

**THREE BOOKS OF POLYDORE VERGIL'S
ENGLISH HISTORY, COMPRISING THE REIGNS
OF HENRY VI., EDWARD IV., AND RICHARD
III. FROM AN EARLY TRANSLATION,
PRESERVED AMONG THE MSS. OF THE OLD
ROYAL LIBRARY IN THE BRITISH MUSEUM**

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Three books of Polydore Vergil's English history, comprising the reigns of Henry VI., Edward IV., and Richard III. from an early translation, preserved among the mss. of the old royal library in the British museum by Sir Henry Ellis

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SIR HENRY ELLIS

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EDITED BY
SIR HENRY ELLIS, K.H.

"Ornatissime Polydore, Opera tua sunt eleganter et feliciter excusa."
Erasmii Epist. fol. Lugd. Bat. 1706, Ep. DCCLX. 3 Sept. 1525.



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P R E F A C E.

POLYDORE VERGIL, otherwise named de Castello, was a native of Urbino in Italy; born in the latter half of the fifteenth century, and educated in the University of Bologna. Of his family we know but little. Burton, who wrote the History of Leicestershire, says his father's name was George Vergil;* he himself tells us that Antony Vergil, his great-grandfather, taught philosophy at Paris; and he had a younger brother whom he mentions with affection, John Matthew Vergil, a professor of Philosophy at Pavia,† who died at a premature age. He had also a

* See Burton's MS. as quoted in Nichols's Hist. of Leicestershire, vol. iii. pt. i. p. 538.

† "Habes enim (prout probe scis) Antonium Vergilium proavum nostrum Archetypon, qui medicæ etiam rei ac astrologiæ peritissimus olim apud Gallos, in Lutetia Parisiorum, philosophiam docuit, quam tu Patavii in præsentî publicè profiteris.

"Non est infima utique laus, duos ex Vergiliana familia viros in duobus totius orbis præcipuis gymnasiis, haud longo temporis intervallo, professores bonarum disciplinarum non absque nominis gloria publicitus extitisse. Sed tu qui proavum jam longe relinquis, efficies (spero) ut aliquando posteritas

kinsman of the name of Adrian de Castello, of whom more will be said hereafter.

Polydore himself was first known to the literary world by the publication of a Collection of Proverbs, "*Proverbiorum Libellus*," printed at Venice in 1498, gathered chiefly from Latin writers, and dedicated to Guido Ubaldo then Duke of Urbino.* It was the first attempt of its kind, and the author was subsequently not a little mortified when Erasmus claimed that same priority for his "*Adagia*." Polydore Vergil gently reproached him in the preface to his next work: Erasmus protested his unacquaintance with Vergil's previous book; and Polydore expunged the censure. Of this literary collision Polydore's biographers have said more than was sufficient. It created a friendship between these eminent scholars which lasted to the close of Erasmus's life, cemented by the congeniality of their pursuits, and evidenced no where more strongly on Erasmus's part than in his Correspondence.†

dicat, fuisse olim Polydorum quendam, qui illum Joannem Matthæum Vergilium à puero bonis moribus atque disciplinis nutrierat. Vale, Londini nonis Decembris, An. M. D. XVII."

* Other editions of the "*Proverbiorum Libellus*" were 4^{to}, Ven. 1506; Argentor. 1510; 8 Basle, 1524, 1532; 12^o 1536, and 8^{vo} 1541 and 1550. To the edition of 1536 is subjoined a short commentary upon the Lord's Prayer, afterwards, about 1554, said to have been printed separately.

† See particularly the letters DCCCLX. DCCCXV. DCCCLIV. MCLXXVI. in *Erasmi Epist.* fol. Lugd. Bat. 1706.

In 1499 Polydore Vergil published his second work, a Treatise "de Inventoribus Rerum." This also was the first publication of its kind, subsequent to the revival of Literature. It gained him great reputation; was afterwards much enlarged by its author; passed through numerous editions in different countries;* and was translated into several of the modern languages of Europe.†

* "Polydori Vergilii Vrbinatis de Inventoribus Rerum, Libri tres," 4to. Ven. 1499; reprinted there in 1503. This work was increased to eight books in the Basle edition of 1521, followed by other editions from the same place in 1524, 1545, 1550, 1554, and 1570, in 8^{vo} and 12^{mo}; printed at Leyden in 1544, 8^{vo}; at Amsterdam, 8^o, 1571, and by Dan. Elzevir, 12^o 1651 and 1662; Rome, 1576, 8^o; Lyons, 1586, 12^o; Frankfort, 1599; Geneva, 1604; and Argentorat. 1606, 8^o and 12^o.

† Two editions of an Italian translation of this work, by Pietro Lauro of Modena, occur, 8^o Ven. 1543 and 1545. A Spanish translation by Fr. Thamar Medina, appeared in 8^{vo} 1551.

Wood in his *Athenæ Oxonienses*, edit. Bliss, vol. iii. col. 435, says, that Bale translated Polydore Vergil's work "de Rerum Inventoribus" in the time of Edward VI. but in rude and old English. He does not say whether this translation was published. Three if not four editions of an Abridgement, however, in English, appeared much about that time; viz. One, "An Abridgemente of the Notable Woorke of Polidore Vergile. Containing the deuisers and fyrste fynders oute as well of Artes, Ministeries, Feactes, and ciuill ordinaunces, as of the Rites and Ceremonies commonly vsed in the churche: and the original beginnyng of the same. Compendiously gathered by Thomas Langley." Dedicated to SirAntonye Denny. "Imprynted at London by Richard Grafton, Printer to the Princes Grace, the xvi. daie of Aprill, the yere of our Lorde M.D.xlvi. Cum priuilegio ad imprimendum solum." Square 12^{mo}. Printed also "xxv. Januarie," 1546, which stands as a second edition. A third, "Imprynted at London by Richard Grafton,

Soon after the production of this Treatise we find Polydore holding the office of chamberlain to Pope Alexander the Sixth, by whom, in or soon after 1501, he was sent to England as sub-collector of the tribute called Peter-Pence, under the auspices of Adrian de Castello his kinsman, already mentioned, who had been raised to the purple under the title of Cardinal S^{ti}. Chrysogoni, and who was his superior in the office of treasurer and collector of the Papal tribute.*

What was Polydore's immediate reception at the English Court is not recorded, but he is known to have been recommended to Henry the Seventh by those who were acquainted with the king, whilst Earl of Richmond, in his exile.† Polydore's relation, the Cardinal S^{ti}. Chrysogoni,

Printer to the Kynges Majestie. Anno 1551. Cum priuilegio," as before. 12^{mo}. The fourth edition, "Imprinted at London by Jhon Tisdale dwellyng in Knight rider's streate neare to the Queenes Wardrop," 12^o. without date. This is the latest edition of "The Abridgement," as we know of no work from Tisdale's press earlier than 1550.

Bayle in his Historical and Critical Dictionary says, "The treatise de Inventoribus Rerum contained several things which the Inquisition disliked, wherefore it approved of no edition but that which Gregory XIII. caused to be printed at Rome in 1576, which was purged of all those passages which displeased the Inquisitors. See also the Index Librorum prohibitorum et expurgatorum, p. 850, et seq. 1667, in folio. "Polidori Virgilii de inventoribus rerum Liber, nisi fuerit ex correctis et impressis ab anno 1576."

* Harl. MS. 6966. Excerpta ex Reg. Cath. Wellen.

† See what Burton's MS. says, Nichols's Hist. Leic. ut supr. respecting Guido Duke of Urbino, Polydore Vergil's first patron.