

SIR ROBERT DUDLEY, KNT.,

AS SKETCHED BY DR. JOHN CAMPBELL IN HIS LIVES OF THE
BRITISH ADMIRALS.

Sir Robert Dudley, son to the great Earl of Leicester, by the Lady Douglass Sheffield, daughter of William Lord Howard of Effingham, distinguished himself by his application to maritime affairs, by his great skill in them, and by his known encouragement of eminent seamen, as well as by his personal exploits, which were such as deserve to be remembered. He was born at Sheen, in Surrey, in 1573, and having received the first tincture of letters from Mr. Owen Jones, at Offington, in Sussex, to whose care and diligence in that respect, he had been committed by his father, he was sent to Oxford in 1587, and entered of Christ Church, being recommended to the inspection of Mr. Chaloner, afterwards the learned Sir Thomas Chaloner, and tutor to Prince Henry, under whom he profited so well in his studies, as to raise the highest expectations, which he lived abundantly to fulfil. By the demise of his father, who breathed his last, September the 4th, 1588, at his house at Cornbury, in Oxfordshire, Sir Robert became entitled, on the death of his uncle, Rose, Earl of Warwick, to the princely estate of Kenilworth, in Warwickshire, and other large estates. He was considered, at this time, one of the most accomplished young gentlemen in the kingdom, having a very agreeable person, tall, finely shaped, an admirable complexion, his hair inclining to red, a very graceful air, and learned beyond his years, particularly in the mathematics, very expert in his exercises, such as tilting, riding the great horse, and other manly feats, in which he is reported to have excelled most of his rank. Having, from his earliest youth, a particular turn to navigation, he took a resolution, when he was scarcely two and twenty years of age, to make a voyage to the South Seas, for which great preparations were made, but before he could put it in execution, the Queen and her ministers interposing, the project was dropped.

In 1594 he fitted out a squadron of four sail, at his own expense, and leaving Southampton on the 6th of November, proceeded for the coast of Spain, where he lost the company of the three other ships. This, however, did not hinder him from continuing his voyage to the West Indies, and, in doing this, he took two large ships, though of no great value. After remaining some time about the Island of Trinidad, he found himself under a necessity of returning home, in a much worse condition than he went out; and yet, coming up in his passage with a Spanish ship of 600 tons, his own vessel being of no greater burden than 200 tons, he engaged her, fought