the fruit of wit or parts, for there Your Lordship's title would be unquestionable, but an acquisition of much labor

and study, which the Nobles of our days are apt to look upon, as inconsistent with the ease and splendor of an elevated fortune, and generally leave to men of professions and inferior Life. But Your Lordship has a different way of thinking, and by Your education in a public School and University, has learnt from Your earliest youth, that no fortune can exempt a man from pains, who desires to distinguish himself from the vulgar: and that it is a folly in any condition of life, to aspire to a superior character, without a superior virtue and industry to support it. What time therefore others bestow upon their sports, or pleasures, or the lazy indolence of a luxurious life, Your Lordship applies to the improvement of Your knowledge, and in those early hours, when all around You are hushed in sleep, seize the opportunity of that quiet, as the most favorable season of study, and frequently spend an useful day, before others begin to enjoy it.

I AM saying no more, my Lord, than what I know, from my constant admision to Your Lordship in my morning-visits, before good manners would permit me to attempt a visit any where else; where I have found You commonly

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engaged with the Claffical writers of *Greece* or *Rome* ; and converfing with thofe very dead, with whom *Scipio* and *Lælius* ufed to converse fo familiarly when living. Nor does Your Lordship affume this part for oftentation or amufement only, but for the real benefit both of Yourfelf and others ; for I have feen the folid effects of Your reading, in your judicious reflections on the policy of thofe ancient Governments, and have felt Your weight even in controverfy, on fome of the moft delicate parts of their Hiftory.

THERE is another circumftance peculiar to Your Lordship, which makes this task of Study the eafier to You, by giving You not only the greater health, but the greater leifure to purfue it ; I mean that fingular temperance in diet, in which Your Lordship perfeveres with a conftancy, fuperior to every temptation, that can excite an appetite to rebel ; and shows a firmnefs of mind, that fubjects every gratification of fenfe to the rule of right reafon. Thus with all the accomplifhments of the Nobleman, You lead the life of a Philofopher ; and while You shine a principal ornament of the Court, You praftife the difcipline of the College.

IN old Rome there were no hereditary honors; but when the virtue of a family was extinct, its honor was extinguished too; so that no man, how nobly soever born, could arrive at any dignity, who did not win it by his personal merit: and here again Your Lordship seems to have emulated that ancient spirit; for though born to the first honors of Your country, yet disclaiming as it were Your birthright, and putting Yourself upon the foot of a Roman, You were not content with inheriting, but resolved to import new dignities into Your family; and after the example of Your Noble Father, to open Your own way into the supreme Council of the Kingdom. In this august Assembly, Your Lordship displays those shining talents, by which You acquired a seat in it, in the defence of our excellent Establishment; in maintaining the rights of the people, yet asserting the prerogative of the Crown; measuring them both by the equal balance of the laws; which by the provident care of our Ancestors, and the happy settlement at the Revolution, have so fixed their just limits, and moderated the extent of their influence, that they mutually defend and preserve, but can never destroy each other without a general ruin.

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IN a nation like ours, which from the natural effect of freedom, is divided into opposite parties, though particular attachments to certain principles, or friendships with certain men, will sometimes draw the best Citizens into measures of a subordinate kind, which they cannot wholly approve; yet whatever envy Your Lordship may incur on that account, You will be found, on all occasions of trial, a true friend to our constitution both in Church and State: which I have heard You demonstrate with great force, to be the bulwark of our common peace and prosperity. From this fundamental point, no engagements will ever move, or interest draw You; and though men inflamed by opposition are apt to charge each other with designs, which were never dreamt of perhaps by either side, yet if there be any, who know so little of You, as to distrust Your principles, they may depend at least on Your judgment, that it can never suffer a person of Your Lordship's rank, born to so large a share of the property, as well as the honors of the nation, to think any private interest an equivalent, for consenting to the ruin of the public.

I MENTION this, my Lord, as an additional reason for presenting You with *the Life of Cicero*: for were I not persuaded of Your Lordship's sincere love of liberty, and zeal for the happiness of Your fellow-citizens, it would be a reproach to You to put into Your hands the Life of a man, who in all the variety of his admirable talents, does not shine so glorious in any, as in his constant attachment to the true interests of his country, and the noble struggle that he sustained, at the expense even of his Life, to avert the impending tyranny, that finally oppressed it.

BUT I ought to ask Your Lordship's pardon for dwelling so long upon a character, which is known to the whole Kingdom, as well as to myself; not only by the high Office, which You fill, and the eminent dignity that You bear in it, but by the sprightly compositions of various kinds, with which Your Lordship has often entertained it. It would be a presumption, to think of adding any honor to Your Lordship by my pen, after You have acquired so much by Your own. The chief design of my Epistle is, to give this public testimony of my thanks for

the signal marks of friendship, with which Your Lordship has long honored me; and to interest Your name, as far as I can, in the fate and success of my work; by letting the world know, what a share You had in the production of it; that it owed its being to Your encouragement; correctness to Your pencil; and what many will think the most substantial benefit, its large subscription to Your authority. For though, in this way of publishing it, I have had the pleasure to find myself supported by a noble list of generous friends, who without being solicited, or even asked by me, have promoted my subscription with an uncommon zeal, yet Your Lordship has distinguished Yourself the most eminently of them, in contributing not only to the number, but the splendor of the names, that adorn it.

NEXT to that little reputation, with which the public has been pleased to favor me, the benefit of this subscription is the chief fruit, that I have ever reaped from my studies. I am indebted for the first to Cicero, for the second to Your Lordship: it was Cicero, who instructed me to write; Your Lordship, who rewards me for

writing: the same motive therefore, which induced me to attempt the history of the one, engages me to dedicate it to the other; that I may express my gratitude to you both, in the most effectual manner that I am able, by celebrating the memory of the dead, and acknowledging the generosity of my living Benefactor.

I HAVE received great civilities, on several occasions, from many Noble persons, of which I shall ever retain a most grateful sense: but your Lordship's accumulated favors have long ago risen up to the character of obligations, and made it my perpetual duty, as it had always been my ambition, to profess myself with the greatest truth and respect,

My Lord,

Your Lordship's

Most obliged and

Devoted Servant,

Conyers Middleton