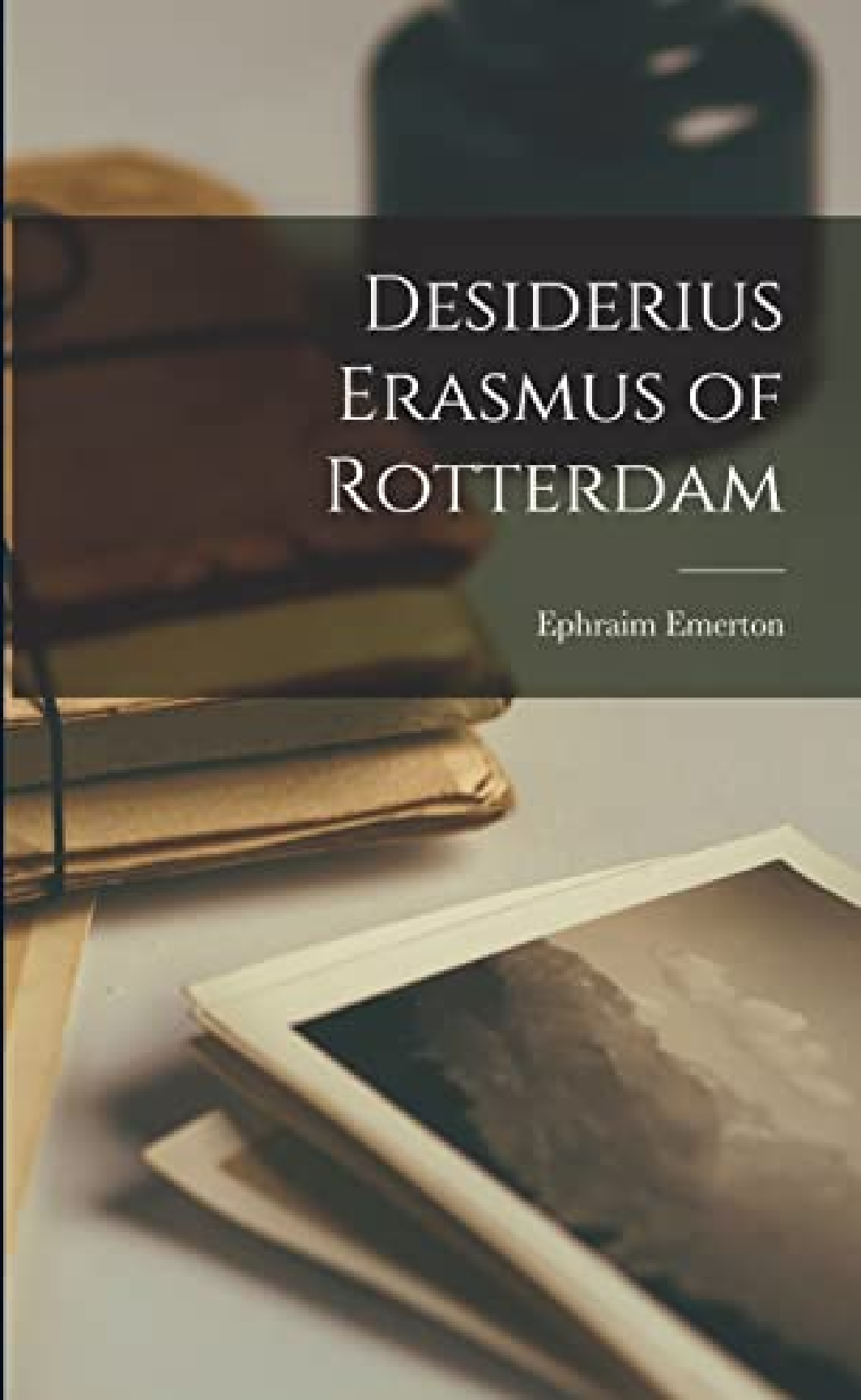


Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam

Ephraim Emerton

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Title: Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam

Author: Ephraim Emerton

Editor: Samuel Macauley Jackson

Release date: December 2, 2014 [eBook #47517]
Most recently updated: October 24, 2024

Language: English

Other information and formats: www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/47517

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Transcriber's note

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III.— **Desiderius Erasmus** (1467-1536). THE HUMANIST IN THE SERVICE OF THE REFORMATION. By Ephraim Emerton, Ph.D.

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS

NEW YORK AND LONDON

Heroes of the Reformation

EDITED BY

Samuel Macauley Jackson

PROFESSOR OF CHURCH HISTORY, NEW YORK UNIVERSITY

Διαιρέσεις χαρισμάτων, τὸ δὲ αὐτὸ πνεῦμα.

DIVERSITIES OF GIFTS, BUT THE SAME SPIRIT.

DESIDERIUS ERASMUS





PORTRAIT OF ERASMUS BY H

ORIGINAL IN THE LOUVRE

DESIDERIUS ERASMUS OF ROTTERDAM

BY

EPHRAIM EMERTON, PH.D.

WINN PROFESSOR OF ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY IN HARVARD UNIVERSITY

> O Erasme Roterodame, wo wiltu bleiben? Sieh, was vermag die ungerecht tyranney der weltlichen gewahlt, der macht der finsternuss? Hör, du ritter Christi, reith hervor neben den herrn Christum, beschüz die wahrheit, erlang der martärer cron.
>
> A. DÜRER'S DIARY, 1521.

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS
NEW YORK AND LONDON
The Knickerbocker Press
1899

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The Knickerbocker Press, New York

PREFACE

A COMPLETE and satisfactory life of Erasmus of Rotterdam still remains to be written. Its author will have to be a thorough student of the classic literatures, a theologian familiar with every form of Christian speculation, a historian, to whom the complicated movement of the Reformation is altogether intelligible, an educator, a moralist, and a man of humour. Only to such a person—if such there ever were—could the writing of this life be a wholly congenial task. The subject has been approached by different writers from all the points of view indicated, but no biography has yet shown the whole range or value of Erasmus' varied activities.

The limitations of the present volume have fortunately been clearly defined by the title of the series in which it forms a part. Its function is to deal with Erasmus as a factor in the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century. With the very peculiar and often elusive personality of the man it has to do only in so far as it serves to suggest an explanation of his attitude towards the world-movement of his time. I say "suggest an explanation" rather than "explain," because, with all diligence, I cannot hope to have made clear all of the many problems involved in the inquiry. At every stage of the study of Erasmus one has to ask first what he believed himself to be doing, then what he wished others to believe he was doing, then what others did

think he was doing, and finally what the man actually *was* doing. And all this has to be learned chiefly from his own words and from his reports of the words of others.

His life was full of strange incongruities, and any story of his life which should seek to cover these incongruities by any fictitious theory of consistency would but ill reflect the truth. And yet, with all its pettinesses and weaknesses, its contradictions and its comings-short of natural demands upon it, this life has, after all, an element of the heroic. If there be a heroism of persistent work and cheerful endurance, of steady exclusion of all distractions, of refusal to commit oneself to anything or anybody which might impede one's chosen line of duty, then we may gladly admit Erasmus into the choice company of the Heroes of the Reformation.

Such a distinction would vastly have amused him. He would have seized his pen and dashed off to some friend, who would spread the word, some such disclaimer as this: "Well, of all things in the world, now they are calling me a hero! If you never laughed before, laugh now to your heart's content. I a hero! a man afraid of my shadow,—a man of books, a hater of conflict, a man, who, if he were put to the test would, I fear, follow the example of Peter and deny his Lord. And, not content with this, they add 'of the Reformation.' I, who never, by word or deed, drunk or sober, gave so much as a hint of belonging to any of their accursed 'movements'! Well, no man can strive against the Fates."

I have chosen the chronological method because it serves best to illustrate the development of the man in his relation to his time. Such selections from

Erasmus' writings have been chosen for detailed examination as bear most directly upon the main objects of the book. It has seemed wiser to make them long enough to show their true meaning rather than to use a greater number of mere scraps, which might in almost every case be contradicted by other scraps. So far as possible the merely controversial has been avoided. For example, I have barely alluded to the prolonged discussions with Archbishop Lee, the Frenchman Bedda, the Spaniard Stunica, and the Italian prince of Carpi. The detail of these controversies tends rather to confuse than to illuminate the point of chief interest to us. Yet no treatment of Erasmus could escape entirely the tone of controversy. He set that tone himself and the student of his writings inevitably falls into it.

The translations have been kept as close to the originals as was consistent with a freedom of style somewhat corresponding to Erasmus' own. It would be hopeless to attempt, by any paraphrasing whatever, to improve upon the freshness and vivacity of the author.

My thanks are due to many friends for kind assistance and suggestion, but especially to my colleague, Professor Albert A. Howard of the Latin department of Harvard University, to whose careful revision the accuracy of the translations is chiefly due.

References to the Leyden edition of Erasmus' works in 1703-1706 are given simply by volume, page (column), and division of the column, as, *e. g.*, iii.[1], 157-B.

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INTRODUCTION

THE student of Erasmus is at first overwhelmed by the abundance of the material before him. A man who has left to posterity enough to fill eleven folio volumes would seem to have made a biographer unnecessary. Especially when two of these volumes are filled with personal letters, more than eighteen hundred in number, and addressed to some five hundred correspondents, it might well seem that the best biography would be a faithful transcript of what the man himself has given us. And, in fact, almost all that we know about Erasmus comes through himself. The singular thing is that with this great mass of material we know so little that is definite about him.

He lived in one of the most eventful periods of the world's history, and was in some kind of personal relation with its leading actors; and yet his life, from beginning to end, has not one event more important or stirring than a journey in winter, an attack of illness, a quarrel with some fellow scholar, or a change of residence. Our whole knowledge of his early life up to the period of production is derived from a very brief record made by himself many years afterward and made obviously with both a literary and a practical purpose.

His letters were largely collected and published by himself long after they were written, and were, so he himself tells us, freely altered for publication.

Their chronology is hopelessly confused. Erasmus says that he supplied many of them with the day and year when he came to edit them. He was himself at all times curiously indifferent to the merely historical. It was always subordinate in his mind to the broadly human and philosophical. The letters must therefore be read with constant reference to their immediate purpose, and few of them are without purpose, though it would require a bold man indeed to be always sure just what it is. Luther's judgment upon them was unjustly severe: "In the epistles of Erasmus you find nothing of any account, except praise for his friends, scolding and abuse for his enemies, and that's all there is to it." The principles which governed Erasmus as editor of his own correspondence are indicated in a letter[1] of 1520 to Beatus Rhenanus.

He represents himself as driven to edit them in order to check the publication of unauthorised editions, of which several had certainly appeared before 1519. He determined to make at least a selection and judiciously to modify the contents. "With this purpose I revised the collection. Some things I explained, which certain persons had interpreted unfavourably. Some, which I found had offended the oversensitive and irritable tempers of certain persons, I struck out. Some things I softened." But, after all, he says, as time went on, he repented him of his plan and urged Froben, to whom he had sent the "copy," to suppress it entirely or put it off to a more fitting time. But the work was so far along that Froben declared he would not throw away all that expense, and Erasmus just had to humour him. "I had to give way to him and incur myself perhaps the risk of my reputation in order to save him the risk of his money."[2]

Erasmus shared with most scholars of the Renaissance the *cacoethes scribendi*. He says of himself that his words were rather poured out than written. When he took his pen in hand it became an independent force, against which he had to contend lest it run away with him altogether, and it is one of his claims to greatness as a writer that on the whole he kept the mastery over it. This essentially literary quality must be constantly borne in mind by the historian and he must always be striving to fix the line where history ends and literature begins.

Again,—and here also Erasmus was eminently a Renaissance man,—he felt himself to be the centre of the world. In a sense that is, of course, true of every thinking man; but in Erasmus this newly awakened individual consciousness took on a form of acute personal sensitiveness which affected his relation to all persons and all things about him. Especially it reacted upon his writing. He could not be objective upon any question into which his personality entered ever so slightly. Whatever touched him as a man, as a scholar, a theologian, a churchman, or a citizen, began at once to lose its true perspective. He saw it only in its relation to himself, or at best to the cause of pure learning, which he always felt to be embodied in himself.

No writer upon Erasmus has failed to notice these qualities. The singular thing has been that, recognising them, the biographers have not tried in any consistent fashion to measure them as affecting the value of our sources of knowledge. It has generally sufficed to refer to them and then to treat the sources as pure historical information. Plainly the solution is not an easy one. If we should reject, for example, the letter to Grunnius[3] or the Colloquy on

The Eating of Fish[4] as sources for Erasmus' early life, we should have very little left. If we should accept them as history we should be mingling fact and fancy in altogether uncertain proportions. The only safe method is, therefore, to try in each case to weigh the value of the text before us with fullest reference to all the circumstances.

This rule applies as well to the treatises as to the letters, whenever the personal element enters into the account. Where no such issue can be raised, as, for example, in the purely philological essays or in the treatises against war, or in abstract moral or didactic writing, we are often forced to admire the vigour and decision of Erasmus' utterance. But if his personal judgment was assailed, as it frequently was, then even on a merely grammatical question his sensitive temper was readily roused to a kind of defence which we find very difficult to accept as a calm statement of fact.

Another source of confusion is Erasmus' amazing command of classic literature and his cleverness in utilising, not merely the forms, but at times the ideas and even the phrases of ancient authors. How much of what he says, for example, in his descriptions of persons, whether favourably or unfavourably, is really his own and how much borrowed is often quite impossible to discover. This borrowing or adapting is so much a habit that he obviously borrows from himself, using under similar circumstances what seem to have become almost formulas of his thought. He *must* be literary; he *might* be accurate.

Of contemporary biographical attempts we have almost nothing. Erasmus' younger friend, Beatus

Rhenanus of Schlettstadt in Alsatia, one of the Basel circle of scholars, has left us two fragments, one a dedication to the Emperor Charles V. of the 1540 edition of Erasmus' works, and the other from the dedication to an edition of Origen in 1536 with Erasmus' revision. These two brief sketches fill but six printed folio pages. They are disfigured by elaborate panegyric, not only of Erasmus, but of the emperor as well, are obviously drawn from Erasmus' own account of himself, and contribute little original material to our knowledge.

In regard to his writings, Erasmus on two occasions made attempts to summarise his work, once in 1524 at the request of John Botzheim, a canon of the church at Constance, and again, during his residence at Freiburg, in reply to an inquiry from Hector Boëthius of the University of Aberdeen. The latter is a mere table of contents for a possible complete edition of his works, but the former includes a great deal of description of the circumstances under which many of the works were written. These descriptions are at times so trivial that they can hardly command our respect, and yet it would of course be impossible to deny that a work of great importance may have had a trivial suggestion. This longer catalogue gives us also a good many sidelights upon Erasmus' personality and movements. The general arrangement and division into volumes suggested by Erasmus himself were followed in the first Basel edition of 1540, and have been preserved in the Leyden edition of Leclerc in 1703-1706 which we have used.

That the following pages will give a clear and consistent impression of Erasmus' motive at each stage of his career is more than we can hope for. The

best we can offer is an honest appreciation of his great service to the cause of reform, often in ways he little expected or desired, often very indirectly, and always without relation to any definite scheme of action. We may, however, fairly hope that as each occasion arises, we have so plainly set the possibilities before the reader that he may form an intelligent judgment as to the probability.

The most serious problem at every step is what weight to give to Erasmus' statements about himself. The only reasonable test is to be found in what he actually did. If, for example, he professes undying love for the city of Rome and an uncontrollable desire to end his days there; at the same time protests that everyone at Rome is longing to have him there, and yet takes no steps to go, we are forced to inquire what were the reasons which kept him away, and may have to conclude that all this was a bit of comedy arranged for some effect which we, as plain historians, should be glad to understand.

In applying these tests to Erasmus' declarations about the Reformation we find the largest scope for the critical method. All that is mysterious in his personality up to that time becomes doubly so when he finds himself—he would have us believe quite against his will—thrust forward into prominence as a rebel against the existing order. Several courses of action were open to him: First, and most obvious, to keep silent; second, to join with the party of reform, try to hold it to the essential things, and supply it with the weapons of learning which none could prepare so well as he; third, to denounce the reform, seek his safety in close alliance with Rome, and then try to moderate, as far as he could, the extremes of Roman abuse. No one of these methods commended

itself wholly to his judgment or to his nature. He could not be silent; he would not lend himself to what he called "sedition"; and he neither could, nor did he quite dare, trust himself in the hands of the Church he professed to serve, lest he find his liberty of action restricted beyond endurance.

The world into which Erasmus was born was a world of violent contrasts. The papal system, having come victorious out of the struggle with the conciliar movement of the fifteenth century, seemed to control without resistance every current of ecclesiastical life and thought. Yet the deep and steady flow of sincere and simple faith best represented by the mystical writers, individual and associated, was gaining in force and was making Europe ready for a revolt they never even thought of. The spirit of modern science, which is nothing more than a desire to see things in their true relations, was making itself felt in invention and discovery and in the revelation of Man to himself as a being worth investigating. Yet over against this spirit of light and liberty hovers the dark shadow of the Inquisition and its kindred manifestations of an exclusive claim to the knowledge and control of the Truth. Vast political powers were contending for the possession of long-disputed territories, while within their borders great social and industrial discontents were gathering to a demonstration whenever the strain of these dynastic struggles should become unbearable.

There were men in this vast conflict of ideas to whom it was given to lead others along some visible and definable road to some determinable end: Thomas à Kempis along the way of faith to the haven of religious peace; Luther and Calvin along the way of doctrinal clearness through ecclesiastical

revolution to deliberate reconstruction; Descartes through a single, all-inclusive philosophical proposition to ultimate certainty of thought; the great artists through "painting the thing as they saw it" to a new basis of æsthetic judgment. The special function of Erasmus in the Great Readjustment was, as he conceived it, to bring men back to the standards of a true Christianity by constant reference to the principles of ancient learning, and by an appeal to the tribunal of common sense. His activity took many forms; but he was always, whether through classical treatise or encyclopædic collection or satirical dialogue or direct moral appeal—always and everywhere, the preacher of righteousness. His successes were invariably along this line. His failures were caused by his incapacity to perceive at what moment the mere appeal to the moral sense was no longer adequate. His services to the Reformation were warmly recognised even by so violent an opponent as Hutten; his personal limitations were in danger of making those services of no avail, and there was the point where he and those with whom he ought to have worked parted company.

Our work divides itself naturally into two parts: First, the development of Erasmus up to the outbreak of the Lutheran Reformation in 1517, and second, his relation to the leading persons and ideas of the next twenty years. In treating the former period we shall examine the traditional story of Erasmus' early education, and shall illustrate by selections showing as fairly as may be what proved to be the dominant traits of his mind and character. In the second part we shall endeavour to show how the traits thus formed determined his attitude towards the unexpected demands of a new time.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

IT would be idle to attempt here an Erasmian bibliography, since the elaborate undertaking of the University Library at Ghent in 1893[5] has placed the material available up to that date in a form accessible to every reader. The same editors are now engaged upon a still more stupendous enterprise, a bibliography,[6] in 16º form, giving complete titles of all known editions of every work. Begun in 1897, it thus far includes only the editions of the *Adagia*. I give here, therefore, only the sources likely to interest the general reader and especially such as I have consulted in the preparation of this volume.

I have used constantly the Leyden edition of Erasmus' works[7] based upon the Basel edition of 1540. The arrangement is roughly according to the nature of the material. The editorial work is meagre and careless. The indexes are elaborately and exasperatingly useless. In the case of the letters, though the editor is perfectly conscious of false arrangement and dating, he leaves them as he finds them, and the reader is compelled to discover the inaccuracies for himself. Professor Adalbert Horawitz of Vienna was preparing to write a Life of Erasmus when he was interrupted by death in 1888. His preliminary studies[8] have supplied much new material and given us many valuable critical suggestions. In 1876 Professor W. Vischer of Basel, acting on the suggestion of Horawitz, published a

series of very interesting documents which he had discovered in the Basel University Library, and which throw much light upon several obscure points in the life of Erasmus.[9] An article by the late Dr. R. Fruin, [10] which came to my knowledge after the completion of the manuscript, quite confirms my view of the utter untrustworthiness of Erasmus' accounts of his early life. Jortin's *Life of Erasmus*, first published in 1758-60, 2d ed., in 3 vols., 1808, is little more than a translation of Leclerc's *Vie d'Érasme*[11] which was published as a kind of résumé and advertisement at once of the Leyden *Opera*. Jortin gives, however, in addition, a good many documents and a mass of more or less relevant remarks.

Of more recent biographies, that of R. B. Drummond[12] is, all things considered, the best; careful and serious, but showing the almost universal tendency to take Erasmus at his word, even while admitting his incapacity to tell the truth.

Durand de Laur[13] gives in his first volume a sketch of Erasmus' life with little critical sifting of evidence, and in the second an interesting examination of his achievements in the several lines of his activity.

Froude's *Life and Letters*[14] illustrates the author's familiar qualities,—his remarkable distinctness of view and his complete indifference to accuracy of detail.

Samuel Knight's *Life*,[15] 1726, is still readable. It deals chiefly with the relations of Erasmus to England, and gives a great deal of "curious information" about persons incidentally connected

with him.

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DESIDERIUS ERASMUS

DESIDERIUS ERASMUS

CHAPTER I
SCHOOL AND MONASTERY
1467-1490

IN a letter[16] written by Erasmus, in 1520, to Peter Manius occurs a passage so characteristic of the writer that one can hardly have a better introduction to the study of his life. Manius had urged him to declare frankly that he was not a Frenchman but a German, in order that Germany might not be defrauded of so great a glory. Erasmus replies:

> "In the first place it seems to me to make little difference where a man is born, and I think it a vain sort of glorification when a city or a nation boasts of producing a man who has become great through his own exertions and not by the help of his native land. Far more properly may that country boast which has made him great than that which brought him forth. So far I speak as if there were anything in me in which my country might take pride. It is enough for me if she be not ashamed of me,—though indeed Aristotle does not wholly disapprove that kind of pride which may add a spur to the pursuit of a worthy aim.
>
> "If there were any of this kind of pride in me I should wish that not France and Germany alone should claim me, but that each and every nation and

> city might go into the strife for Erasmus. It would be a useful error which should incite so many to worthy effort. Whether I am a Batavian or no is not even yet quite clear to me. I cannot deny that I am a Hollander, born in that region which, if we may trust the map-makers, lies rather towards France than towards Germany; although it is beyond a doubt that that whole region is on the borderland between the two."

Erasmus cared not where he was born and certainly was in no way identified with Rotterdam, his native place. He often speaks of "us" and "our people," referring to Low Germans generally, but he preferred to be called a citizen of the world, and his whole life is the illustration of this indifference. Though born a Dutchman, it has been doubted whether he could speak with readiness his native tongue, and it seems certain that no other modern language came as readily to his lips as did the speech of ancient Rome.[17] During a long life he was continually in motion, never resting more than a few years in any one place, always seeking more favourable conditions for the work he had in hand.



STATUE OF ERASMUS AT ROTTERDA

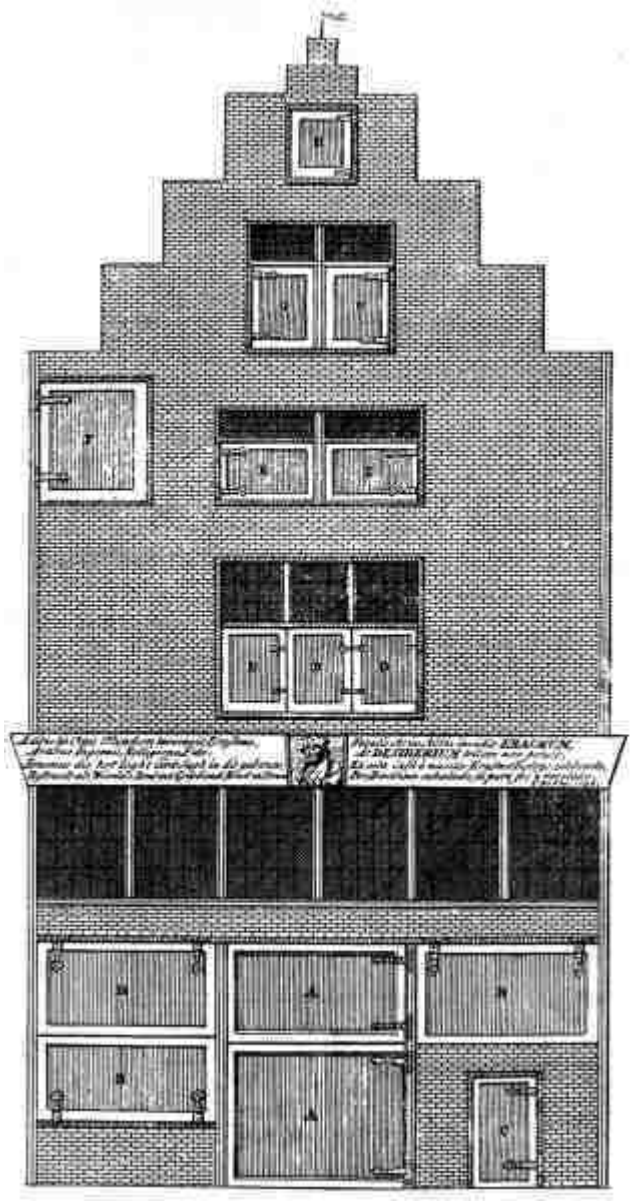
Holland, Belgium, England, France, Switzerland, were equally his homes, "*ubi bene, ibi patria*." If he had a preference of sentiment for any country it was possibly for England, but the demands of his work and the pressure of untoward circumstances carried him hither and yon, so that his visits to England seem rather like busy vacations in his arduous life. Patriotism, citizenship, loyalty to a place, seemed to him like so many limitations upon that dominant individuality which was the key-note of his character.

As he was indifferent to the place, so was he also to the time of his birth. It is even probable that he did not know precisely when he was born. At all events he nowhere tells us, excepting that the day was the 27-28th of October. As to the year we are left to later conjecture, and 1467, the date placed by the citizens of Rotterdam upon their monument to his memory, is as likely to be correct as any other. [18]

In regard to his family and the circumstances of his birth, Erasmus was also reticent to the point of obscurity. That he was born out of wedlock is clear. His enemies made what little they could out of the fact, and he never took the trouble to deny it. We may safely conclude that he cared as little to what family he belonged as to what land he owed his affection. Our actual knowledge on the subject is limited to the pathetic little opening paragraph of the very brief *Compendium Vitæ*, which he sent, under the impression of approaching death, to his intimate friend, Conrad Goclenius, Latin professor at the University of Louvain. "Nothing," he says in the letter accompanying it, "was ever more unfortunate than my birth, but perchance there will be those who

will add fictions to the facts." "My father Gerard," he writes, "had secretly an affair with Margaret, daughter of a physician of Zevenberge, in the hope of marriage, and some say that they had plighted their troth (*intercessisse verba*)."

The marriage was delayed by the desire of Gerard's parents that one of their family of ten sons should be devoted to the Church and by the jealousy of the brothers lest their property be diminished. Meanwhile Gerard, "as desperate men are wont to do," took himself out of the way and wandered to Rome. Our Erasmus was born after his departure. The relatives, learning Gerard's whereabouts, sent him word that Margaret was dead, and the poor fellow, who had been earning his living as a copyist and decorator of manuscripts, sought refuge in ordination as a priest. On his return to Holland he discovered the fraud, but lived the short remnant of his days faithful to his priestly vows.



HOUSE AT ROTTERDAM IN WHICH ERASMUS WAS BORN.

FROM KNIGHT'S "LIFE OF ERASMUS."

One or two obscure references in later writings give some reason to think that Erasmus had an older brother, who figures also in the letter to Grunnius mentioned in the Introduction. This brother can interest us only as affecting the question of the relation between the father and mother of Erasmus. His appearance in the letter to Grunnius reminds one so strongly of the characters introduced by Erasmus in his Colloquies to serve as foils for the principal speakers, that one can hardly help suspecting a similar device here. At all events the brother is too shadowy a personage to warrant us in drawing from his previous existence any instructive conclusion as to the origin of Erasmus.

In spite of so unfavourable a start in life, the early years of the lad seem to have been as well sheltered and cared for as could be desired. The little Gerard, as tradition would have him called during his childhood, was early sent to school in Gouda (Tergouw), his father's native place, to an uncle, Peter Winckel by name, and served for some time before he was nine years old as choir-boy at the Cathedral of Utrecht.[19]

He says of himself at this tender age, that he "made but little progress in those unattractive studies for which he was not made by Nature," but we are hardly warranted in drawing from this phrase the conclusion that he was ever a backward scholar.

At nine he was sent to the famous school at Deventer. His mother accompanied him and cared for him as before. Of the Deventer school Erasmus says that it was "as yet a barbarous place," by which

he means that it had not yet been reformed in the direction of the New Learning. The boys had to learn their "*pater meus*,"[20] (?) to conjugate their verbs, and to master their Latin grammar in the text-books of Everard and John Garland. It was a dreary method and Erasmus' recollection doubtless made it seem worse than it really was. The error of it to his maturer mind was that it was rather practical than scientific, especially that it did not introduce the pupil from the outset to the models of Latin style, which the great classic authors alone could furnish. He looked back upon these, as indeed upon all his years of pupilage, as to a time of struggle and hardship. Yet the fact is that he was making rapid progress, and at the close of his four years at Deventer he found himself the equal in learning of many older lads.

The head-master of Deventer at the time was a German, Alexander Hegius, from whom and from John Sintheim, one of the teachers, Erasmus says the school was beginning to get a glimmer of the great light, which, spreading from Italy, was enlightening the world. Erasmus' younger friend and biographer, Beatus Rhenanus, speaks of this Hegius as a man of very moderate learning, who knew no Greek at all, but says that he was open to the merits of the learning he did not share and gladly accepted the instruction of the younger German scholar, Rudolf Agricola, who had just returned from Italy fresh with the eager enthusiasm of that land of all promise. Erasmus fancied that the most he got out of his Deventer days was a "certain odor of better learning" which came to him from his older mates, who enjoyed the direct teaching of Sintheim, and from the occasional hearing of Hegius, who on feast days lectured to the whole school. There can be no doubt,

however, that he had got on famously in Latin and made at least a beginning in Greek.[21] Beatus tells a very pretty story of Sintheim,—that having heard Erasmus recite, he kissed him and said, "Go on, Erasmus, you will some day reach the very summit of learning."

After four years at Deventer an outbreak of the plague carried off the faithful mother and within a few weeks the father also, both just over forty years of age. Gerard, so Erasmus says, left a modest fortune, sufficient, if it had been properly husbanded, to provide for his own education at a university. The guardians, however, to whom he had intrusted his little property, the uncle Peter Winckel especially, were determined not to give the boy an academic training, but instead to turn him into the monastic life. Beatus speaks of Deventer as "a most prolific nursery of monks of every kind," and Erasmus employs this phrase, with every shade of anger and contempt, for the next institution in which his lot was to be cast.

This was a house of the so-called "Brethren of the Common Life" at 's Hertogenbosch (Bois-le-Duc). This widespread organisation had for more than a century played a large part in the religious life of the Low Countries. Founded by one Gerard Groot of Deventer, about 1380, it had come into existence as above all else a protest against the dominant monasticism of the Middle Ages. It was not an "order" in the stricter sense; the brethren were not bound by irrevocable vows; they were not regularly chartered by the authority of the Church. It was a free association of men who simply came to live together, giving up their private property, in order that they might the more effectively, as they believed, live the life of the

Spirit.

Their chief occupation was the copying of sacred writings, but they professed to support themselves by manual labour. Without calling into question any of the teachings of the Church, their greater lights, Gerard himself, Thomas à Kempis, John Wessel, had given to them a deeper spiritual meaning. They had sought to emphasise rather the inner life of the individual than the outward, visible institutions of the Church. Naturally they had from the first been suspected by all those elements of the Church organisation which saw their future thus threatened; the regular orders, the Inquisition, the secularised priesthood, had each in its turn sought to check this growing protest against their peculiar interests. On the other hand, the communities in which the brethren had established themselves had come to value them as examples of piety and types of a virtue which did not tend to separate men too widely from the life of the world.

Now all this would seem to point precisely in the direction towards which all the thought of Erasmus naturally turned. Of the two early instructors who chiefly impressed him, Hegius and Sintheim, the latter was certainly of the Brethren. The school of Deventer, while probably not directly under their control, was profoundly influenced by them. Yet we find in his writings repeated reflections upon their houses as training-schools for the monasteries and upon themselves as enemies of sound learning and practical virtue.

At 's Hertogenbosch he spent—or, as he himself says, wasted—about three years. Yet he admits that at the end of that time he had made good progress,

had acquired a ready style, and in some good authors was "*satis paratus*." We may be quite sure that he would not have exaggerated any attainments he might have made under such circumstances. His residence at 's Hertogenbosch was cut short by an illness, a quartan fever, as he describes it, to which he seems to have been subject. He was thrown back upon his guardians and, if we may believe his own later testimony, he found the whole world in a conspiracy to force him into the monastic life. The uncle Peter, whom he describes as a man of good outward reputation, but selfish, ignorant, and bigoted, was especially determined on this point. Erasmus makes what he can out of the ruin of his little fortune as a motive for getting rid of him, but rather spoils the force of his argument by representing Peter as upon principle devoted to getting his pupils into monasteries. "He used to brag about how many youths he had captured every year for Francis or Dominic or Benedict or Augustine or Bridget."

That the effort of the guardians was to persuade Erasmus to become a member of the Brethren of the Common Life is made probable by his use of the term "*Fratres Collationarii*." This was one of the popular names for the Brethren, derived from their peculiar practice of giving moral instruction by means of conferences (*collationes*). Erasmus includes them all in his sweeping denunciations of all schools and monasteries as "man-stealers." "Formerly," he says, "they were not monks at all; now they are a half-way kind of people, monks in what suits them, non-monks in what they don't like." "They have nested themselves in everywhere and make a regular business of hunting up boys to be trained." A clever lad of quick parts was an especial prize. "They ply

him with torments, break him with threats, reproofs, and many other arts, and call this 'training.' Thus they mould him for the monastic life. If this is not 'man-stealing,' what is?"

One might have supposed that the more stupid the boy, the greater the reason for urging him to a life whose essence is described as stupidness; but Erasmus declares the opposite and makes himself the illustration. All these devices were tried upon him. Violence worked as badly with him then as ever afterward, and so one of the teachers, for whom he shows some real affection, was set to try the method of persuasion. Erasmus, however, declared that he was too young, that he knew neither the world nor himself, and that it seemed much wiser for him to pass some years yet in the study of good literature before making so important a decision. These were not bad people; they were simply ignorant men, shut up in a corner, always comparing themselves one with the other, but never with men of the world—what could be expected of them but narrowness and bigotry? In the reflected light of later years the great scholar saw himself already at fourteen the champion of pure learning as against the benumbing influence of the schools.

A final assault was made by one of the guardians. Erasmus and his elder brother—we are following the Grunnius letter—had prepared themselves by an agreement to stand by each other. The younger was to be spokesman and was very doubtful of the elder's firmness of purpose. The guardian came in all kindness to congratulate the boys on their good fortune in having, through his good offices, obtained a place among the canons. Erasmus thanked him kindly, but said, as he had said to his teacher, that

they had decided not to venture upon this unknown way of life until they should have gained in years and knowledge. The guardian, instead of being pleased with the manliness of the answer, "flared up as if someone had struck him, could hardly keep his hands off them, and began to call names,"—"you recognise the voice of the monks," Erasmus adds slyly to the papal secretary. The end of it was that the guardian threw up his trust, declared that the boys' estate was all spent and they might see to it how they got on in the world. "Very well," Erasmus heard himself saying through his tears, "we accept your resignation and release you from all care of us."

Then the guardian sent his brother, a man famous for his gentle ways. He invited the lads into the garden, offered them wine, and with all gentleness entertained them with the marvellous charms of the monastic life. "Many a lie he told them of the wondrous happiness of that institution." At this the elder gave way, and this gives Erasmus a pretext for an assault upon the good name of his dead brother—supposing this brother to be a real person. He was a dull fellow, eager only for gain, sly, crafty, a wine-bibber and worse—"in short, so different from the younger that one might think him a changeling; for he had nothing in common with him but his evil genius."

Hereupon follows Erasmus' famous description of the pressure which finally drove him into the monastery. It is plainly a work of literary art, with little of the directness of simple truth; but we have no reason to doubt that it fairly represents one side of the impressions under which a youth of Erasmus' tastes and condition would naturally be brought. He describes it as a conspiracy deliberately set in motion

by a hostile guardian, but one hardly needs this explanation to account for the fact that a lad in the year of grace 1483 should hear every manner of description of the monastic life. These things were in the air. To be a scholar had, up to that time, been almost the same thing as to be a monk, and if Erasmus desired to be a scholar, here was, apparently, the line of least resistance.

The youth was at that crisis which comes to every young man, when for the first time he is called upon to decide for himself, with such help as he can get from others, what course of life he ought to follow. He describes himself as just entering upon his sixteenth year, without experience of the world and by nature disinclined to everything but study; of frail body, though strong enough for mental occupation. He had passed all his life in schools and believed that the low fever, from which he had suffered more than a year, was the consequence of this narrow and dreary training. Deserted on every side, with no one to turn to,—was not this enough to break a tender youth like him?

Still he held out, and then began a new series of persecutions. "Monks and semi-monks, relatives, both male and female, young and old, known and unknown," were set upon him.

> "Some of these," he says, "were such natural born fools that if it had not been for their sacred garments, they might have gone about as clowns with cap and bells. Others sinned through superstition rather than through any ill-will,—but what matters it whether one be choked to death by folly or by evil intention? One painted a lovely picture of monastic repose, picking out only the most attractive features;—why, the quartan fever itself might be made attractive after this

fashion."

Another gave an overdrawn picture of the evils of this world—as if monks were not of this world! Indeed they do represent themselves as safe on board ship while all the rest of the world is struggling in the waves and must surely perish unless they cast out a spar or a rope. Another spread before his eyes the frightful torments of hell—as if there were no open road from the monasteries into hell!

Others sought to alarm him with "old wives' tales" of prodigies and monstrous visions. They praised the monkish communion in good works, "as if they had a superfluity of these, when really they need the mercy of God more than laymen." In short, there was no engine of any sort that was not set at work on the poor lad, and they spent upon him as much energy as would go to the taking of an opulent city. So he hung "between the victim and the knife," waiting for some god to show him a hope of safety, when by chance he met an old friend who had been from his earliest years an inmate of the monastery at Steyn, near Gouda. This Cantelius, or Cornelius, whom Erasmus describes as driven into the monastery partly by the love of ease and good living, partly as a last resort, because he had failed to make his fortune in Italy, conceived a mighty affection for the boy and joined in the chorus of exhortation. Especially, knowing his taste, he dwelt upon the abundance of books and the leisure for study until "to hear him one would suppose that this was not so much a monastery as a garden of the Muses." Erasmus returned this affection, "ignorant as yet of human nature and judging others by himself." Cornelius left no stone unturned, but still Erasmus resisted, until finally some "yet more powerful battering-rams" were

applied. What these were he does not precisely say, but only enumerates again the loss of property and the pressure of his friends. At last, "rather tormented than persuaded," he goes back to Cornelius, "*tantum fabulandi gratia*,"—whatever he may wish to imply by that,—and consents to try the experiment, without, however, committing himself to remain permanently. His only condition was that he would not go to "the filthy, unwholesome place, unfit for oxen, which his guardian had recommended."

Still Erasmus cannot help fancying himself abused. He was charmingly treated; no duties were pressed upon him; everybody flattered him and coddled him to his heart's content. He had a capital chance to read all the "good literature" he wished, for Cornelius soon came to regard him as a kind of private tutor and kept him at it whole nights long, much to the injury, he says, of his poor little body. "After all," thought Erasmus, "this was what the selfish fellow wanted me here for." In a few months the friends had thus read through the principal Latin authors; so that this novitiate must have been for Erasmus a time of great profit along the very line for which he professed unlimited enthusiasm.

As the time drew near for putting off the secular and donning the "religious" garb, the same conflict is repeated. Erasmus, looking back upon his youth, says that his only ambition was for scholarship, pure and simple, and that, therefore, his natural wish was to go to a university. His experience in the monastery had made it clear to him that this was not the life he wished to lead, but precisely why, he does not satisfactorily explain. Reasons, indeed, he gives in plenty: his health was not good; he needed plenty of

good food and at regular intervals; he could not bear to be broken of his sleep, and so forth. His delicate constitution was plainly a source of pride to him as evidence of a finer spirit than those about him possessed.

> "All these things are a mere joke to the coarse-bred beasts who would thrive on hay and enjoy it. But skilled physicians know that this delicacy is the peculiarity of a specially refined body and of the rarer spirits, and prescribe for them food cooked so as to be digestible and eaten frequently but sparingly; whereas you will find others who, if you once fill them up, can hold out a long time without inconvenience, like vultures."

Especially against fish, Erasmus says, he had such a loathing that the very smell of it gave him a headache and fever.

These objections are highly trivial. They agree, for one thing, very ill with Erasmus' charges against monks, for of all things he accuses them most often of easy and luxurious living. There were ways enough, as he found out afterward for his own convenience, of getting around the burdensome requirements of the cloister and, on the other hand, out of these very restrictions there had gone forth many a vigorous leader of human thought and action. The fact is, probably, that Erasmus felt already stirring within him that restless impulse towards the free, unfettered development of his own individuality which was to be the guide and motive of his life. He accepted the monastery because under the circumstances there was nothing else to do; but it could not satisfy him.

Such, at all events, is the impression he desired to

produce when writing this account. He says:

> "In such a place learning had neither honour nor use. He [meaning himself] was not an enemy of piety, but had no liking for formulas and ceremonies in which pretty much their whole life consists. Besides, in an association like this, as a rule the dull of intellect are put to the front, half fools, who love their bellies more than letters. If any exceptional talent appears among them, one who is born for learning, he is crushed down lest he rise to distinction. And yet such creatures must have a tyrant, and it generally happens that the dullest and wickedest, if only he be of sturdy body, is of most account in the gang. Now then, consider what a cross it would be for a man born to the Muses to pass his whole life among such persons. There is no hope of deliverance unless, perchance, one might be set over a convent of virgins, and that is the worst slavery there is."

Here indeed we may see what was really troubling Erasmus. It was not any special hostility to the monastery. It was a dread of anything and anybody that could make any lasting claims upon him. The monastery simply came in for a larger share of his abuse because its claim upon him was more burdensome and more evident. It was not true that a man bred a monk could not rise to almost any distinction in almost any field. The times just before Erasmus were filled with examples of men who, through their own talent and energy, had made their monastic connection the ladder by which they had mounted to far-reaching usefulness. Even Luther, fiery spirit as he was, worked his way to liberty along the path of monastic conformity.

For Erasmus a thorough-going conformity to anything was an impossibility. Making all allowance for the effect of later experience upon his record of

youthful feeling, we may well believe that he really felt at the moment of his struggle something of what he puts into his defence:

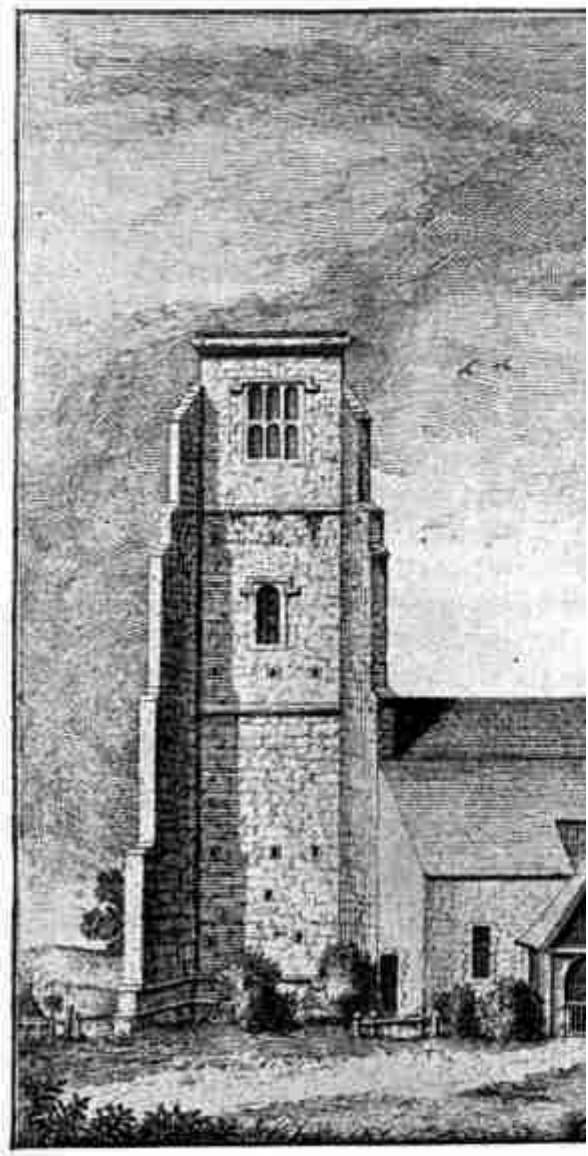
> "What could such a mind and such a body do in a monastery? As well put a fish into a meadow or an ox into the sea. When those fathers knew this, if there had been a spark of true human love in them, ought they not, of their own accord, to have come to the aid of his youthful ignorance or thoughtlessness and have advised him thus: 'My son, it is idle to make a hopeless struggle; you are not suited to this way of life nor this way of life to you; choose another while as yet no harm is done. Christ dwelleth everywhere, not here alone; piety may be cultivated under any garment, if only the heart be right. We will help you to return to liberty under suitable guardians and friends, so that in future you may not be a burden to us, nor we prove your destruction.'[22] That would have been a speech worthy indeed of pious men. But no one gave a word of warning; nay, rather, they moved their whole machinery to prevent this one poor little tunny from being drawn out of the net."

Above all, he says, they worked upon his acute sense of shame. If he should turn back now he would be disgraced in the sight of God and man. His friends and guardians again joined in the cry and finally

> "by baseness they conquered. The youth, with abhorrence in his heart and with reluctant words, was compelled to take the cowl, precisely as captives in war offer their hands to the victor to be bound, or as conquered men go through protracted torments, not because they will, but because it pleases their master. He overcame his spirit, but no man can make his body over new. The youth did as men in prison do, consoled himself with study as far as it was permitted him;—for this had to be done secretly, while drunkenness was openly tolerated."

It has seemed worth while to follow rather closely this account of his early years, as given chiefly by Erasmus himself, partly because it is almost our only source of information and partly because it gives at the outset so good an illustration of his way of dressing up every subject he touched to suit the occasion.[23] His biographers have generally done little more than copy out the Grunnius letter as an authentic record of his early experience, and its contents have become the common property of our books of reference. It must, however, be carefully studied in view of the circumstances under which it was written and by comparison with the little we can learn from other sources. Especially must all Erasmus' later criticism of the monastic life be referred to one of his earliest literary performances, the treatise, On the Contempt of the World (*de contemptu mundi*), written, probably, while he was still at Steyn, and when he was about twenty years old. This is an essay on the charms of the monastery as compared to "the world." It purports to be written by a monk to a nephew who was considering how his life should be spent. Excepting in the concluding paragraph there is hardly an indication of even a question as to the superiority of the solitary life over the life of society. The tone throughout is serious to the point of dulness. There is hardly a trace of the sparkle and liveliness which marked most of Erasmus' later writing. He begins with the same laboured comparison between human life and a troubled sea which he later ridicules:—the sea with its storms, its hidden rocks, its violent alternations, its siren voices luring the sailor to destruction. There is danger on the land, but one is far nearer to it on the sea. Life offers many joys, but none to compare with safety. Earthly joys are so hedged about with

miseries that they lose their proper charm.



PARISH CHURCH A
ORIGINAL I

> "Oh, bitter sweetness, so walled in before, behind and on every side with wretchedness. I said just now that man was coming to the condition of the brutes; but here I think the brutes have greatly the advantage of us; for they enjoy freely whatever pleasures they will. But man,—good God! how brief and how low a thing is this tickling of the throat and the belly!"

Marriage is all very well for those who cannot live otherwise, but it is a necessary evil. Earthly honours are vain and fleeting. If the great king Alexander himself could look upon the present world he would unquestionably warn us that even his unparalleled powers and dignities were as nothing compared with the victory of the man who knows how to govern himself. Death makes an end of all and does not wait for all to come to maturity, but cuts down many in the flower of their youth.

Then the argument turns to the positive attractions of the monastery and these are chiefly three: liberty, tranquillity, and happiness. As to the last two the line of defence is tolerably obvious; but to represent the monastery as the abode of liberty required no little ingenuity. Erasmus solved the difficulty by showing that all the relations of human life were but so many restraints on personal freedom, while the life in the monastery, imposing limits only upon the body, allows the soul to enjoy the highest kind of freedom.

Now which of these documents, the *de contemptu mundi*, written at the time, or the Grunnius letter

written perhaps thirty years afterward, represents the true Erasmus as he was at the age of twenty? If one tries to form an opinion from facts rather than from words, one must feel that there is at least room for the question. Erasmus speaks in the letter as if his intellectual life had been utterly crushed by the discipline of the monastery, but on the other hand there is every indication that he had all the opportunity for study that he could desire. Even if we think of the *de contemptu mundi* as a mere piece of sophomoric composition, it shows a very great acquisition, both of knowledge and of power, in a lad of twenty. It cannot have been written to please any teacher, for he was at this time under no regular instruction.

He was no longer at school, but was simply educating himself by the only pedagogical method which ever yet produced any results anywhere,—namely, by the method of his own tireless energy in continuous study and practice. This essay shows a command of classic literature in quotation and allusion quite inconceivable except as a result of persistent study. Almost as much may be said of the style. If it lacks much of the vivacity and personality of the later Erasmus, it has already gained a very considerable degree of correctness and force. The conclusion is irresistible that the description of the charm of the monastery as a place of refuge from the distractions of the world, and as affording leisure for the higher life, is a fair reflection of Erasmus' own experience up to that time. The monastery had served his purpose and now he was ready for something wider and freer, but he could not justify his quitting the monastic life without piling charges upon charges against the institution that had tided over for him, as gently as its conditions permitted,

these years of helplessness.

Nor had his life been by any means a solitary one. He had formed an intimate friendship with a certain William Hermann of Gouda and with him "he spent," says Beatus, "days and nights over his books. There was not a volume of the Latin authors which he had not thoroughly studied. The time which their companions basely spent in games, in sleep, in guzzling, these two spent in turning over books and in improving their style."

Another friendship dating from this period was that with Servatius, a fellow-monk and afterward prior of Steyn. No one of Erasmus' correspondents seems to have stood nearer to his heart. The group of letters addressed to him, probably just before and just after the writer had left the monastery, show a warmth of affection and a real desire for affection in return which bear every mark of sincerity. Even long after their ways had parted for ever Erasmus writes to Servatius with a respect which has no tinge of bitterness in it. If his hatred of monasticism had been as furious as he would often have men believe, hardly anyone would have been a more natural victim for him than this prior of the house where he is popularly believed to have suffered such a grievous experience.

So far as the two things which he always described as the requisites of a happy life, books and friendship, could go, the life of Erasmus at Steyn ought to have been a happy one.

Let us add one more contribution to the problem, —a letter[24] written at the age of sixty to a certain monk who had grown restless during the stirring

time of the Reformation:

> "I congratulate you on your bodily health, but am very sorry to hear of your distress of mind.... I fear you have been imposed upon by the trickery of certain men who are bragging nowadays, with splendid phrases, of their apostolic liberty. Believe me, if you knew more of the affair, your own form of life would be less wearisome to you. I see a kind of men springing up, from which my very soul revolts. I see that no one is growing better, but all are growing worse, so far at least as I have made their acquaintance, so that I greatly regret that formerly I advocated in writing the liberty of the spirit, though I did this with a good purpose and with no suspicion that a generation like this would come into being....
>
> "You have lived now so many years in your community without blame, and now, as you say, your life is inclining toward its evening—you may be eight or nine years my junior. You are living in a most comfortable place, and in a most healthful climate. You derive great happiness from the conversation of learned men; you have plenty of good books and a clever talent. What can be sweeter in this world than to wander in such meadows and taste beforehand, as it were, the joys of the heavenly life? especially at your age and in these days, the most turbulent and ruinous that ever were. I have known some, who, deceived by the phantom of liberty, have deserted their orders. They changed their dress and took to themselves wives, destitute meanwhile, living as exiles and hateful to their relatives to whom they had been dear....
>
> "Finally, my dearest brother in Christ, by our ancient and unbroken friendship and by Christ I beg, I beseech, I implore you to put this discontent wholly out of your mind; and to give no ear to the fatal discourses of men who will bring you no comfort, but will rather laugh at you when they have trapped you into their snare. If with your whole heart you shall

turn yourself entirely to meditation on the heavenly life, believe me you will find abundant consolation, and that little restlessness you speak of will vanish like smoke."

CHAPTER II
PARIS AND HOLLAND
1492-1498

IT may well be doubted, especially in view of his later experience, whether a residence at Paris or at any other university during just these years of probation would have been more profitable to Erasmus than his life at Steyn. He had been learning the invaluable lesson of self-education, and all his life was to be the richer for it. No doubt he was beginning to be restless under restraint, and thinking, as any monk had a perfect right to do, of how he might widen his opportunity.

He says, we remember, that there was no way out of the monastic life except to become the head of a nunnery, a remark so obviously foolish that it is worth recalling only to notice how completely his own experience contradicted it.

The Bishop of Cambrai, planning to go to Italy, wanted a young scholar of good parts to help him out with his necessary Latin. He had heard of Erasmus, how we do not know, and invited him to join his court and make the Italian journey with him. This may well have seemed to the young man a glorious opportunity. Italy was then, even more than it has ever been since, the goal toward which every ambitious youth of scholarly taste naturally turned. Doubtless, also, in the larger liberty (or bondage) of the great world, his monastic experience seemed

narrow and sordid enough. He calls the Bishop his god ἀπὸ μηχανῆς. "Had it not been for this deliverance his distinguished talent would have rotted in idleness, in luxury and in revelling." Evidently he would have had no reason to dread the severity of discipline for which he fancied his health was too delicate. The Bishop made sure of his prize by securing the approval of the Bishop of Utrecht, in whose diocese the monastery lay, and also of the prior and the general of the order. The excellent prior himself had long been convinced that Erasmus and the monastery were unsuited to each other and had recommended him to take some such opportunity as now offered.[25] This was the kind of especially unreasoning beast whom Erasmus says the monks were wont to choose for their tyrant!

The relation into which Erasmus now entered with the Bishop of Cambrai was one of the most agreeable that could present itself to a young scholar. It demanded of him but small services, and those of a kind most attractive to him, and yet it gave him a sense of usefulness which saved his self-respect. As a member of the Bishop's household his living was provided for, and leisure was secured for the studies toward which he was now eagerly looking forward. Once for all we have to bear in mind in studying the life of a scholar, that pure scholarship is never, and never has been, self-supporting. The only question has been how to provide for its maintenance in ways least dangerous to its integrity and least offensive to its own sense of dignity. In our day we are familiar with endowments by which the earlier stages of the scholar's life are made accessible to talent without wealth, but in its later stages scholarship is held to a pretty strict account and is expected to give a very tangible *quid pro quo* for all it receives.

In Erasmus' time this dependence of learning upon endowment was more frankly acknowledged, and might be indefinitely prolonged. Undoubtedly the easiest form of such dependence was the monastic. There is no doubt that Erasmus' *de contemptu mundi* gives a perfectly fair ideal picture of the normal monastic liberty and its suitableness for the scholar, but for him this life had also its dangers and its limitations. Next to the endowment through the monastery there was provision by private patronage. It had come to be more than ever before in Europe, the duty and the pride of all princes, lay and clerical, to devote some part of the revenue which came from their people to promoting their higher intellectual interests. Scholars were thought of as a decoration as indispensable to the well equipped princely court as was the court jester or the private religious counsellor.

With the progress of a new classic culture, all public documents were taking on a higher tone and demanded a more highly trained body of scholars for their preparation. But such a position might become laborious, too mechanical and professional for men of real genius. Then there was the alternative of teaching, either privately in the employ of some rich family, or publicly at a university. In Erasmus' time we find traces of university freedom, but they were not significant of the normal condition of things. The university was a great corporation with a reputation to keep up, and compelled to preserve at least a decent uniformity in its instruction. A man of independent genius could hardly have found himself entirely at his ease there, even if he were able to win one of the endowments by which to live. We shall see that Erasmus was not attracted by the university career, and only resorted to the method of private

tutoring when other resources failed.

Another form of endowment of scholarship was through the application of church foundations to this purpose. Of course this was in a sense a perversion of trusts, but there were many excuses for it. For one thing, the ends of religion and of education have always, under Christianity, been largely identified. Even in our own country, and down to the present moment, endowments for education have been almost primarily thought of as made in the service of religion. The prime function of Christian scholarship has been the maintenance of the religious tradition. So that, when a man was given a "living" out of church funds, it was felt that he might properly make use of this income to carry on his personal studies. Especially if, as a result of those studies, he produced works of religious edification, the purpose of the endowment was not thought to be violated. Furthermore, if with this endowment there were connected distinct duties involving the "cure of souls," no one was shocked if the scholarly holder of the "living" hired a lesser talent with a small percentage of the income to perform these duties, while he himself devoted his leisure to the higher studies for which he was fitted. Such a living may fairly be compared to a university scholarship in our day—as in fact the majority of our American scholarships will be found to have a religious origin.

It must have required an unusual sense of the fitness of things for a man of Erasmus' time to decline so easy and so honourable a means of subsistence. What his own real views on the subject were we shall have occasion to see later when the temptation comes to him. Enough to say here that, at least so far as the cure of souls was concerned, it

seemed to him, in his better moments, a scandal that the man who did the work of a "living" should not receive at least a large part of its emoluments. Doubtless, also, the sense of confinement, always an unbearable one to Erasmus, had its part in making a church benefice unacceptable to him. Another consideration no doubt had its weight. The mediæval scholar had served the cause of religion by agreeing in every detail with its traditions as the organised church handed them to him. The scholar of the Renaissance, though he might be equally devoted to the religious system, thought of his learning as something having an independent right to existence, and might well hesitate to commit himself to such obligations toward the traditional views of religion as were implied in the holding of a clerical office.

Distinctly the most agreeable form of support for the scholar of the early Renaissance was a regular pension from some rich patron. He had no need to feel himself humbled by this relation, for he could always fall back on the pleasant reflection that he was giving back to his patron in honour quite as much as he received from him in money. In fact, this was the very essence of such patronage. The relation was quite different from that of the public official, clerk, secretary, or what not, hired to perform a definite kind of service. It was a relation of honour, not to be reduced to commercial terms. The money given was not paid for the scholar's services; it was given to secure him the leisure needed for the proper pursuit of his own scholarly aims. It bound him only to diligence in pure scholarship, not to a servile flattery of his patron, nor to any direct furtherance of the patron's ends.

Plainly this system was open to abuses; but so is

every relation of honour between men, and even the more exposed to abuse in proportion as it calls upon the principle of honour and not upon that of commercial equivalents. The *quid pro quo* is the scholar's devotion to the highest aims of scholarship, and if he fulfils his part to the best of his ability he may hold up his head in the presence of any man, even in an age of exclusively commercial standards.

All these forms of support were at one time or another employed by Erasmus. He seems to have disliked teaching, both public and private, though the evidence points towards his success, at least in the latter kind. The cure of souls he never undertook, but was willing to accept livings, if he were permitted to resign them for a handsome percentage as pension. Excepting with the bishop of Cambrai he never stood to any patron in the relation of secretary, clerk, librarian, or in any other similar form of service. His choice was a good liberal pension, and as to the *quid pro quo*, there was never in his case any room for doubt.

Whatever else Erasmus was, he certainly was not lazy. The impulse to produce was in him an irresistible one. All he asked was opportunity, and the several patrons who, from time to time, contributed to his support must have felt that on his side the point of honour was fully met. One other consideration will perhaps help us to understand the exact feeling of Erasmus in entering upon what seems to us, perhaps, a condition of personal dependence. How, we may ask, could any man have that confidence in his own talent which would assure him against the dread that after all he might prove a bad investment? The answer is twofold: the man

must have a profound confidence either in the greatness of the cause he stands for or in his own surpassing merit. In Erasmus both these elements of assurance were united. He always thought and spoke of pure scholarship, when applied to the advancement of a pure Christianity, as the noblest occupation of man, and he shared in a high degree that exaggerated sense of personal importance which is the especial mark of the Renaissance scholar.

The acceptance of a pension from a private person was, then, the most untrammelled form of financial dependence which a poor scholar could assume, and it is the form chosen by Erasmus whenever he had an opportunity of choice. His first relation to the bishop of Cambrai was, indeed, intended to be one of actual, definite service. He was to go with him to Italy as his Latin secretary, and might well feel that he was to give a fair equivalent for his support. The journey to Italy, however, was indefinitely postponed. Erasmus says the bishop could not afford it. Meanwhile the young scholar lived at the episcopal court until, as the Italian plan seemed to be abandoned, the bishop gave him money enough to get to Paris. He promised a regular pension, but it was not forthcoming: "such is the way of princes."[26]

As to further detail of the life of Erasmus with the bishop we are quite in the dark. Even how long he was there is not clear and is cheerfully disregarded by most recent writers. It would probably be safe to conclude with Drummond that it was not more than about two years and that Erasmus' residence at Paris, therefore, began about 1491 or 1492, when he was about twenty-five years of age. As he had up to this time consistently complained of every situation in

which he had found himself, we shall be quite prepared to find him making the worst possible of a manner of life which at the best cannot have been too attractive to a lover of ease and comfort.

The organisation of the University was such that the instruction was largely separate from the detail of discipline and maintenance of the student. Each student lived as he could, sought the teaching of such masters as suited his immediate purpose, and presented himself for academic honours whenever he was ready. A student of means lodged at his own cost in a private house or private Hall, and lived subject only to the general discipline of the University and the town. For poor students there existed, as in England, "colleges"—*i. e.*, primarily lodging- and boarding-houses under a stricter oversight. These colleges were not primarily intended to provide instruction, a function which was only gradually assumed by them as their endowments grew to be larger than were needed to provide the ordinary necessities of living. Their teachers were rather tutors or "coaches" than men of independent scholarship; their function was to supplement by repetition and personal attention the public teaching of the more eminent university professors.

The Collége Montaigu, into which Erasmus entered, was a foundation of some antiquity, but during the previous generation had fallen into complete decay, so that nothing was left of it but the buildings. About 1480 it had taken a new lease of life under one John Standonch,[27] who devoted himself to its service. As master of the college he could make something by teaching, and gradually, through his own activity and that of his fellows, had got together enough so that he could give lodging and partial

board to a certain number of poor students. By the year 1493 he was thus partially maintaining over eighty. The rest of their support they got as they could, by begging or otherwise.

Erasmus was, then, a charity boarder and ought, in all reason, to have been grateful for even this poor opportunity of enjoying the privileges toward which he had for years been looking forward as the summit of his hopes. Yet he can nowhere mention these Parisian days without the most doleful complaints of his sufferings from foul air, bad food, and severe discipline. The most famous of these diatribes occurs in the Colloquy called Ἰχθυοφαγία—"The Eating of Fish." Erasmus' theme is here the excessive devotion to formal rules and observances in religion to the sacrifice of more important things. The eating of fish is only a text on which he hangs extremely bold and acute criticism of would-be religious persons, who for their lives would not violate the rules of the Church against the eating of meat, but were ready on the other hand to run into any excesses of fleshly dissipation. The speakers are a butcher and a salt-fishmonger. After they have gone on matching stories for a long time, the fishmonger suddenly breaks out:

> [28] "'Thirty years ago I lived at Paris in a college which has its name from vinegar (*acetum*).' [The Latin form of Montaigu was *Mons acutus*.] The butcher answers: 'Well, that is a name of wisdom! What are you giving us? A salt-fishmonger in such a sour college? No wonder he's such a keen one at quibbles of theology! For there, as I hear, the very walls have theological minds.'
>
> "*Fishm.*—'You're right, but all I got there was a body infected with the worst kind of humours and a

plentiful supply of lice. But let me go on as I began. The college was at that time governed by John Standonch, a man whose disposition (*affectum*) you would not condemn, but in whom you would like to see more discrimination. For you couldn't help greatly approving his regard for the poor, mindful as he was of his own youth passed in extreme poverty. If he had so far relieved the poverty of youths that they might go on with honest study, yet not so far that abundance would have led to extravagance, he would have deserved praise. But he went into the thing with beds so hard, food so coarse and so scanty, vigils and work so severe that within a year the first trial brought many youths of excellent parts and of great promise, some to their deaths, some to blindness, some to madness and not a few to leprosy. Some of these I knew myself, and surely not one escaped danger. Now can't anybody see that that is cruelty to one's neighbour? And not content with this he put on (them) hood and cloak and took from them all animal food—and then he transferred such nursery-gardens as this into far-distant regions. If every one should indulge his impulses (*affectus*) as far as he did, the result would be that the like of these people would fill up the whole world. From such beginnings arose monasteries, which now threaten both kings and pontiffs. It is a pious deed to boast of bringing one's neighbour to piety, but to seek for glory by one's dress or one's food is the part of a Pharisee; it is piety to relieve the want of one's neighbours, and to see to it that they do not abuse the generosity of good men by excess, is good discipline. But to drive your brother by these things into sickness, into madness and death, that is cruelty, that is murder. The intention to kill is perhaps wanting, but the murder is there all the same. What forgiveness shall these men have then? The same as a physician, who, through notable lack of skill, kills a patient. Does anyone say:—"but no one forces them into this mode of life; they come of their own accord; they long to be admitted and are free to leave when they are tired of it"? Ah! An answer worthy of a Scythian. They do ask this, as youths who

> know what is good for them better than a man of years, full of learning and experience! Thus might one excuse himself to a famished wolf, after he had drawn him into a trap with bait. Can one who has put unwholesome or even poisonous food before a frightfully hungry man excuse himself by saying:—"Nobody compels you to eat; you have willingly and gladly devoured what was set before you"? Would he not properly reply:—"You have given me not food but poison"? Necessity is a mighty weapon; hunger is a terrible torment. So let them do away with that high-sounding phrase:—"the choice was free," for he who uses such torments is really using force. Nor has this cruelty ruined poor men alone; it has carried off many a rich man's son and corrupted many a well-born talent.'"

So Erasmus goes on to tell other details of student-life at Montaigu. In the depths of winter a bit of bread was given out for food and they were obliged to draw water from a polluted well. Some of the sleeping-rooms were on the ground-floor and in such close neighbourhood to the common resort that anyone who lived there was sure to get his death or a dangerous illness. Frightful beatings were inflicted even on the innocent, "in order, as they say, to take the ferocity out of them,—for so they call a noble spirit,—and break it down on purpose to make them fit for monasteries. How many rotten eggs were devoured there! What a quantity of foul wine was drunk!"

And then, having made his fishmonger say all the vile things about Montaigu that he can think of, Erasmus, true to his nature, begins to hedge. Perhaps these things have been corrected since, but this is too late for those who are dead or are carrying about the seeds of disease in their bodies. Nor does he say all this from any ill-will to the college, but only to warn

against the corruption of youth through the cruelty of man under the disguise of religion. He protests that if he could see good results from the monastic life he would urge everyone to take the cowl. In fact, however, he seldom goes into a Carthusian house without finding there someone who is either gone silly or is a regular madman. There can be no doubt that the rules for the Collége Montaigu published by Master Standonch in 1501 were sufficiently harsh. They were so made in order to check the abuse of too great freedom for the very young boys admitted to such foundations. In confirmation of Erasmus' picture of the horrors of Montaigu we find regularly quoted Rabelais' famous passage[29] in which the youth Gargantua on his return from Paris combs cannon-balls out of his hair and thus gives occasion to his father and tutor for an attack upon this same "college of vermin" as the haunt of cruelty and wretchedness. When Rabelais wrote this passage he had not yet been at Paris. It is practically certain that he was acquainted with the writings of Erasmus, and the conclusion seems obvious that he borrowed his illustration directly from the *Ichthyophagia*.

This description of "Vinegar College" has been almost universally taken as a serious account of Erasmus' own experience in Paris, and probably it has its foundation of truth. The commonest laws of sanitary decency are a thing almost of our own day, and not much more can be said of the principles of proper food and care of the body. No one could expect much from a charity-school in the fifteenth century. But these stories must be considered in their context. They are introduced, not as actual autobiography, but as illustrations of one of Erasmus' favourite themes, the evils of monasticism, and especially they are made to bear on an idea which

seems to have been almost an *idée fixe* with him,—that all the powers of religion and learning were in league to drive young men into monasteries. As before in his recollections of Deventer and Steyn, so now here in his memories of the Collége Montaigu, this spectre still, after thirty years, haunts his imagination. He forgets that he was enjoying the fruits of the devotion and self-sacrifice of the founders and interprets all their actions by this same governing motive. He had called his schools "*seminaria*" for monks; now he calls his Paris college a "*plantarium*" for the same kind of a crop.

In fact, these early studies at the University were full of profit to Erasmus. He was at the centre of the best culture of the earlier time and the reviving spirit of the new classic learning was beginning to make itself felt. In his references to this experience it suited his purpose and his disposition always to throw contempt upon his teachers and upon all learning except that which seemed to him to reflect the glory of antiquity. Indeed, if he had been forced to content himself with the dry quibbling of the "Scotist" theologians who were still the dominant party at Paris, he would have found himself in dreary company enough. But we find no reason to think that there was any compulsion upon him to take any teaching he did not like. Greek had already begun to make its way as an attainable subject at Paris, and Erasmus was beginning to feel the charm which this, the choicest vehicle of human expression, was to exercise upon his whole life.

His first Paris residence was interrupted by illness, in consequence of which he returned for a time to the bishop of Cambrai. The bishop seems to have been willing to keep him indefinitely at his

court, but not to have provided for his further maintenance elsewhere. With restored health Erasmus was back again at Paris and now, for the first time, on a really independent footing. For the moment he ceased to consider the question of patronage and began to give lessons to private pupils. Beatus, unquestionably prompted by Erasmus in all details, says that "the Englishmen at the university could find no one among the professors of liberal study in the whole place who was able to teach more learnedly or accustomed to teach more conscientiously." And then he goes on to make a comparison between this youth and the two best-known professors of literature at the time in Paris. One of these, Faustus Andrelinus, was evidently a type of the gay, reckless spirits who found in classic study an enjoyment purely intellectual and who used its moral standard as an excuse for all looseness of life. His manner of teaching was "popular" to the point of flippancy, designed rather to catch the applause of the crowd than to merit the approval of the learned. It is to Erasmus' credit that he did not allow his classic enthusiasm to carry away his judgment of this person. The other teacher, Gaguinus, was a more serious scholar, but not so far advanced and not yet regularly teaching publicly.

So it appears that, in spite of his doleful stories, our scholar had as usual been making the most of his time, and we come now happily to a point where evident facts and the testimony of other men can be made use of to show his growing value and power. There seems little reason to doubt that he was now a distinctly popular figure in academic circles. He was in steady demand as a private tutor for young men who could afford to pay well for his services. Among

such youths Englishmen, then as ever since, were naturally most prominent, and it is through this relation to English pupils at Paris that the way was opened for Erasmus to many of the most interesting and important connections of his later life.

During this second Paris residence, Erasmus evidently got into some rather serious scrape, of which we get only vague suggestions in his correspondence. What it was and precisely the nature of the charges it brought upon him we cannot say. It seems to have had some connection with his relation to a mysterious personage, who has been supposed to be almost every possible person from the bishop of Cambrai down. Froude, in his hit-or-miss fashion, suggests that this person, whom Erasmus always refers to as *senex ille*, was the aged Marquis of Veere in Holland, son of a bastard of Duke Philip of Burgundy. Unfortunately for this theory, the Marquis of Veere was already dead and is of interest to Erasmus only on account of his charming widow, who at about this time begins to dawn on his horizon as a possible patroness. Beatus tells us with a word that Erasmus after his Montaigu experience went over (*emigravit*) to a certain noble Englishman who had with him two noble youths, of whom Beatus thinks Lord Mountjoy was one. This Mountjoy was certainly a pupil and afterward a faithful friend of Erasmus, and we have references to the "old man" in letters to Mountjoy which show plainly that the young nobleman was a confidant of the writer in the Paris unpleasantness, whatever that may have been. The same is also true of the other English youth whom Erasmus now met and learned to love, Thomas Grey, son of the Marquis of Dorset. An extract from a letter to him will give us an indication of how our scholar had got on in the art of vigorous

expression. The letter[30] is dated at Paris, 1497 (?), and was evidently written soon after the trouble of which the old man is the alleged cause. It begins with extravagant expressions of affection for Grey. "Of the whole race of men none is dearer to me than you." He would have written him earlier, but dreaded to open up again the wound which he was just hoping would begin to heal.

> "Nothing is more intolerable," he goes on, "than abuse in return for kindness. Would that I might drink so deep of the waters of Lethe that that old man and his insults might wholly flow forth out of my mind. As often as I think of him I not only fall into a rage, but I marvel that so much poison, so much envy, treachery and faithlessness could dwell in a human breast. So help me God! when I think of the scoundrelly soul of that man, the Poets, men so keen, so eloquent, in describing human nature, seem to me either never to have seen poison of this sort or to have been unequal to its description. For what panderer so false, what ruffian so boastful, what old man so ill-conditioned, or what monster so envious, so full of bitterness, so ungrateful, have they ever dared to depict, as this old humbug, who even sets up for a pietist and invents fine names for his very vices? You bid me not to be distressed, and indeed, my dear Thomas, I am bearing the thing patiently when you think how horrible it is. So unexpected misfortunes can but grieve one. How ever could I, in return for my frankness, my kindnesses, my faithfulness, my almost brotherly affection, expect from a man so venerable as he appeared, so noble as he boasted himself to be, so pious as he pretended, such extraordinary abuse? I supposed it to be basest ingratitude not to return favour for favour. I had read that there was a kind of men whom it was safer to offend than to oblige by kindness. I did not believe, until I had learned it by experience, that it was far more dangerous to do good to evil men than evil to good men. For when the

ungrateful rascal found that he was under greater obligations to me than he could repay, he turned his attention away from literature, which he had been wretchedly tormenting up to that time, and bent all his energies to ruining me with his infamous tricks. And when he despaired of doing this by his actions (*laboribus*) he sought to crush me with his tongue steeped in the poison of hell, and he did it, too, as far as he could. That I am alive at all, that I have my health, I ascribe to my books, which have taught me to give way to no storm of fate. It is a blow to a man thus born to crime to find that he does but little harm.

"But not satisfied with raging against me with such fury when I was present, he pursued me when I had fled from him and, out of hatred to me, rages against you, the dearest part of my soul—rages, I say, with that most terrible of human weapons, with slander. O poison of snakes, worse than any aconite, than any froth from the fangs of Cerberus! That a monster like this should gaze upon the fair light of the sun, should breathe,—nay! poison the vital air! That our common earth should bear such a disgrace! The imagination of the Poets was never able to conjure up a mischief so horrible, so pestilent, so accursed that this monster would not easily surpass it. For what Cerberus, what Sphinx, what Chimæra, what Tisiphone, what hobgoblin can rightly be compared with this evil thing which *Gothia* [?] has lately spewed out upon us? What scorpion, what viper, what basilisk has its poison handier? Venomous things seldom give forth their poison except when irritated. Lions repay kindness with kindness; dragons grow gentle under kind treatment; but this old man is made mad by good-will. There is a poisoned soul for you!

"Now that you may see how solid is my proof; if one marks carefully his savage face, the whole habit of his body, does not one seem to see as it were the very image of all vices? And herein is the wisdom of Nature to be praised, that she has pent this soul of deformity in a fitting body. Beneath the bristling

> forest of his eyebrows lurk his retreating eyes with their savage gaze. A brow of stone, that in his evil doing no blush of shame may ever be seen. His nostrils, filled with a grove of bristles, puff out a polypus. His cheeks are drooping, his lips livid, his voice belched out rather than breathed out—such is the man's impotence—you would think him barking rather than speaking. His twisted neck, his crooked legs—nothing that Nature has not branded with some stigma. So we brand criminals and malefactors; so we hang a bell upon a biting dog; so we mark a vicious ox by the hay bound about his horns.
>
> "To share my learning with this base monster! for his sake to waste so much time, talent and energy! If this had gone for naught, I should be less wretched, for now I see that I have sown the dragon's teeth and they are springing up to my destruction."

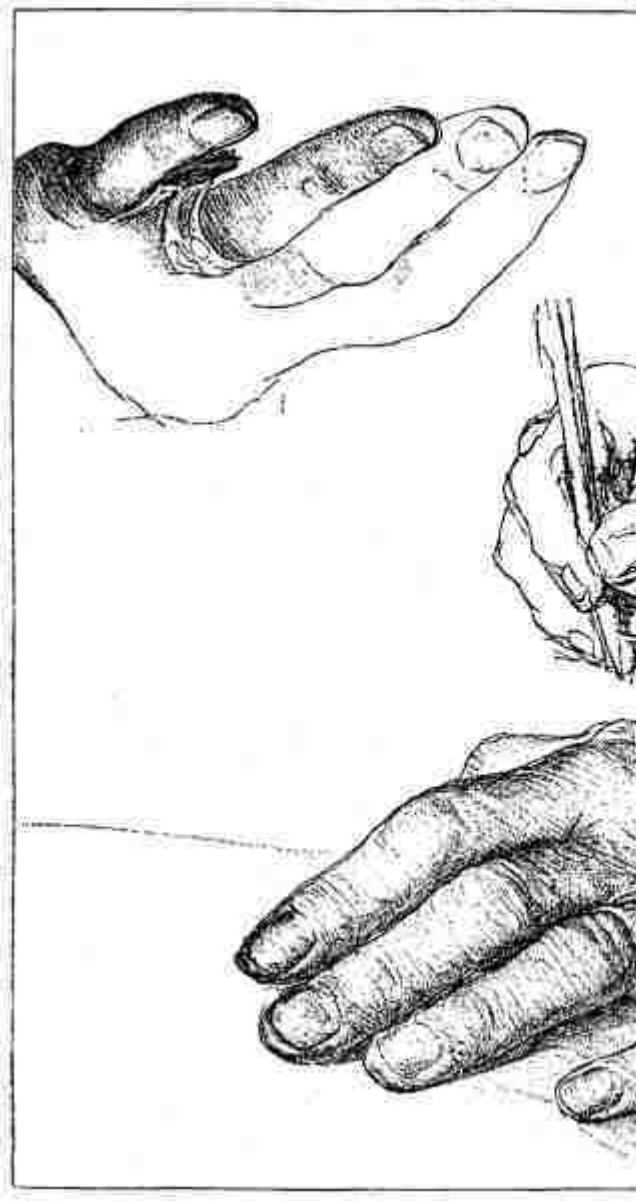
This is about one half of the letter. It is evident that Erasmus was in good training for the choicest specimens of personal abuse which he was later to produce. The remainder of the letter is filled with flattery of young Grey laid on with as liberal a hand as was the abuse of the unfortunate "old man." The burden of this part of the letter is to console Grey for being still under the power of his tormentor, and to urge him to new effort and to self-reliance in his studies. Out of the confusion of vague references and later surmises as to who this unpleasant being was, one can get a certain unity and form such conjecture as one will. It seems probable that he was some Englishman of mature years and of good family who had been sent over to Paris as a guardian for the two young noblemen, Mountjoy and Grey; that he had engaged Erasmus as tutor, to live at their lodgings and to include himself in his instruction; that some cause, perhaps some looseness of morals on Erasmus' part, had brought them to a quarrel, in consequence

of which Erasmus was forced to throw up his engagement. On the other hand, it is clear that no father would have intrusted his son to such a monster of physical and moral deformity as is here described. Just what Erasmus means by saying that "Gothia" was responsible for him I cannot make out. The whole episode is interesting only as throwing light on the development of our scholar in his style and his character.

That Erasmus, eager and diligent student as he surely was, did not entirely escape the allurements of the Latin Quarter is plain from later references of his own. Probably he is referring to some such experiences in a letter[31] written about this time to the friend whom Mr. Froude jauntily calls William Gauden, and who is the same William Hermann of Gouda to whom we have already alluded. This William had evidently written him a reproachful letter, but we do not learn clearly the grounds of his reproof. Erasmus ascribes his irritation to the tattling of some enemy and beseeches him at great length to trust rather his own personal knowledge and his memory of their lifelong friendship than any such calumny. He represents himself as plunged in the depths of misery. He would rather die than endure longer the burden of such a life. It is not life at all; it is mere existence. Doubtless this is mostly rhetoric, but the true state of the writer's mind seems to come out in a passage in which he refers to certain definite persons well known to the receiver, though obscure to us. The upshot of his gloomy reflections is:

> "This is the kind of a moral atmosphere (*moribus*) we have to live in; and so we have to follow that saying of Chilo: 'So love as if thou wert one day to hate, and so hate as if thou wert one day to love.'"

This letter illustrates well traits of Erasmus which were to become very marked in his future work. He was already showing that joy in the idea of being persecuted which later seems to have reacted on his memory of his earliest years. It flattered his vanity to think that men cared enough about him to abuse him, and such abuse gave him an added claim upon the devotion of his friends. His nature demanded affection and admiration, and he was ready to repay them in kind, so long as he thereby incurred no lasting or burdensome obligation.



HOLBEIN'S STUDIES FOR THE HANDS OF E

These singular contradictions of Erasmus' nature are most clearly brought out in his early correspondence with his friend Battus, a young man whom he met at Cambrai, and who became tutor to the son of the Marchioness of Veere. In connection with Battus, also, we learn to know Erasmus for the first time as a suitor for patronage. The Battus letters, some score in number, cover the period just before and just after his first trip to England, that is, about the year 1500. We are to think of him at this time as firmly fixed in his determination to be a scholar and, to this end, to get to Italy as soon as ever it might be possible. He wanted to take his doctor's degree there, and thought of Italy as a scholar's paradise. But to gain this great privilege he was not prepared for every sacrifice. One is apt to think of Erasmus as a wanderer, and with good reason, but after all he had little of the typical Bohemian in him. He was, it is true, a poor youth, but his poverty was always a comfortable poverty. There was nothing, apparently, to prevent him from taking his staff in his hand and making his way on foot, if need were, as many another poor scholar had done, to the goal of his desires. That was Luther's method of seeing Italy, under a very different impulse. Probably nothing would have done so much to chase away the megrims that were always pestering him. He would have had less reason to complain of his digestion and his bad sleeping—but if he could not have complained he would, perhaps, have been unhappier still. Meanwhile, he had to have books, he must eat only just such food as seemed to suit him, he kept a horse, and could not think of a journey without at least one servant and two horses. Italy seemed indefinitely far away. Private tutoring was a slippery source of revenue; frequent visitations of the plague

scattered his pupils and he had to cast about him for ways and means. There were two resources: a place with an income and, presumably, with duties attached to it, or a patron. For obvious reasons, he preferred the latter.

Battus, his dear Battus, was pretty comfortably fixed at the castle of Tournehens on the island of Walcheren, the residence of the Marchioness of Veere. He was a good fellow and might be counted on to do his friend a good turn. We have Erasmus, then, in the Battus letters in an entirely new character,—as the flatterer of the great for his own personal advantage. The earliest indication of relations with the marchioness is in a Paris letter[32] to Battus, which begins:

> "I can quite understand, Battus, best of men, how surprised you are that I don't fly to you at once, now that our affair has turned out so much better than either of us dared to hope. But when you know my reasons you will cease to wonder and will see that I have consulted your advantage no less than my own. I can hardly tell you how delighted I was at your letter. Already I am seeing visions of a happy life with you. What freedom to chatter away together! How we will live in common with our Muses! I just long to be free from this hateful slavery. 'Why then hesitate?' you say. You will see that I do so not without reason. I had not expected your messenger so soon. There are some little sums due me here, and you know very little is a great thing for me. I have unfulfilled obligations with certain persons, which I could not leave without injury. I am just beginning a month with the count; I have paid my room-rent," etc.

Then follows an account of some troubles about certain manuscripts and money lost by unsafe messengers, and then he returns to the subject of the

marchioness.

"I don't need to urge you, dear Battus, for I know your loyalty and your affection, to consider at once my profit and my dignity. I am not a little in dread of a court and I am very conscious of my unlucky star. I rejoice greatly that the Lady is so favourably disposed towards me, but what says the *antistes*? what hope does he offer? Was ever anything colder? I would rather you had named a fixed sum than talked about a great one. I will not remind you of Vergil's line

> "'... *varium et mutabile semper,*
> *Fœmina* ...'

for I count her not among common women, but among those of manly quality (*viragines*). Yet how many are there in that place who care for my writings? or is there anyone who does not hate learning altogether? My whole fortune depends upon you. But if—which Jove forbid!—the affair should fall out contrary to both our wishes,—you, burdened with debt as you are, will be worse off in that respect, and what help, pray, can you be to me?

"I will not admit that your zeal for me is any hotter than mine for you; but I am sure we ought to take the greatest care not to be too eager in this matter. I write this not as having changed my opinion or as being fickle in my intentions, but to rouse your watchfulness; for we are both in the same position. Now if I hadn't so high an opinion of your loyalty, your prudence and your carefulness that, when I have turned the thing over to you I feel that I can sleep on both ears, I might be alarmed at this beginning of the business as at a very unfavourable omen. They have sent me a two-for-a-cent hired nag and an allowance for the journey that is just about nothing at all. Now, my dear James, if the beginning is so cold will the end be likely to boil? When will there be a more honourable or more fitting chance for you to ask a favour in my name than now, when they will have to

get me away from this city and from such favouring circumstances? With such a pittance I could hardly come on foot; how should I manage it on horseback and with two companions? If the affair is to be paid for with my Lady's money, as I suppose, this beginning doesn't suit me; but if it is at your expense, I like it still less, for it would not only be unfair, but it would have to be done with borrowed money. What is more unlike the man you have always taken me for, than to come flying at the first nod and especially under such conditions? Who wouldn't think me either a greenhorn or a knave or at any rate in the last extremity? Who wouldn't despise me? If I weren't so awfully fond of you, Battus, my dear fellow, so that to live with you would repay me for any inconvenience, these things might turn me from my plans; but they don't move me in the least. I am only warning you to keep up my dignity with all diligence. Now you ask my opinion and here it is:—I will arrange my affairs here, collect my writings and settle up my business. Meanwhile you will be copying out what I send you. Write me, by the lad who they say is shortly coming hither to study, precisely how the land lies; then, when you have copied the Laurentius, send by the same lad who brings it—I mean Adrian—an allowance for the journey and some very definite statement; an allowance, mind you, suitable for me. I can't come at my own expense, dead broke as I am, and it is not right that I should leave my present fair enough position. Besides I want you to send me a better horse, if you can. I am not asking for a splendid Bucephalus, but one that a respectable man would not be ashamed to ride; and you understand that I need two horses, for I am determined to bring my servant and I intend this second horse for him. You will easily persuade my Lady of all this. You have an excellent case and I well know you are clever enough to make a good case out of the very worst. If she refuses to do this—well then, I pray you, how will she ever give a pension if she would refuse my travelling expenses? Now, then, you understand why I had to postpone our writing, as I said at the beginning, and I am sure you will approve

> it. I have told you how to keep up my dignity and all you have to do is to push the thing as fast as you can. I'll not be napping here; do you keep on the watch there."

This letter is one of the most important revelations of Erasmus' methods of providing for himself. Battus, his friend, had apparently held out to him a prospect of nothing less than a regular settlement at the court of the Marchioness Anna. Erasmus speaks especially of a settled life of study, with Battus as the chief attraction. But he is not going to give himself away too easily. He admits that he is at the end of his resources, but it would never do to let my Lady know this. His cue is to raise his own value in her eyes. So he delays, on the plea of important engagements; he reminds Battus that his stake in the affair is the same as his own—though one hardly sees why—and he urges him to caution lest he seem too eager in his suit. He flatters him with praise of his eloquence and with expressions of entire confidence. It is not a guileless youth whom we meet here, but a man of the world, conscious of himself to the point of morbidness, and yet willing to go pretty far along the road of sycophancy to the great.

The journey to Tournehens took place in the winter of 1497. In his account of it in a letter[33] to Mountjoy, Erasmus figures himself as the especial victim of hostile gods. He might have been Hannibal crossing the Alps, so magnificent is his language. Even the testimony of the oldest inhabitant is not omitted in proof of the terrors of the way. It is worth noticing that the gorgeous spectacle of trees encrusted with ice, the deep-drifted snow, the castle gleaming in a complete icy shroud, roused in

Erasmus no sense of beauty or of grandeur. He was occupied solely with his own discomforts and describes all this as so much evidence of a malignant fate.

> "We reached the princess Anna of Veere but just alive. What shall I say of the gentleness, the kindness, the liberality of this woman! I am aware that the exaggerations of fine writers are wont to be suspected, especially by those who have some skill at such things; but I beg you to believe that I exaggerate nothing;—nay rather that the truth goes beyond my skill. Nature never brought forth a being more modest, more clever, more spotless, more kindly. To put it all in one word:—her kindness to me was as far beyond my merits as the malice of that old scamp was contrary to my deserts. She, without any effort of mine, loaded me with as many kindnesses as he, after my endless kindness to him, heaped insults upon me. And Battus, dear fellow,—what shall I say of him, the simplest and most affectionate soul in the world! Now at last I really begin to hate those ingrates. To think that I should have been the slave of those monsters so long!"

We seem to have here a reference to his *bête noire*, the Paris persecutor, with whom Mountjoy was in some way associated.

The same tone of extreme laudation is kept up in a short and hurried letter[34] sent back to Battus from Antwerp on his way home. He has evidently been well treated, but is not yet at his ease about future favours from the lady. "I will fly back," he writes, "as soon as ever I can, if the gods permit." The remaining letters of this correspondence may belong to a later period, but will serve here to show how Erasmus continued his suit. While he is exhausting the language of flattery about his fair patron, he makes

mysterious allusions to possible checks upon her liberality. She is in trouble; there are demands made upon her by unworthy persons. Finally it appears that she married someone quite below her station. The burden of Erasmus' song is that Battus ought to get ahead of these other claimants on the lady's bounty and make sure of his case before it is too late. One letter[35] shows downright ill-temper towards his dear friend, which he partly excuses on the ground of continued ill-health. Battus, it seems, had been urging him to write something, probably as an equivalent for favours to come. He replies:

> "I hope to die if I ever in my life so hated to write anything as I did those trifles, nay, those Gnathonisms, which I have written for my Lady, for the Provost and for the Abbot. I know you will say this is my ill-temper; but you won't say that, Battus, if you think of my condition or if you consider how hard it is to force the mind to the writing of a great work, and how much harder yet, when it is all in a glow, to have it called off to other and trifling things. Because you haven't tried this yourself you fancy that my mind is always in perfect order, always on the alert, as yours is when you are enjoying the greatest possible leisure. Don't you understand that there is no worse burden than a mind wearied by writing, and don't you think I am doing enough here to satisfy those whose favours I enjoy? You are asking me for bales of books, but you don't help me to get the leisure which the writing of books demands. It isn't enough for you if I shall some day immortalise our friendship and the favour of my Lady by my books, but I must be writing you six hundred letters every day. It is now a year since you promised me money and meanwhile you send me nothing but hopes: 'I don't despair, I will push your case with all zeal.'—This sort of thing has been crammed into my ears too long; it makes me sick. And finally you lament the hard fortune of your mistress. You seem to me to be ailing with another's sickness.

> She neglects her fortune; you feel the pain! She fools and trifles with her N. and you snarl out: 'She hasn't anything to give.' Well! the only thing I see clearly is that if she gives nothing for these reasons she will never give anything, for reasons of this sort are never wanting to the great. How little it would be, with such vast wealth, fairly running to waste, to send me two hundred francs. She has plenty to keep those cowled whoremongers, those low-lived wretches,—you know whom I mean,—but she has nothing to provide leisure for a man who might write books worthy to live—if I may brag a little of myself. She gets into many a tight place, but it's her own fault, if she prefers to keep that pretty fellow rather than a grave and serious man, as becomes her age and sex. If she doesn't change her mind I foresee still greater troubles;—and yet I am not writing in anger against her, for indeed I love her as I ought, considering what she has done for me. But, come now, how can it hurt her fortune if I get two hundred francs? In seven hours she will never know it. The whole business comes to this: that we get the money out of her, if not in cash, then from her banker, so that I can draw it here at Paris. You have been writing letters and letters to her in this affair, asking, hinting, going round about; but what could be more useless? You ought to have watched your chance, gone at it carefully and then put it through boldly; now the same thing has got to be done, but too late. I hope to die, but I believe you might have carried it through as I wish, if you had only taken hold of it with more spirit. You can be a little more pushing in your friend's cause without offending my modesty.... Good-bye, my dear Battus, and take in good part what I have written, not in temper nor in a panic, but as to the man who is the very dearest of all men to me."

Another letter,[36] written from Orleans after his return from England, begins with similar references to some misunderstanding and goes on to the most barefaced of all Erasmus' begging efforts. Here occurs his first appeal for a church living, and this plainly

not as a makeshift, but as the beginning of a regular speculation in livings:

> "Then persuade her to look out for some church living for me so that when I come back I may have a quiet place to devote myself to my books. And not this only; give her some reason, the best you can make up for yourself, why she should promise me the first of the many livings she has. A pretty good one if not the best, and one that I can change for a better whenever it turns up. Of course I know there are many seeking for livings, but say that I am a man apart, one whom, if she compare him with all others, etc., etc.—you know your good old way of pouring out lies for your Erasmus. See to it that your Adolphus writes the same things, most seductive petitions namely, at your dictation. Keep it up until the promise of a hundred francs be fulfilled and if possible let it be handed over to your Adolphus, so that if,—which Heaven forbid!—any accident should take away the mother, I may get it from the son. Put in at the end that I have complained in my letters that I am suffering as Jerome often complains he suffered, from loss of eyesight and that I look forward to beginning to study as Jerome did with ears and tongue alone. Persuade her, with what elegant words you can, that she send me some sapphire or other gem that is good for strengthening the eyes. I would have written her myself what gems have this power, only I haven't my Pliny by me; do you find out for yourself from your medical man."

We have but one letter[37] from Erasmus to the lady of his hopes. It was written after his return from England and is an excellent illustration of the type of literature it represents. It is really an essay in classical composition, with its object, the getting of money, partly concealed under the cover of literary digression. This was probably the kind of thing which Erasmus liked to call *nugæ* and which he affected to consider a waste of time. He begins with

a fantastic allusion to three other Annas, the sister of Dido, the mother of Samuel, and the grandmother of Jesus. These have all been sufficiently lauded by great writers. He will now proceed to add her as a worthy fourth to the list. We may spare ourselves his fulsome eulogies of the woman whom he has treated in his letters to Battus with something pretty close to contempt, and will quote only a specimen. He has shown how the great men of antiquity favoured the scholars of their day:—

> "But I, thou muse of mine, would not change thee for any Mæcenas or any Cæsar. As for what I can give in return, I will strive, as far as this little talent and this manly strength of mine may go, that future ages shall know my Mæcenas and shall marvel that one woman at the ends of the earth strove to revive by her benevolence the cause of letters corrupted by the ignorance of the unskilled, cast down by the fault of princes, neglected through the indolence of men; that she would not suffer the labours of Erasmus, deserted by splendid promise-makers, despoiled by a tyrant, buffeted by all the blows of fortune, to fall away into poverty. Go on then, as thou hast begun. My writings, thy foster-children, stretch forth suppliant hands to thee and beseech thee by the fortune which thou spurnest when favourable and bearest bravely when hostile, by their own ever hostile fates, against which they stand by thy favour alone, and by the love of that excellent queen—I mean the ancient Theology—whom the divine Psalmist (as Jerome interprets) says stood at the right hand of God, not in foul rags as she is now seen in the fooleries of the sophists, but in golden vestments, girt with varied colours, to whose recovery from the mould all my vigils are devoted."

Then he becomes more explicit: two things he must have,—the trip to Italy and the doctor's degree, both of them really follies; he says:

> "for it is quite true, as Horace tells us, that no one changes his intellect by running over the sea, and the shadow of a big word will not make one a hair's breadth more learned; but one must fit one's conduct to the times as they are and nowadays, I will not say the vulgar, but even those who are at the very top of learning, think no one can be truly a learned man unless he is called "*magister noster*," though Christ himself, the prince of theologians, forbids it. In former times no one was called "*doctus*" because he had bought the title of Doctor, but they were called Doctors who by putting forth books had given evident witness of their learning."

A very apt and pretty comment on the doctor-fabrication of our own day and land.

He concludes with certain definite statements as to the work he has in hand, which show that in spite of all his complaints he was going steadily on with his studies and with his production as well. They show further that he was perfectly sincere in his declarations that he needed money in order that he might do a kind of work from which he could hope for little pecuniary profit excepting in the form of payment for dedications. The Veere episode throughout is full of mysteries. We have no means whatever of knowing how long it went on, how often, or for how long periods, Erasmus was a guest at Tournehens, nor how much help he actually received from his noble patroness. The only date which clearly connects this correspondence with other events is a reference in the letter to the Marchioness to the anniversary of his departure from England, and that is, on other accounts, extremely uncertain. We may safely guess, however, that this connection covers several years just before and just after 1500. Battus died in 1502 and by that time the

Lady Anna had contracted a marriage "*plusquam servile*." The letter[38] which tells these facts was written the same year at Louvain, whither Erasmus says he had fled from the plague. He complains that he has little chance of earning anything there and yet says he had declined an offer of a place to teach made to him by the magistrates. "I am wholly devoted to the study of Greek and have not been playing with my work; for I have got along so well that I can write fairly in Greek whatever I wish to say, and that *ex tempore*."

CHAPTER III
FIRST VISIT TO ENGLAND
1498-1500

MR. SEEBOHM, in his amiable study of the Oxford Reformers,[39] is inclined to find the motive of Erasmus' first visit to England in his desire to pursue his studies, and especially that of Greek, under circumstances more favourable than he could find elsewhere; but connecting this visit with his earlier experiences and especially recalling the struggle for maintenance in which he was just then engaged, we can hardly fail to find at least suggestions of other motives. That his visit did, in fact, powerfully influence his study and his thought there can be little doubt.

The immediate occasion of the journey, which we may safely place in the summer or autumn of 1498, was an invitation of young Lord Mountjoy. Of all the English youths whom Erasmus had known intimately at Paris, Mountjoy was the favourite. He seems to have been sincerely attached to his teacher and to have done his part in making easier for him the rugged path of pure scholarship. Writing from England to Robert Fisher, another of these young men, who was then in Italy, Erasmus says[40]:

> "You would have seen me there, too, long since had not Lord Mountjoy, even as I was girded for the journey, carried me off to his own England. For whither would I not follow a youth so cultivated, so

> gentle, so amiable? I would follow him, so help me God! to the infernal regions."

The English trip must be regarded in a way as a substitute for the Italian. He was "girded" for Italy in every way but one. He could not find the money, and he took this chance of living on that English generosity of which he had made so successful trial at Paris. Nor was he in any way disappointed. During the year and a half, perhaps, of his first visit he was entertained by one and another of the patrons of English learning, or by some of the English scholars themselves—for scholarship in England was taking on that character which it has ever since maintained, of being joined with wealth and station. This was a type of scholarship so far unfamiliar to Erasmus and it made its due impression upon him. He liked everything in England. He writes to Fisher:

> "You will ask me how I like your England. Well, if you ever believed me in anything, my dear Robert, I pray you believe me in this, that nothing has ever pleased me so much. I have found here a climate pleasant and healthful, and such cultivation and learning, not of the hair-splitting and trivial sort, but profound, exact and classic, both in Latin and in Greek, that now I feel no great longing for Italy, except for what is to be seen there. When I hear my friend Colet I seem to be listening to Plato's self. Who does not marvel at the complete mastery of the sciences in Grocyn? Was ever anything keener, more profound or more acute than the judgment of Linacre? Has Nature ever made a more gentle, a sweeter or a happier disposition than Thomas More's?"

There is a touch of sincerity about these expressions, in spite of their conventional form, which is borne out by the whole future relation of

Erasmus to the English group of scholars. For the first time in his life he forgets to grumble and has no occasion to beg.



THOMAS MORE.

FROM THE DRAWING BY HOLBEIN, IN WINDSOR CA

In England, too, Erasmus found himself, for the first time, in relations with men who he had to confess were his superiors in many ways. We know nothing of the circumstances of Erasmus' arrival, but it seems that Mountjoy soon sent him on to Oxford and that he was received there in a college of Augustinian Canons known as the College of St. Mary. So far as any place could be called his English headquarters, this was it. The prior of the college, Richard Charnock, was far from being the kind of person Erasmus became so fond of representing as the natural head of a monastic establishment. He was a cultivated gentleman and sound scholar after Erasmus' own heart and in the friendliest relations with the most "advanced" of the early English humanistic scholars. On just what terms Erasmus lived at St. Mary's is not quite clear. He refers often to the Prior's "hospitality," but we find him asking Mountjoy to send him "his money" (*pecunias meas*) at once that he might repay Charnock his many obligations. Erasmus was very careful in his use of all the parts of speech except adjectives, and this phrase seems to indicate on the one hand that he was a boarder at the college, and on the other that he had some regular understanding with Mountjoy as to a supply of money.

Through prior Charnock, probably, Erasmus was introduced to the leading scholars of the University. Among these by far the most interesting to him was John Colet, a young man of just his own age, who was living at Oxford as a private or independent teacher. He was a man of admirable character, of rare acuteness of mind, already well out of the fogs

of mediæval scholasticism which were still clinging around Erasmus. Colet seems at once to have impressed himself upon the visitor as a new type. He was, first of all, a man of fine culture, the son of a Lord Mayor of London, reared in ease and plenty and given from the outset that wider outlook into the world of thought which Erasmus was just beginning to get for himself. He had enjoyed the great advantage of the Italian journey with all that it implied by the way. He was a theologian, but as far as possible removed from the quality which had made the very name of theology hateful in Erasmus' ears. At Paris, as he continually complains, theology still meant the futile struggle of hair-splitting schools of a pseudo-philosophy to explain the how and the why of Christian truth. For the truth itself they seemed to have little comprehension and little care. New light was coming into theology, as into all science, through the larger and freer dealing with ancient learning; but how to connect this learning of antiquity with the present problems of religion and of life—that was the all-important question to every serious mind.

That the very clever mind of Erasmus was already fixed on serious things there can be no doubt. He was thirty years old; he had largely overcome the mechanical difficulties of the scholar's work. He had read the vast mass of the Latin classic authors with great diligence and with profound personal interest. He had had his fling as well as his trials at Paris. If he had aimed to be merely a classicist he was well fitted to join the great army of those flippant scoffers who had already brought discredit upon learning by failing to give it a serious and a modern content. Learning, divorced from life, was already beginning to lose its hold upon many circles of European

interest. Every such failure was only another argument given to the surviving mediæval methods why men should not desert them until something better had been found.

And if Erasmus was fitted by his training to imitate the gay and brilliant shallowness of the Italian Humanists, he was perhaps still more drawn their way by the natural cast of his mind. He liked bright things and bright people. He was fond of ease and comfort. His interests were largely bounded by his own personality. He loved praise and could not endure reproach. He demanded friendship, but would not be bound by any ties that threatened his own convenience. His vanity called for continual food, and he often provided it by protestations of modesty which called forth devoted expressions from his admirers. The impression of his quality at this time is not a lovely one, and yet he was plainly more attractive in person than he is to us in his correspondence. He made friends and, on the whole, considering his motto, "to love as if thou wert some day to hate and hate as if thou wert some day to love," he kept them remarkably well.

The English visit was a critical time to Erasmus. His mood in the months just before had been one of discouragement, just the mood which might well have turned a man of his tastes and apparent character into a life of brilliant literary flippancy. A glimpse into his own reflections on this point is given in the letter[41] to Mountjoy above quoted, written from Oxford:

> "I am getting on here splendidly and better every day. I can't tell you how delighted I am with your England, partly through custom which softens all hard

> things, partly through the kindness of Colet and Prior Charnock; for there was never anything more gentle, sweeter or more lovable than their characters. With two such friends I could live in farthest Scythia. What Horace wrote, that even the common people see the truth sometimes, experience has taught me:—you know his well-worn saying that things which begin the worst are wont to have the best ending. What was ever more inauspicious than my coming here?—and now everything goes better from day to day. I have cast away all that depression from which you used to see me suffering. For the rest, I beseech you, my pride, as formerly, when my courage failed, you supported me with your own, so now, though mine is not lacking, let not yours desert me."

Erasmus in England found his better self awakening to renewed courage and exertion. Even before he came over, he had begun to see that perhaps a solution of his life-problem might be found in a deliberate rejection of the mediæval method in theology by throwing it all away and going straight back, first to the original documents of Christianity themselves, and then to the early commentators on Christianity who had expounded these documents under the direct influence of the classic culture. Jerome, especially, seemed to him worthy of the most careful study and of a new and scientific edition. This was the "great work" to which he refers in his correspondence with Battus as being interrupted by Battus's trivial demands for some show-pieces to please their patroness.

Underneath all his thought there lay continually this purpose to apply his learning to making clearer the ways of God to man. The Oxford friends were eminently men to strengthen his intention, and we may feel sure that here was the real source of

Erasmus' higher content in England. Let us try to make acquaintance with them through Erasmus' own words; and first with Colet, beginning at the point of their first meeting. In a long letter bearing date 1519, just twenty years later, and written under the first shock of Colet's death, Erasmus gives a short but feeling sketch of his friend's life. This sketch[42] forms the basis of all subsequent treatment of Colet.

> "On his return from Italy he chose to leave his home and go to Oxford, and there publicly, and without pay, he expounded all the epistles of Paul. There I began his acquaintance, sent thither by some divine leading. He was then about thirty years old, two or three months younger than I. He had never taken nor tried for a degree in theology and yet there was no doctor in the place, either of theology or of law, and no abbot or person of any rank whatever, who did not go to hear him and even take his note-book along,—a credit alike to the learning of Colet and to the interest of those hearers, that old men were not ashamed to learn of a younger one and doctors from one who was not a doctor. The doctor title was voluntarily offered him afterward and he accepted it rather to please his friends than because he really cared for it.
>
> "From this sacred task he was called to London by the favour of King Henry VII. and made Dean of St. Paul's, president of his congregation, whose writings he so dearly loved. This is the highest dignity in England, though there be others with more ample revenue. This man, as if called to the labour, rather than to the dignity of the office, restored the decayed discipline of his congregation and, a novelty in that place, undertook to preach on every holy day in his own church, besides the extraordinary sermons which he delivered in the royal chapel and in various other places. In his preaching he did not take his subject by fragments from the Gospels or the apostolic letters, but he proposed some one topic and carried it out to

the end in successive discourses: as for example the Gospel of Matthew, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer. He preached to crowded audiences in which were generally to be found the foremost men of the city and of the royal court.

"The Dean's table, which had formerly under the name of hospitality degenerated into luxury, he brought within frugal limits."

The occasion of eating was improved by learned and serious conversation.

"He delighted especially in friendly discussions, which he often prolonged until late into the night, but all his discourse was of learning or of Christ. He often asked me to walk with him and then he was as gay as anyone, but ever a book was the companion of our walk and our discourse was still of Christ. He was impatient of all uncleanness and could not bear to hear language ungrammatical and defiled with barbarisms. All his household furniture, his dress, his books, he wished to have perfectly nice, but did not strive for show. He wore only sad-coloured garments, whereas priests and theologians there are generally clad in purple. His outer dress was always of plain woollen, lined with fur in winter. The whole income of his see he gave over to his agent to be spent in household matters and gave away his own ample income for pious purposes."



JOHN COLET.

FROM THE DRAWING BY HOLBEIN, IN WINDSOR

Then follows an account of the endowment by Colet of the famous St. Paul's school, to which he gave the best energies of his later years.

> "While everyone approved this work, many wondered at his building a splendid house on the grounds of the Carthusian monastery near the king's palace at Richmond. He used to say that he was preparing a retreat for his old age when he should be unequal to his work or broken by disease. It was his intention to live there the philosopher's life with two or three choice friends, among whom he used to count me, but his death came too soon."

The careful analysis of Colet's character which concludes this sketch is quite different from Erasmus' usual undiscriminating praise of what suited himself. He presents Colet to us as an eminently human personage, inclined by nature to all the joys of earthly life, and yet subduing all lower temptations by the force of his unconquerable will. He was a man of strongly marked individual opinions, yet so careful of the feelings of others that he avoided discussion excepting among friends or when it was forced upon him. At such times, however, he spoke as one compelled by an inner impulse of which he was no longer master. In the first interview of which we have any record, at a dinner at St. Mary's, in Oxford, a discussion arose on the very speculative question of the meaning of the story of Cain's sacrifice. Erasmus and an unknown theologian took sides against Colet[43]:

> "'Not Hercules himself can prevail against two' say the Greeks, but he alone conquered us all. He seemed

> to be intoxicated with a sacred frenzy and to utter things more lofty and more noble than belong to men. His voice took on another sound, his eyes a different expression, his face and figure were changed; he seemed to grow larger, and at times to be inspired with a something divine."

So in this later, more careful account Erasmus refers to Colet's view of Thomas Aquinas. He himself, it appears, had come to have some respect for Aquinas and had made various attempts to draw out Colet on the subject. He had so far failed, but one day, returning again to the charge, he found Colet's eyes fixed upon him,

> "as if watching whether I were in jest or in earnest. But when he saw that I was speaking from my heart, he cried out, as if inspired by some spirit:—'Don't speak to me of the man! If he had not been a most arrogant creature he would not have defined all things with such boldness and with such haughtiness. If he had not had something of the spirit of this world, he would not so have corrupted the whole teaching of Christ with his profane philosophy.'"

The result was that Erasmus looked more carefully into his Aquinas and greatly revised his judgment of him.

Remembering that this sketch of Colet was written two or three years after Luther had nailed his Theses on the church door at Wittenberg, we may gain from it a good insight into the views not only of Colet, but of Erasmus as well, upon many of the doubtful questions of the early Reformation days. Nowhere, perhaps, in Erasmus' writings do we find more temperate and cautious suggestions. Already we may discern in clear outline the determining

motives of his position in the great struggle. In his pet abhorrence, the monastic system, Colet went with him to the point of free criticism of faithless and irreligious monks, but, like Erasmus himself when he was, so to speak, in the witness-box, he had nothing to say against the monastic life in itself. He had little to do with monks and gave them nothing at his death, but he professed great affection for the life of seclusion and often declared that he would enter it himself

> "if he could find anywhere an order really devoted to apostolic living. When I was setting out for Italy, he commissioned me to inquire on this point, saying that he had heard that in Italy there were some monks really sensible and pious. For he did not follow the vulgar opinion which calls that 'religion' which is sometimes only weakness of intellect. He used to say that he nowhere found greater virtue than among married people, since they were restrained from falling into many vices by their natural affections, by the care of children and by their household duties.
>
> "On this account he was more charitable towards the fleshly sins of the clergy. He used to say that he hated pride and avarice in a priest more than if he kept a hundred concubines. Not indeed that he thought incontinence in priest or monk was a trifling fault, but that the other vices seemed to him farther removed from true piety. There was no kind of person more hateful to him than those bishops who acted more like wolves than like shepherds, commending themselves to the crowd by their sacred offices, their ceremonies, their benedictions and indulgences when really they were heart and soul devoted to this world, to glory and to greed.
>
> "From Dionysius and the other early Fathers he had learned certain things which he did not so far adopt as ever to go against the laws of the church, but yet far enough to make him less opposed to those who

did not approve the worship everywhere in the churches of images painted or in wood, stone, bronze, gold and silver. He had the same feeling toward those who doubted whether a priest openly and plainly wicked could properly perform the sacraments;—not by any means that he favoured their error! but in wrath against those who by a life openly and every way corrupt gave ground for such suspicions. The numerous colleges, founded in England at vast expense, he used to say only stood in the way of good learning and were nothing but so many enticements to laziness. Nor did he have a very high opinion of the Universities where the all-corrupting ambition and greed of the professors destroyed the integrity of all science.

"While he strongly approved the auricular confession, saying that nothing gave him such comfort and good feeling, yet he as strongly condemned its too anxious and frequent repetition. While it is the custom in England for priests to celebrate mass almost every day, he was content to do so on Sundays and holidays and very rarely on other occasions.... Yet he by no means condemned the practice of those who go daily to the Lord's table. Although he was himself a most learned man, yet he disapproved of that painful and laborious learning which, gathered from a knowledge of all branches and the reading of all authors, is as it were lugged in by every handle. He always said that in this way the native soundness and simplicity of the mind were worn away and men were made less sane and less adapted to the innocence and to the pure affection of Christianity. He greatly admired the apostolic letters, but so reverenced the wonderful majesty of Christ that compared with this the writings of the apostles seemed to become as it were defiled.... There are countless things accepted to-day in the universities from which he greatly differed and which he used to discuss at times with his intimate friends. With others, however, he concealed his views for fear of two evils, first, that he would make the matter worse, and second, that he would ruin his own

> reputation. There was no book so heretical that he would not read it carefully, saying that he often got more profit from it than from the books of those who make such fine definitions and often come to worship the leaders of their school and sometimes even themselves."

In this affectionate, but at the same time discriminating, review of Colet's life and character we may easily see outlined certain ideals of Erasmus himself. He admires in his friend a quality of discretion, which, under some circumstances, might come pretty near to duplicity. On many matters he had two opinions, one for himself and his intimate friends, and another for the public. That is a condition of mind that will do very well so long as the great issues of a dispute are not brought out into sharp relief. In the times that try men's souls, when events will no longer bear nice distinctions, but demand that men shall stand up and be counted—yes or no—on the question of the hour, then this quality of discretion may be the ruin of a man. It was toward precisely such a crisis that the affairs of the Christian Church were rapidly tending when Erasmus learned to know John Colet in the delightful intercourse of the college at Oxford. Colet had the good fortune to die (in 1519) before the supreme test came to him. Erasmus was to spend the best energy of his declining years in the struggle to live up to the difficult standard of having one opinion for himself and another for the world.

In the several subjects touched upon in the review of Colet's opinions we hear plainly the echoes of discussions, growing ever more intense, upon the secondary issues of the Reformation. Colet approved of monks, of secret confession, of an elaborate

ceremonial, of a priesthood resting upon divine consecration, and he would not for the world question the validity of recognised church law. Yet he was ready to deal fearless blows at faithless monks, at a superstitious repetition of confession, an overdoing of the ceremonies of worship, and the worldliness of the parish clergy. He approved of all learning, but he condemned the application of learning to a fruitless definition-making.

The first letter we have from Colet to Erasmus is an address of welcome to England, a graceful little note, as full of flattery as any of Erasmus' own and of interest to us chiefly as showing that the visitor had not come to England unknown. He had, it is true, written nothing of consequence, but Colet had seen some little things of his at Paris, and Erasmus' acquaintance there with young Englishmen of high social rank could hardly fail to have carried at least his name across the Channel. The same impression of a reputation already grounded is embodied in the well-known story of Erasmus' first meeting with another Englishman, with whom his relations, at least by correspondence, were to be still more intimate,—Thomas More. The incident is told in the life of More by his great-grandson as follows[44]:

> "it is reported how that he, who conducted him in his passage, procured that Sir Thomas More and he should first meet together in London at the Lord Mayor's table, neither of them knowing each other. And in the dinner-time, they chanced to fall into argument, Erasmus still endeavouring to defend the worser part; but he was so sharply set upon and opposed by Sir Thomas More, that perceiving that he was now to argue with a readier wit than ever he had before met withal, he broke forth into these words, not without some choler:—'*Aut tu es Morus aut nullus*.'

Whereto Sir Thomas readily replied, '*Aut tu es Erasmus aut diabolus*,' because at that time he was strangely disguised, and had sought to defend impious positions...."



HENRY VIII. AND HENRY VII.

FRAGMENT OF A CARTOON BY HOLBEIN, IN POSSESSION OF THE DUKE OF DEVONSHIRE.

This story plainly implies a considerable degree of reputation for both persons concerned, but as More was at most twenty years old and known only as a very bright young student at the time of Erasmus' arrival, we are compelled either to give up the story or to place it some years later and suppose that Erasmus did not meet More at all during his first visit. This latter supposition, however, is quite impossible, since Erasmus speaks plainly of More at this time as among his most valued friends. The author indeed prefaces the anecdote with the statement that the two scholars had long known and loved each other and that their affection "increased so much that he [Erasmus] took a journey of purpose into England to see and enjoy his personal acquaintance and more entire familiarity,"—most of which lacks support in known facts.[45] We can only accept so much of it as implies previous acquaintance by correspondence, and that may well have taken place while Erasmus was at Oxford and More in London working with as much zeal as he could command at his preparation for the bar. If we strip off the decorations and suppose the meeting to have occurred during some visit of Erasmus in London from Oxford, this very pretty story is not altogether improbable. At all events it strikes the key-note of a friendship which was to last as long as life. The disparity in age (eleven years) was more than made up by the great activity and originality of More's mind and the singular charm of his engaging personality. During this first visit to England we have no specific record of Erasmus' relations with More, except this one anecdote of the dinner and another of

a visit paid by the two friends to the children of King Henry VII. at the royal villa of Eltham, near Greenwich. Erasmus' account of this visit, given many years afterward,[46] is an explanation of how he came to write an ode to the young prince. He was dragged into it, he says, by Thomas More, who came to him while he was staying at Lord Mountjoy's in Greenwich and invited him to take a walk for pleasure into the neighbouring village.

> "There all the royal children were being educated, with the exception of Arthur the eldest.... In the centre stood Henry, a boy of nine, but already with a certain regal bearing, that is a loftiness of mind joined with a singular courtesy of demeanour. At his right was Margaret, then about eleven, who afterward married James, king of Scotland. At his left Mary, a child of four, was playing, and Edmund, a babe, was carried in his nurse's arms. More and his friend Arnold, having paid their respects to the lad Henry, under whose reign Britain now rejoices, offered him some writing—I know not what. I, expecting nothing of this sort and having nothing to offer, promised that I would prove my devotion to him in some way and at some time or other. Meanwhile I was vexed with More, because he had given me no warning and especially because the youth sent me a note at dinner, challenging my pen. I went home, and though the muses, from whom I had long been divorced, were hostile to me, I produced an ode in three days. Thus I avenged the affront and patched up my chagrin. It was a task of only three days and yet a task, for it was several years since I had read or written any poetry."

This rather silly tale is of interest only as giving the first hint of any connection of Erasmus with the English royal family, a connection not wholly without influence on his future. If More was playing a joke on his friend, as has been generally assumed,

it was certainly a very poor one. Other indications of Erasmus' occupations in England are found in a famous letter to his former teacher in Paris, Faustus Andrelinus. It is a merry letter to a merry fellow and must not be taken too seriously.[47]

> "I, too, in England have gone ahead not a little. That Erasmus whom you used to know is almost a good hunter, a horseman not the worst, and no slouch of a courtier; he knows how to salute more gracefully and smile more sweetly and all this with Minerva against him. How are my affairs? Well enough. If you are a wise man you will fly over here too. Why should a man with a nose like yours grow old in that Gallic dung-heap? But then your gout—bad luck to it, saving your presence!—keeps you away. And yet if you knew the delights of Britain, Faustus, you would hurry over here with winged feet, and if your gout wouldn't let you, you'd pray to be turned into a Daedalus. Why, just to mention one thing out of many: the girls here have divine faces; they are gentle and easy-mannered. You'd like them better than your Muses. Besides, there is a fashion here which can't be praised enough. Wherever you go everyone kisses you, and when you leave you are dismissed with kisses; you come back, the sweets are returned. Someone comes to see you—your health in kisses! he says good-bye—kisses again! You meet a person anywhere,—kisses galore!—so wherever you go everything is filled with these sweets. If you, Faustus, should just once taste how delicious, how fragrant they are, you would long to travel in England, not like Solon, for ten years only, but to the end of your days. The rest we will laugh over together, for I hope to see you very soon."

Two other Englishmen, both his seniors by some years, became friends of Erasmus during this first visit,—William Grocyn and Thomas Linacre. Grocyn was primarily a scholar and teacher, versed especially in Greek. Linacre was a physician of the

highest repute in his day, and identified with the whole future of medical science in England through his foundation of the London College of Physicians. Both had studied in Italy and there had put themselves under the influence of the leading personages in the later humanistic generation. Both had become skilled in Greek learning, and were doing their parts, each in his own way, to further the advancement of Greek study in England. Grocyn was probably teaching Greek at Oxford when Erasmus came thither, and so far as he ever acknowledged obligations to any teacher, the younger man admits the great profit he derived from this riper talent. In regard to Linacre he notes especially a severe and painful accuracy which was, probably, the reason why he left so little behind to attest his scholarship. He could not satisfy his own exacting standards. With both these men Erasmus seems to have lived on terms of affectionate intimacy. There are indications that they were at times rather tired of his persistent begging, but this did not interfere with their friendly interest, which ended only with their lives.

Delighted as he plainly was with everything and everybody in England, better treated than he had ever been in his life, why did not Erasmus take his own advice and settle down there in some regular occupation? So cosmopolitan a genius as his could hardly have dreaded a change of residence; the scholar's home was wherever the sun shone, and certainly never was man more free to follow the bent of his own wishes than was Erasmus. That the idea was not a strange one to him is clear from many indications. Especially was it forced upon him by a suggestion from Colet that he might stay on at Oxford and join him in what seemed then likely to be his life-work of expounding the fundamental

documents of Christianity upon the "new" basis of science and common sense. What Colet's arguments were on this point we can only guess from a reply of Erasmus, but they seem to have been such as would come naturally from one scholar to another in whom he thought he recognised a spirit kindred to his own. Colet lived in that new world of thought which was the old, and saw before him the mission of clearing away the mediæval rubbish that had piled up in the long interval between the really old theology of the Greek Fathers and the new thought of his own times. And here he seemed to have found the man of all others best fitted to help him—young, learned in the language and filled with the spirit of the ancients, free from all ties of family or home and, apparently, deeply serious in his interest in religious things. Colet had had a test of his quality in several active discussions on points of theology, which had brought out at once his learning and his desire for truth even at the sacrifice of his own less well-considered opinions. Erasmus had shown a docility in revising his judgments in very marked contrast to his firmness when dealing with other opponents. The difference was, that in facing Colet he found an opponent who was using his own weapons with equal skill and even greater courage. In the letter of Erasmus declining to remain at Oxford we hear nothing of the question of ways and means. It is impossible that it should not have been in his mind, but there is every reason to suppose that it did not influence his decision. The only trustworthy patron he had yet found was an Englishman; there was a chance of a university appointment, and, failing this, the prospect of private pupils was better in England than anywhere else. We are told *ad nauseam* of a considerable money loss which he suffered on

leaving England. So that we are sure almost beyond a doubt that his reasons for declining what must have been a very tempting proposition were somehow connected with his larger scholarly ambitions.[48] Of course he makes as much as possible of his own modesty: Colet "is (to quote Plautus) asking water of a rock." How should he have the face to teach what he has never learned; how warm the frost of others when he himself was all of a shiver with fear? He praises Colet for his courage and zeal in the cause of the "ancient" theology as against the "new-fangled race of theologians, who spend their lives in mere arguments and sophistical quibbling." Not that he altogether condemns these studies, for he approves of every kind of study,

> "but taken by themselves, with no admixture of more refined and ancient letters, they seem to make a man a conceited and disputatious fellow—whether they can ever make him a wise man, let others decide. For they seem to exhaust the mind with a kind of crude and barren subtlety; there is no sap in them, nor any real breath of life.
>
> "I am not speaking against learned and approved professors of theology, for I look up to them with the greatest respect, but against that mean and haughty herd of theologians who think all the writings of all authors are worth nothing compared to themselves. When you, Colet, went into the fight against this unassailable horde that, so far as in you lay, you might restore that ancient and pure theology, now overgrown with their thorns, to its early splendour and dignity, you took upon yourself, so help me God! —a task in many ways most admirable, most loyal to the name of Theology itself, most wholesome for all studious men and especially for this blooming University of Oxford—but, I don't conceal it, a task full of difficulty and of opposition. Yet you will overcome the difficulty with your learning and your

> industry, and your great soul can afford to overlook the opposition. There are, too, among those theologians not a few who are both willing and able to help such honest efforts as yours. Nay, there is no one who would not join hands with you, since there is not a doctor in this famous school who has not listened most attentively to your lectures on St. Paul, now going on for the third year....
>
> "I am not wondering that you should take upon your shoulders a burden to which you may be equal, but that you call me, a man of no account whatever, to share in so great an enterprise. For you ask me—nay you urge upon me, that as you are lecturing upon Paul so I, by expounding the ancient Moses or the eloquent Isaiah, should strive to rekindle the studies of this school—chilled, as you say, by these long months of winter."

He goes on to protest his unfitness for the task and especially to defend himself against the charge that he had given Colet reason to believe he might accept his suggestion.

> "Nor did I come hither to teach poetry or rhetoric, which have ceased to be agreeable to me since they ceased to be necessary. I refuse the one, because it does not accord with my plans, the other because it is beyond my powers. You blame me wrongly in the one case, my dear Colet, because I have never had before me the profession of so-called secular literature, and you urge me in vain to the other, because I know that I am unequal to it. Besides, if I were never so fit, I could not do it, for I must soon go back to my deserted Paris."

We seem to find here a suggestion that Colet had laid before him two propositions,—one that he might become a teacher of the classic literature in which he was already a master; the other that he should join

with himself in setting the meaning of Scripture free from the absurd trammels which the scholastic methods of interpretation had laid upon it. Either of these tasks, with a reasonable prospect of support and the delightful intercourse of academic life, would, one must suppose, have been a supreme attraction for Erasmus. The only possible explanation of his refusal is his dread of putting his neck into any yoke whatever, no matter how easy it might be. A possible suggestion of this motive is found in the somewhat enigmatic sentence that "poetry and rhetoric had ceased to interest him since they had ceased to be necessary." This may have meant that literature in itself was important to him only as a means of livelihood, and since he was, at least temporarily, provided for, he did not care to teach it at Oxford. Literature was henceforth to be a means to the higher end of redeeming theology, the *regina disciplinarum*, the "queen of sciences," from her present degradation. But for this latter work he was not as yet prepared. If we ask why he did not choose to continue his preparation under the very favourable conditions at Oxford, we may perhaps find a partial answer in his deep-seated dislike of the work of teaching. He could talk beautifully about it, but it seems pretty clear that he always hated it. So Oxford lost a professor, but the world gained a man.

CHAPTER IV
PARIS—THE "ADAGIA"—THE "ENCHIRIDION MILITIS CHRISTIANI"—PANEGYRIC ON PHILIP OF BURGUNDY
1500-1506

HIS "deserted Paris," "that Gallic dung-heap," was calling to Erasmus, perhaps with the same siren voice that has drawn thither so many another homeless genius, and he went. He was, if we may believe his later wails, pretty well supplied with money, which he had turned into French coin. He is very careful to insist that he had not received this money in England, but if not, it is difficult to imagine where it could have come from. He was aware of a law forbidding the exportation of gold from the realm, but had been advised by his friends that this law applied only to English coin and so felt safe. The customs officers at Dover, however, took another view of the matter and left him nothing but the small amount allowed by law, nor could his connections in high quarters ever avail him to make good his loss.

An account of the affair, written, so Erasmus says, "unless he is mistaken," twenty-seven years afterward, brings this incident into direct connection with the earliest piece of writing in which Erasmus presented himself to the world in his true character. Speaking[49] of his mishap from the lofty position of a famous scholar before whose biting satire the great ones of the earth might well tremble a little, he gives

himself great praise for not having taken immediate vengeance on the king and the country which had used him so badly, by writing something against them. He refrained partly because it seemed an unworthy thing to do, and partly because he would not be the means of bringing down the royal wrath upon his dear friends in England; and so, having no resources, he determined to publish something that might pay. He had nothing on hand, but by reading hard for a few days he "got together in haste quite a 'forest' of adages, thinking that a book of this sort, whatever its quality, would, by its very usefulness, go into the hands of students."

This account of the origin of the famous Adages of Erasmus seems in the main reasonable. It was in the strictest sense a bread-and-butter undertaking, calculated to meet a demand which every writer of that day must feel and for which there was no adequate supply. The scholar, no matter how great his claim to individuality, could not get on without continual references to classical literature. They were, so to speak, the certificates of his scholarship; they took the place of the references to the Christian and Hebrew Scriptures by which the mediæval scholar had at once supported his views and demonstrated his learning. Of course such decoration ought to come naturally as a result of the writer's own wide reading and profound reflection in the classic literature, and during the really great times of the Revival of Learning, while scholarship was confined to comparatively few men, and these men of really commanding powers, such had been the case. By the time of Erasmus, however, the new learning was falling rapidly into its second stage; it was becoming more widely diffused and, naturally, was drawing to itself ever more and more second-

rate material. Learning was coming to be fashionable, and at just that stage all aids to a ready acquirement of at least the appearance of scholarship were sure to be in demand. It is an evidence of Erasmus' practical good sense that he was ready to advance his most serious purposes by contributing to this popularisation of learning.

Erasmus was always fond of telling how rapidly he worked, but in the present case we have every reason to believe that his work was hasty and experimental in the extreme. Nothing more unscientific in form can well be imagined than this collection of scattered sayings from the writings, chiefly, of classic authors. The method, practically unchanged in the many later editions, was simply to jot down at random some verse of poetry or some word having a peculiar meaning and then to give a very brief explanation of its origin and value; then if the occasion warranted, upon this as a text to write a little essay. In this personal and individual comment lies the real importance of the Adages, in giving us an idea of their author. It was this personal element also which appealed most strongly to those of his own time who were capable of valuing it, but it was not this which commended the Adages, probably, to the widest circle of readers. To the great mass of young students and to the increasing numbers of men everywhere who were trying their hands at Latin composition, the book was rather an encyclopædia of classical quotations, from which they could select the needed decorations of their style without the trouble of going to the original sources.

To these two lines of patronage the Adages owed their great and immediate popularity. The first

edition was printed at Paris in 1500 and contained about eight hundred selections. As to the method of the future editions Erasmus gives us some information. When he saw that the book was received with gratitude by scholars and was apparently going to live, and moreover that publishers were vying with each other in printing it, he kept enriching it from time to time as his own leisure or the supply of available books gave him opportunity. What he regarded as the final edition was printed at Basel by Froben in 1523. After that he merely annotated previous editions, "rather as giving to others material for a future work than as really making a new book with proper care."[50] This first edition of the Adages was dedicated to Mountjoy. Without the later additions it must, one would think, have been as dry reading as could well be imagined, but the fact of its popularity is unquestionable. Edition after edition appeared with great rapidity, so that we are now able to record no less than sixty-two within the author's lifetime.

As for the pecuniary rewards which Erasmus may have had in view, there is no indication that they were immediate or considerable. The ethics of book-publishing were at that time in a highly rudimentary state. So far as one can see there was nothing to prevent any printer from putting forth any writing that by any chance got into his hands. Erasmus in a dedicatory letter to Mountjoy with a later edition[51] says that his reason for the new publication was that the earlier editions had been printed so badly that one might suppose the errors had been made intentionally. In another place[52] he says, with an unusual effort at accuracy, that the first edition of the Adages was published on the 15th of June, 1500, while he was absent from Paris. This date is certainly

a very early one, and we have to bear in mind that Erasmus' object in giving it was to prove that he had got ahead of a rival compiler of proverbs who had accused him of stealing his thunder. It agrees, however, with our other indications. The most singular thing about it is that a young author, putting forth his first ambitious publication, should have been willing to absent himself from the place where the work was being done. The fact was, probably, that Erasmus was frightened half out of his wits by the presence of the plague in Paris, and this impression is strengthened by the pains he takes to convince his friend Faustus Andrelinus of his uncommon freedom from the vulgar emotion of fear. He was at Orleans and Faustus had urged him to come back to Paris; had even, so Erasmus says, called him a coward by the mouth of his own servant.

> "This reproach would not be endured even if made against a Swiss soldier; against a poet, a lover of ease and quiet, it doesn't stick at all. And yet, in matters of this sort, to have no dread whatever seems to me rather the part of a log than of a brave man. When the fight is with an enemy that can be driven back, whose blows can be returned, who can be conquered by fighting, then if a man wants to seem brave, let him, for all I care. The Lernean Hydra, last and hardest of all the labours of Hercules, could not be overcome with steel but could be beaten by Greek fire; but what can you do against an evil that can be neither seen nor conquered? There are some things which it is better to run away from than to conquer. The brave Æneas did not go into battle with the sirens, but turned his helm far away from that shore of danger. 'But,' you say, 'there is no danger'—well, meanwhile I, on the safe side of danger, see a great many persons dying. I imitate the fox in Horace:—'I am alarmed at the footsteps, so many leading towards you and so few away.' In this condition of things I wouldn't hesitate to

> fly, not merely to Orleans, but to Cadiz or to the farthest of the far Orkneys; not because I am a timid person or of less than manly courage, but because I really do fear—not to die, for we are all born to die—but to die by my own fault. If Christ warned his disciples to flee from the wrath of their persecutors by straightway changing their residence, why should I not evade so deadly a foe when I conveniently can?"

Yet he is not happy at Orleans; the Muses grow chilly in that city of law-books; he means to come back, and meanwhile he begs Faustus to write a prefatory letter to his Adages, which he has just put forth. He asks this not for the merit of the work, for he does not flatter himself so far as not to see how poor it is—but the worse the goods the more they need recommendation. Faustus gave the letter and it duly appeared, but whether it did not just suit Erasmus, or whether he could not quite bear to have his work recommended by anyone, he saw fit later to declare that the printer had wormed it out of Faustus. Perhaps, too, Faustus had a little overdone it and in the extravagance of this festive person's praise Erasmus may have detected a little sting of sarcasm. In a letter to his friend and pupil, Augustinus, Erasmus reproves him for taking too flattering a tone towards himself and says, by the way,

> "that exaggeration of Faustus, in which he says that in me alone is the very sanctuary of letters, was not so very delightful to me, both because extravagant praise suits neither my modesty nor my deserts and because such figures of speech are as a rule not believed and simply arouse envy. They are moreover akin to irony, just as what you wrote me, although in most flattering terms, did not really flatter me at all: 'O, most attentive teacher, I, thy devoted pupil, dedicate myself to thee; command me as thou wilt; naught that I have is mine, but all is thine!' All that kind of talk, it seems

> to me, ought to be kept as far as possible from a sincere attachment. For where there is real affection as there is, I think, between us, what use is there in such figures of speech? And where affection is insincere they are wont to be turned into a suspicion of malice. Therefore you would greatly oblige me if you would completely banish such exaggerations from your letters, that simple affection may find its proper language and that you may bear in mind that you are writing to an attached friend and not to a tyrant."

This sounds very fine and would impress one with a great sense of Erasmus' ingenuous nature, if one could forget that this is precisely the time when he was carrying on the correspondence with Battus and the Marchioness of Veere which we have already examined.[53] Indeed the years from 1500 to 1506 are the most perplexing in Erasmus' whole life. He was continually on the move, now at Paris, now at Orleans, again in the Low Countries, visiting this friend and that, with no regular source of income, yet somehow pulling himself through. During all this time there is hardly a letter which does not speak of him as the victim of a cruel fate. Of course it is always the fault of someone else, but human nature has not so greatly changed in four hundred years that we can afford to take his word for it that all his patrons had deserted him with no cause whatever on his part. To get the proper perspective for an understanding of the situation we must remind ourselves that Erasmus was as yet a very doubtful investment. His real individuality was hardly showing itself. He had positively rejected all proposals of regular occupation; he was making considerable demands on life, but he would take life only on his own terms.

The motive of Erasmus' wanderings in these early

years of the century is not clear. More easily perceptible than any other is his fear of the plague and a nervous dread of other illness. When things went badly in one place he betook himself to another, but it is hard to find much principle even in his health-seeking. He speaks of finding relief in his native land and again writes that Zeeland is hell to him, he "never felt a harsher climate or one less suited to his poor little body." The bishop of Cambrai had long since failed him. The bishop's brother, the abbot of St. Bertin, formerly a great friend, was of no use; the Marchioness was herself in some mysterious trouble; Battus alone, his precious Battus, was quite true to him, but not able to do much for him. Altogether it seems most probable that the conspiracy of the fates against our scholar may have been nothing more than a common feeling of distrust toward a sturdy beggar, who had not yet proved his value and who was not inclined to put up with any half-way charity.

But meanwhile Erasmus was always at work. His real, permanent, and persistent interest was his own self-culture—not in any narrow or mean sense, but that he might be equal to the great demands he was preparing to make upon himself. Of all things he wished to make himself strong in Greek, and it is clear that he was dissatisfied with any teaching which thus far had been open to him. From this we ought not hastily to draw conclusions as to the badness of Greek teaching at Paris. Erasmus, like most men of original genius, was not a docile pupil. He knew intuitively, what it takes most of us a lifetime to find out, that every man must teach himself all that he ever really and effectively knows, and that this is especially true of all linguistic knowledge. Erasmus complains of his Greek teachers,

but he did not sit down and wait for better ones. He went to work with such appliances as he had and read Greek books and gradually came to read them well. He learned Greek, in short, as he had learned Latin, by *using* it.

From time to time, however, he gave evidences of his progress in culture by some production intended for wider circulation. A specimen of such occasional writing is his *Enchiridion militis christiani*, a title which has almost invariably been rendered, "A Handbook of the Christian Soldier," but which bears equally well the meaning, "The Christian Soldier's Dagger." The essential point is that it was a something "handy," a *vade mecum* for the average gentleman who aimed to be a good Christian. Erasmus uses the word in both meanings at different times. Writing, according to his own reckoning, nearly thirty years afterwards,[54] Erasmus gives us an account of the origin of this treatise, which is interesting as showing how unsystematic were the motives which led, or which he imagined led, to the writing of many of his most famous works. He says "the thing was born of chance." He was at Tournehens to escape the plague then raging in Paris and there came into relations with a friend of Battus, a gentleman who was "his own worst enemy," a gay and reckless liver. This gentleman's wife was a woman of singular piety and in great distress for her husband's soul. She begged Erasmus to write something which might move him to repentance, but to be careful that this warning should not appear to come from her; for "he was cruel to her even to blows, after the manner of soldiers." So Erasmus noted down a few things and showed them to his friends, who approved them so highly that some time afterward at Louvain he employed his leisure in

putting them into shape. For a while the book attracted little attention; but later it became one of the most popular and widely read of its author's more serious works. It was first printed in 1503 and after that ran through edition after edition with great rapidity. Naturally, it brought out also no little opposition; but that will explain itself when we have examined a little more carefully the aim and contents of the book.

Its object is especially to emphasise the difference between a true religion of the heart and an outward, formal religion of observances. It is divided into thirteen chapters of varying length, each headed with a caption rather vaguely indicating its contents. After a somewhat long introduction he proceeds to a definition of the human soul, following in the main the lead of the early Fathers, especially of Origen. He distinguishes between the soul of man and a something higher yet, which they describe as spirit. The body is the purely material, the spirit is the purely divine, but the soul, living between the two, belongs permanently to neither, but is tossed back and forth from one to the other according as it resists or gives way to the temptations of the flesh. The body is the harlot, soliciting to evil. "Thus the spirit makes us gods; the flesh makes us beasts; the soul makes us men." This distinction is again and again illustrated, and the chapter ends with a declaration of the true rule of Christian piety; viz., that every man see to it that he judge himself according to his own temptation.[55]

> "One man rejoices in fasting, in sacred observances, in going often to church, in repeating psalms, as many as possible—but in the spirit. Now ask, according to our rule, what he is doing:—if he is

> looking for praise or reward, he smacks of the flesh—not of the spirit. If he is merely indulging his own nature, doing what pleases him, this is not a thing to be proud of, but rather to be feared. There is your danger. You pray and you judge the man who prays not; you fast and you condemn the man who eats. Whoever does not do as you do, you think is inferior to you. Look out that your fasting be not to the flesh! Your brother needs your help, but you meanwhile are mumbling your prayers to God and neglecting your brother's poverty: God will be deaf to such prayers as that.... You love your wife just because she is your wife; that is very little, for the heathen do the same. Or you love her only for your own pleasure; then your love is to the flesh: but if you love her chiefly because you see in her the image of Christ, piety, modesty, sobriety, chastity, then you love her not in herself, but in Christ—nay, you love Christ in her and so God in the spirit."

The book then goes on to more specific injunctions to the Christian life, always with the undernote of sincerity as the main thing. Here is a striking passage from the second canon of the eighth chapter:[56]

> "Christ said to all men that he who will not take up his cross and follow after him is not worthy of him. Now you have no concern with dying to the flesh with Christ, if living in his spirit does not concern you. It is not yours to be crucified to the world, if living to God be not yours. To be buried with Christ is nothing to you, if rising in glory is nothing to you. Christ's humility, his poverty, his trial, his scorn, his toil, his struggle, his grief, are nothing to you, if you have no care for his kingdom. What more base than to claim for yourself the reward with others, but to put off upon a certain few the toil for which the reward is offered? What more wanton than to wish to reign with our Head, when you are not willing to suffer with

him? Therefore, my brother, do not look about to see what others do and flatter yourself with their example;—a difficult thing indeed and known to very few, even to monks, is this dying to sin, to carnal desire and to the world. Yet this is the common profession of all Christians."

So again in the fourth canon:[57]

"You fast,—a pious work indeed to all appearance; but to what purpose is this fasting? Is it to save provisions or to seem to be more pious than you are? Then your eye is evil. Or do you fast to keep your health? Why then do you fear disease? Lest it keep you from pleasure? Your eye is evil. Or do you desire health that you may devote yourself to study? Then to what end is this study?—that you may get a church office? But why do you wish the office?—that you may live to yourself and not to Christ? Then you have wandered from the standard which the Christian ought to have set up everywhere. You take food that your body may be strong, but you desire this strength that you may be equal to the study of sacred things and to holy vigils:—you have hit the mark; but if you look after your health lest you lose your beauty and so be incapable of sensual pleasure, then you have fallen away from Christ and have set up another God for yourself.

"There are those who worship certain divinities with certain rites. One salutes Christopher every day, but only while he is gazing upon his image, and for what? because he has persuaded himself that he will thus be safe for that day from an evil death. Another worships a certain Rochus, and why? because he fancies he will drive the plague away from his body. Another mumbles prayers to Barbara or George, lest he fall into the hands of his enemy. This man fasts to Apollonia to prevent the toothache. That one gazes upon an image of the god-like Job, that he may be free of the itch. Some devote a certain part of their

profits to the poor, lest their business go to wreck. A candle is lighted to Jerome to rescue some business that is going to pieces. In short, whatever our fears and our desires, we set so many gods over them and these are different in different nations; as, for example, Paul does for the French what Jerome does for our people, and James and John are not good everywhere for what they can do in certain places. Now this kind of piety, unless it be brought back to Christ instead of being merely a care for the convenience or inconvenience of our bodies, is not Christian, for it is not far removed from the superstition of those who used to vow tithes to Hercules in order to get rich—or a cock to Æsculapius to get well of an illness, or who slew a bull to Neptune for a favourable voyage. The names are changed, but the object is the same. You pray to God to escape a sudden death and not rather that he may grant you a better mind, so that whenever death overtakes you it may not find you unprepared. You never think of changing your way of life and yet you pray God to let you live. What then are you asking?—why, only that you may keep on sinning as long as possible. You pray for wealth and know not how to use wealth; so you are praying for your own ruin. If you pray for health and then abuse it, is not your piety impious?

"An objection will be made here by some 'religious' fellows, who look upon piety as a profession, or, in other words, by certain sweet phrases of blessing seduce the souls of the innocent, serving their own bellies and not Jesus Christ: 'What,' they will say, 'do you forbid the worship of the saints, in whom God is honoured?' Indeed I do not so much condemn those who do this from a certain simple superstition as those who, seeking their own profit, put forth things that might perhaps be tolerated with pure and lofty piety, but encourage for their own advantage the ignorance of the common people. This ignorance I do not in the least despise, but I cannot bear to have them taking indifferent things for the most important, the least for the greatest. I will even approve their asking Rochus

> for a life of health if they will consecrate their life to Christ; but I should like it still better if they would simply pray that their love of virtue may be increased through their hatred of vice. Let them lay their living and dying in God's hands, and say with Paul 'whether we live or whether we die, we live or die to the Lord.' ... I will bear with weakness, but, like Paul, I will show you a more excellent way."

It will be noticed that even thus early in Erasmus' moral appeal, he does not aim at destroying anything. Even for the worship of saints he has plenty of room in his thought, but he says:[58]

> "the way to worship the saints is to imitate their virtues. The saint cares more for this kind of reverence than if you burn a hundred candles for him. You think it a great thing to be borne to your grave in the cowl of Francis; but the likeness of his garment will profit you nothing after you are dead, if your morals were unlike his when you were alive.... You pay the greatest reverence to the ashes of Paul, and no harm if your own religion is consistent with this. But if you adore these dead and silent ashes and neglect that image of him which lives and speaks and, as it were, breathes to this day in his writings, is not your religion preposterous? You worship the bones of Paul laid away in a shrine, but you do not worship the mind of Paul enshrined in his writings. You make great things of a scrap of his body seen through a glass case, but you do not marvel at the whole soul of Paul that gleams through his works.... Let infidels, for whom they were given, wonder at these signs, but do you, a believer, embrace the books of that man, so that, while you doubt not that God is able to do all things, you may learn to love Him above all things. You honour an image of the face of Christ, badly cut in stone or painted in colours, but far more honour ought to be given to that image of his soul which by the work of the Holy Spirit is made manifest in the Gospels.... You gaze with awe upon a tunic or a

handkerchief said to be those of Christ, but you fall asleep over the oracles of the law of Christ."

With constant reference to Paul as the greatest of human teachers, Erasmus comes to the monastic life in some detail.[59]

"'Love,' says Paul, 'is to edify your neighbour,' and if only this were done, nothing could be more joyous or more easy than the life of the 'religious'; but now this life seems gloomy, full of Jewish superstitions, not in any way free from the vices of laymen and in some ways more corrupt. If Augustine, whom they boast of as the founder of their system, were to come to life again, he would not recognise them; he would cry out that he had never approved this sort of a life, but had organized a way of living according to the rule of the apostles, not according to the superstition of the Jews. But now I hear some of the more sensible ones say: —'We must be on our guard in the least things lest we gradually slip into greater vices.' I hear and I approve; but we ought none the less to be on our guard lest we get so bound up in these lesser things that we wholly fall away from the greater. The danger is plainer on that side, but greater on this. Look out for Scylla, but do not fall into Charybdis. To do those things is well, but to put your trust in them is perilous. Paul does not forbid us to make use of the 'elements,' but he would not have the man who is free in Christ made a slave to them. He does not condemn the law of works, but would have it properly applied. Without these things you will perchance not be a pious man, but it is not these that make you pious....

"What, then, shall the Christian do? Shall he neglect the commands of the Church, despise the honourable traditions of the Fathers, and condemn pious observances? Nay, if he is a weakling he will hold on to these as necessary; if he is strong and perfect, he will observe them so much the more, lest through his wisdom he offend his weak brother, and

> slay him for whom Christ died. These things he ought to do and not leave the others undone.... Your body is clothed with the monkish cowl; what, then, if your soul wears an earthly garment? If the outer man is veiled in a snowy tunic, let also the vestment of the inner man be white like snow. You keep silence outwardly; see to it so much the more that your mind within is fixed in silent attention. You bend the knee of the body in the visible temple; but that is nothing if in the temple of the heart you are standing upright against God. You adore the wood of the cross;—follow much more the mystery of the cross. Do you go into a fast and abstain from those things which do not defile the man and yet not refrain from obscene conversation which defiles both your own conscience and that of others? Food is withheld from the body and shall the soul gorge itself upon the husks of the swine? You build a temple of stone; you have places sacred to religion; what profits it if the temple of the soul, whose wall Ezekiel dug through, is profaned with the abominations of the Egyptians?... If the body be kept pure and yet you are covetous, then the soul is polluted. You sing psalms with your bodily lips, but listen within to what your soul is saying: you are blessing with the mouth and cursing with the heart. Bodily you are bound within a narrow cell, but with your thoughts you wander over the wide earth. You hear the word of God with your bodily ear: hear it rather within."

So much for the monks. As to the general moral standards of his day Erasmus is equally clear and vigorous and is interesting especially from the comparison he makes with the morals of ancient times.[60]

> "Turn the annals of the ancients," he bursts out, "and compare the manners of our time. When was true honour less respected? When were riches, no matter how gained, ever so highly esteemed? In what age

was ever that word of Horace[61] more true—

> 'A dowried wife, friends, beauty, birth, fair fame,
> These are the gifts of money, heavenly dame.'

When was luxury ever more reckless? When were vice and adultery ever more widespread or less punished or less condemned?... Who does not think poverty the last extreme of misfortune and disgrace?"

It is the cry, familiar to all ages, especially of course at times when civilisation has reached a high point, that all honour may be bought for money and place. It shows no especial acuteness on Erasmus' part, but it does prove his courage and his clear Christian insight. That he should fancy the heroes of the classic world to have been superior to the modern Christians of his own day was a natural part of the classic enthusiasm in which he lived. Nor can we doubt that it greatly strengthened the moral argument in his time to add these examples of purely non-Christian virtue to those furnished by the well-worn heroes of the Jewish past.

A very characteristic touch is found in Erasmus' reference to the prevailing rage for information, also a vice of an over-eager age.[62]

"Let me speak of another error. They call him a clever man and skilled in affairs who, catching at all kinds of rumours, knows what is going on all over the world: what is the fortune of the merchants, what the tyrant of the Britains is planning, what is the news at Rome, what is the latest happening in Gaul, how the Dacians and Scythians are getting on, what the princes are thinking about,—in short, the man who is eager to do battle about every kind of affairs among every race of men, that man they call wise. But what is more

> senseless, more foolish, than to be running after things remote, that have nothing to do with yourself, and not even to think of what is going on in your own heart and what belongs especially to you. You talk about the troubles in Britain; tell rather what is troubling your own heart,—envy, lust, ambition; how far these have been sent under the yoke,—what hope there is of victory,—how far the war is advanced,—how the plan of campaign is laid out. If in these things you are watchful, with eyes and ears well trained, if you are cunning and cautious, then indeed I will declare you to be a clever man."

A very interesting example of Erasmus' insistence upon the essential thing and his indifference to names and forms is in the chapter which describes the opinions worthy of the Christian. It has almost a socialistic ring, so sharply does he emphasise the duty of Christian charity.[63]

> "You thought it was only monks to whom property was forbidden and poverty enjoined? You were wrong; both commands apply to all Christians. The law punishes you if you take what belongs to another; it does not punish you if you take what is yours away from your brother when he needs it; but Christ will punish both. If you are a magistrate the office should not make you more fierce, but the responsibility should make you more cautious. 'But,' you say, 'I do not hold a church office; I am not a priest or a bishop.' Quite so, but you are a Christian, are you not? See to it whose man you be, if you are not a man of the Church. Christ is come into such contempt in the world, that they think it a fine thing and a royal to have no dealings with him and despise a person the more, the more closely he is bound to him. Do you not hear every day some angry layman throwing in our faces as a violent reproach the words 'Clerk!' 'Priest!' 'Monk!' and that with the same temper and the same voice as if he were charging us with incest or

sacrilege? Of a truth I wonder why they don't attack Baptism, or like the Saracens assault the name of Christ as something infamous. If they would say '*bad* Clerk!' '*unworthy* Priest!' '*impious* Monk!' we could bear it as coming from those who were rebuking the character of the man and not the profession of virtue. But those who call the rape of virgins, the plunder of war, the gain and loss of money at dice deeds of glory, these people have no word to throw at another more full of contempt and shame than 'Monk!' or 'Priest!'—though it is clear enough what these people, Christians in nothing but the name, think of Christ.

"There is not one Lord for bishops and another for civil rulers; both are vicegerents of the same Lord and both must render an account to him. The office of the Christian prince is not to excel others in wealth, but, as far as possible, to seek the advantage of all. Turn not what belongs to the public to your own profit, but spend whatever is yours, even yourself, for the public good. The people owe much to you, but you owe everything to them. High-sounding names, '*Invictus*,' '*Sacrosanctus*,' '*Majestas*,' though your ears are forced to hear them, yet ascribe them all to Christ, to whom alone they belong. The crime of *læsæ majestatis*, which others bring forward with frightful clamour,—let this be to you a very small matter. He alone violates the majesty of the prince who, under the name of a prince, does things contrary to law, cruel, violent, or criminal. Let no attack move you so little as one which touches you personally. Remember that you are a public person, and that it is your duty to think only of the public good. If you are wise consider, not how great you are, but how great a burden rests upon your shoulders. The greater danger you are in, so much the less seek indulgence for yourself, and choose the model for your administration, not from your fathers or from your partisans, but from Christ. What can be more absurd than that a Christian prince should set up Hannibal, Alexander, Cæsar, or Pompey as an example to himself?... Nothing is so becoming, so splendid, so glorious in kings as to attain as nearly as may be to

> the perfect likeness of Jesus, the supreme king, greatest and best.... '*Apostolus*,' '*Pastor*,' '*Episcopus*,' these are names of duties, not of government; '*Papa*,' '*Abbas*,' are titles of love, not of dominion. But why should I go into this ocean of vulgar errors?"

The Enchiridion closes with five chapters of remedies against certain vices: lust, avarice, ambition, arrogance, and anger. These prescriptions have to us so obvious a sound that one easily overlooks their real importance. Their value consists in this: that in an age of formal righteousness they direct the conscience of the individual man straight back to the sources of all Christian living, to the plain teaching of Jesus and the plain argument of common sense. We ought to follow Scripture,—yes, but because Solomon kept a harem of concubines, that is no example for us. Peter denied the Christ for whom he afterward died; but that is no excuse for perjury. The Christian law is thus made plain to the individual conscience.

It has seemed worth while to go into the contents of this little book with more care than its extent might appear to warrant, because it is the earliest formulated expression of those principles of interpretation which form the basis of Erasmus' whole mature life and thought. It is for him, as it were, a programme, which he was to fill out in detail, in the long series of writings that now began to flow rapidly from his pen. In it he made his challenge to the world, yet with such moderation, such careful weighing and balancing of views, that he evidently hoped to win the support of all classes in what he began to feel was his life-work.

We are always told that Erasmus here in the Enchiridion began his unceasing warfare upon the

monks; but if we read closely we see how carefully he guarded himself against direct assault upon this or any other established institution. Not the name "monk" was a reproach, but the name "bad monk." He even goes so far as to identify himself with the clerical order. It was well enough to fast or even to use images and relics, so long as one saw through the forms to the meaning underneath; but the moment a man found himself *relying* upon the forms, no matter who he was, pope, priest, or layman, that moment he was in danger.

Erasmus says that the Enchiridion attracted little attention at first, but afterward had a great sale. We can well believe that the full force of its criticism was not felt until the first stirrings of the Protestant Reformation brought men sharply face to face with the problems it had outlined. It cannot be called precisely a controversial book, yet the germs of the bitterest controversies of the Reformation time are contained in it. Erasmus professed the utmost reverence for the existing institutions of the Church, and there is nothing in his later life to make us doubt the sincerity of this profession. He was by nature averse to all the violence and confusion that must attend any great social change. But it was clear to him that his age had wandered far from the ideals of the founders of these institutions. His remedy was to point out to men how widely they had erred and to show them once more in plain and direct language the true foundations of the Christian life.

It is noticeable that with all his protests of respect, Erasmus nowhere urges the appeal to the existing order in the Church as final. Men *may* fast, worship saints, take vows, seek absolution; but their real salvation is to be found in none of these things.

As this little book went out into the world in the year 1503, it remained to be seen which aspect of its teaching would prove the more effectual, whether its real meaning would penetrate alike to friends and enemies. Some light on this point may be gained from a letter[64] of Erasmus written in 1518 to his friend Volzius and afterward published as a preface to a new edition of the Enchiridion. In this letter he says that his work was criticised as unlearned, because it did not use the quibbling methods of the schools. But he was not trying "to train men for the prize-ring of the Sorbonne, but rather for the peace which belongs to the Christian." There is no lack of books on theology;

> "there are as many commentaries on the 'Sentences' of Petrus Lombardus as there are theologians. There is no end of little *summas*, which mix up one thing with another over and over again and after the manner of apothecaries fabricate and refabricate old things from new, new from old, one from many, and many from one. The result is that there are so many books about right living that no one can ever live long enough to read them. As if a doctor should prescribe for a man in a dangerous illness that he should read the books of Jacobus à Partibus and all the likes of them and there he would find out how to mend his health."

There were books enough, Heaven knew! but not life enough to read them, and this multitude of quarrelling doctors were only obscuring the true art of living, which Christ meant to make plain and simple to all. These so-called philosophers are obstacles, not helps, to the true Christian life.

> "They could never have enough of discussing in what words they ought to speak of Christ, as if they were dealing with some horrid demon, who would

> bring destruction upon them if they failed to invoke him in proper terms, instead of with a most gentle Saviour, who asks nothing of us but a pure and upright life."

Erasmus makes here the very practical and constructive suggestion, that

> "a commission of pious and learned men should bring together into a compendium from the purest sources of the gospels and the apostles and from their most approved commentators, the whole philosophy of Christ, with as much simplicity as learning, as much brevity as clearness. What pertains to the faith should be treated in as few articles as possible; what belongs to life, also in few words, and so put that men may know that the yoke of Christ is easy and pleasant, not cruel; that they have been given fathers, not tyrants; pastors, not robbers; called to salvation, not betrayed into slavery.
>
> "Now then," he says, "that is precisely the purpose I was filled with when I wrote my Enchiridion. I saw the multitude of Christians corrupted, not only in their passions, but also in their opinions. I saw those who professed to be pastors and doctors generally abusing the name of Christ to their own profit,—to say nothing of those at whose nod the affairs of men are tossed hither and thither, but at whose vices, open as they are, it is hardly permitted to raise a groan. And in such a turmoil of affairs, in such corruption of the world, in such a conflict of human opinions, whither was one to flee, except to the sacred anchor of the Gospel teaching?
>
> "I would not defile the divine philosophy of Christ with human decrees. Let Christ remain what he is, the centre, with certain circles about him. I would not move the centre from its place. Let those who are nearest Christ, priests, bishops, cardinals, popes, whose duty it is to follow the Lamb wherever he goes, embrace that most perfect part and, so far as may be,

> hand it on to the next in order. Let the second circle contain temporal princes, whose arms and whose laws are in the service of Christ.... In the third circle let us place the mass of the people as the dullest part of this world, but yet, dull as it is, a member of the body of Christ. For the eyes are not the only members of the body, but also the hands and the feet. And for these we ought to have consideration, so that, as far as possible, they may be called to those things which are nearer to Christ,—for in this body he who is now but a foot may come to be an eye.... So a mark is to be set before all, toward which they may strive, and there is but one mark, namely Christ and his pure doctrine. But if, instead of a heavenly mark you set an earthly one, there will be nothing towards which one may properly strive. That which is highest is meant for all, that we may at least attain to some moderate height.... The perfection of Christ is in our motives, not in the form of our life, in our minds, not in dress or food. There are some among the monks whom the third circle would scarcely accept,—I am speaking now of good ones, but weak. There are some, even among men twice married, whom Christ would think worthy of the first circle. It is no offence to any particular form of life if what is best and most perfect is put forth as a standard for all. Every kind of life has its own peculiar dangers and he who shows them up makes no reflection upon the institution, but is rather defending its cause."

This highly characteristic letter closes with a review of the early history and purpose of the monastic orders and emphasises still further Erasmus' point that he has no quarrel with monks as such, but only in so far as they set more value upon forms than upon the true following of Christ.

> "I would have all Christians so live that those who alone are now called 'religious' should seem very little religious—and that is true to-day in not a few cases;

> for why should we hide what is open to all?"

His picture of the true monks, as Benedict and Bernard would have had them, must have seemed Utopian indeed. They were merely voluntary communities of friends, living

> "in the liberty of the spirit according to the Gospel law, and under certain necessary rules about dress and food. They hated riches, they avoided all offices, even those of the church; they laboured with their hands, so that they might not only be no burden upon others, but might have a surplus to relieve distress; they dwelt upon mountain-peaks, in swamps, and sandy deserts."

Now let whoever will compare all this with the monks of his own day!

Things had moved very rapidly in the fifteen years since Erasmus had written the Enchiridion, but the tone of this defence is quite in harmony with that of the book itself. It is not loose and vulgar abuse of the "religious" orders, but rather a calm and consistent appeal to the one true standard of Christian life, namely to the teaching and example of Christ himself.

This is the great interest of this little manual of the Christian gentleman. It shows Erasmus as a clear-eyed critic of existing institutions, rather than as a man who had any definite scheme of reform to propose. Throughout the book there is but one concrete proposition: that a commission be appointed—by whom is not suggested—to reduce the substance of Christian faith and morals to such simple form that it could be understood by everyone. A very pretty and amiable suggestion indeed, but hardly suited to a moment when the irreconcilable

nature of the great conflict between a religious system founded upon formalism and the simple morality of the Gospel was beginning to be more and more clearly felt.

In the year following the publication of the Enchiridion, while Erasmus was quietly going on with his studies, living where he could find a comfortable place for the moment, he was suddenly called upon to perform one of the very few public functions of his life. Philip, Duke of Burgundy, son of the Emperor Maximilian and administrator of the government in the Low Countries, was returning from a journey to Spain and France in the year 1504 and was to be received at Brussels with all fitting demonstrations of loyalty and affection. Among other things the community desired to show its appreciation of learning by inflicting upon the young man a public oration in as good style as they could pay for.

Erasmus was chosen for this task and fulfilled it with success if not with enthusiasm. His extravagant phrases of laudation, in which the prince is credited with almost more than human qualities, cannot interest us. They are purely conventional and can convince us neither of the prince's merit nor of the orator's insincerity. More important for us is the evidence that even through such formal surroundings, the originality of the man cannot fail to make itself here and there felt.

The oration was delivered in the ducal palace at Brussels. In its printed form it fills over twenty folio pages and can hardly have occupied less than three or four hours in delivery. One would imagine that even the divine virtues of the young prince could

hardly have kept up his spirits while these ponderous paragraphs were being read to him, and it is certainly to be hoped that he was let off with an abbreviated edition. He may well have yawned over the tedious narrative of his journey to Spain and his magnificent reception in France, but he was, probably seldom privileged to hear such sound instruction as Erasmus dealt out to him from point to point of his discourse.[65]

> "Even to-day," said the orator, "there are not wanting those who croak into the ears of kings such stuff as this:—'Why should you hesitate? Have you forgotten that you are a prince? Is not your pleasure the law? It is the part of kings to live not by rule but by the lust of their own hearts. Whatever any of your subjects has, that belongs to you. It is yours to give life and to take it away; yours to make or to ruin the fortunes of whom you will. Others are praised or blamed, but to you everything is honourable, everything praiseworthy. Will you listen to those philosophers and scholastics?... Seal your ears with wax, most noble Duke, against the fatal song of these Sirens; like Homer's Ulysses, or rather, like Virgil's Æneas, steer your course so far from their coast that the poison of their seductive voices may not touch the soundness of your mind."
>
> "By what names we call you, it matters little to you, for you do not think yourself to be other than what Homer calls the 'shepherd of the people' or Plato its 'guardian.' You have discovered a new way to increase the revenues of your nobles and of yourself: by diminishing expense instead of increasing taxes. Oh! wonderful soul! you deprive yourself that your subjects may abound; you deny yourself that there may be the more for the multitude. You keep watch, that we may sleep in safety. You are wearied with continual anxieties, that your own may have peace. You wear your princedom, not for yourself, but for

your land."

> "The Astrologers declare that in certain years there appear long-tailed stars which bring mighty convulsions into human affairs, touching both the minds and the bodies of men with fatal force and terribly affecting rivers, seas, earth, and air. But no comet can arise so fatal to the earth as a bad prince, nor any planet so healthful as a blameless ruler."

The most striking part of the panegyric, however, is that which compares the virtues of peace with those of war. Here Erasmus makes his first great declaration of principles as to the absolute wickedness and folly of war and henceforth, during his whole life, he never failed to repeat and to emphasise them. We cannot account for this consistent attitude on any theory of personal timidity or even on the ground that the scholar's work demanded peace for its full development. This latter argument we do find in Erasmus, but it might equally well be turned in favour of war as furnishing those stirring episodes and kindling that enthusiasm for heroic deeds which have always been inspiring to literary genius. Erasmus was sincerely and profoundly impressed with the enormous waste of energy which war seemed to imply and believed with all his heart that the motives leading to it were almost invariably bad. In a day when the peoples of Europe were continually involved in wars and rumours of wars, it was an act of no little courage for this solitary scholar to stand before a great assembly of princes and plead the sacred cause of peace.

Considerable ingenuity is shown in his clever reply to the argument that peace is enervating to the ruler. Bravery, Erasmus says, is far easier in war, for

we see that a very poor kind of man may show it there; but to govern the spirit, to control desire, to put a bridle upon greed, to restrain the temper,—that kind of courage is peculiar to the wise and good. Of all these peaceful virtues he declares Philip to be the model, and it is of little account to us whether this praise be well or ill applied. Our interest is in the growth of Erasmus' own ideas and the part they had in fitting him for the work he was to do. His description of the miseries of war is a really noble piece of eloquence and reason.

We shall have occasion again to refer to Erasmus' peace propaganda. Enough here that he had the courage to speak his mind under circumstances which might well have led a less manly orator to dwell upon the glory and profit of a warlike policy. His listener, involved as he was at that moment in as tangled a web of negotiations as ever European diplomacy had yet woven, must have smiled in his sleeve at this harmless pedantry of the worthy scholar. Certainly no action of his life up to that time or in the short years left to him can indicate any preference for peace for its own sake.

More grateful, doubtless, to the princely ears were Erasmus' prognostications of his future. He had no faith in astrology, but he seemed to see in the evident trend of European affairs an accumulation of powers in the hand of duke Philip, which was to be realised in the person of his son Charles. The orator lets himself go in laudation of Maximilian, Ferdinand, Joanna, and Philip himself, with confident prediction of a magnificent future. In fact Maximilian's career was a series of brilliant failures. Ferdinand was in continual dread of Philip and often in open hostility with him. Joanna was already

showing traces of that hopeless insanity, aggravated it was said by the cruel frivolities of Philip, which was to taint the house of Habsburg to this day. Finally Philip was to die of disease within two years, without realising any of the schemes of aggrandisement to which his life was devoted.

But if Erasmus' prophecy was bad, his scheme of princely morals, as here laid down, was good, and it indicates clearly the bent of his serious thought. A man with his sense of humour—in other words, with his common sense—could not fail to see the discrepancy between the actual Philip and the being whom he had here depicted. When he came to publish his panegyric he found it necessary to defend himself against the charge of falsehood. In a letter[66] to his friend Paludanus, professor of rhetoric at Louvain, he goes at considerable length into the obligation of a writer of such things to tell the truth. He supports his own action by reference to classic panegyrists and lays down the general principle, that one can do more to help a prince by praising him for virtues he has not, than by blaming him for the faults he has.

> "Just," he says, "as the best of physicians declares to his patient that he likes his colour and the expression of his face, not because these things are so, but that he may make them so. Augustine, so they say, confesses that he told many a lie in praise of emperors. Paul the apostle himself not infrequently employs the device of pious adulation, praising in order that he may reform."

The panegyric to Philip, in its published form, was dedicated to Nicholas Ruterius, bishop of Arras. In the dedicatory letter Erasmus professes that this

kind of writing was distasteful to him, and defends himself again by the reflection that

> "there is no way so effectual for improving a prince, as to present to him, under the form of praise, the model of a good prince,—provided only that you ascribe virtues to him and take faults away from him in such wise that you urge him to the one and warn him from the other."

We are led to believe that Prince Philip was graciously pleased to approve the discourse of Erasmus. Doubtless he was as quick as the orator himself to explain it in a Pickwickian sense wherever it verged too closely upon unpleasant facts. He gave him a handsome present and is said to have offered him a place in his service which Erasmus, as usual, declined.

CHAPTER V
RESIDENCE IN ITALY—THE "PRAISE OF FOLLY"
1506-1509

We have already noted Erasmus' often-expressed desire to visit Italy. It is the alleged motive of his begging correspondence with the Marchioness Anna in and about the year 1500. At that time he professes to have little interest in Italy for its own sake, but to be yielding to a popular delusion that a doctor's degree was absolutely indispensable to a scholarly reputation and that an Italian doctorate was worth more than any other. In England he is quite satisfied that he has done just as well for his Greek and his scholarly advancement in general as if he had gone to Italy; yet the idea of the Italian journey seems never to have left him. It is an interesting inquiry precisely what the real attraction of Italy to Erasmus was.

One can easily draw a fancy picture of what ought to have attracted him. Italy had naturally for the scholar of the Renaissance a double interest, first as the seat of ancient Roman culture, and again as the source and spring of that modern revival in which he himself formed a part. It might well appeal to the instinct of the antiquarian and the sight-seer, eager to bring visibly before himself the remains of ancient splendour, the living and vivid reminders of a mighty past. He might hope to live again in the

charmed atmosphere of Virgil and Horace, to sit amid the scenes already familiar to him in the glowing pages of Cicero, and to bring into his mind some more adequate understanding of the vast achievements he had read of in the pregnant story of Livy or of Julius Cæsar.

The appeal of Italy, in short, to the historical imagination is, one would say, perhaps the most powerful that has ever come to a scholar's mind from that land of enchantment. It was a time, too, when men's thoughts and activities were turning eagerly to all that side of the new classical study. For a century and a half, ever since the days of Petrarch and Rienzi, the treasures of ancient art, Greek as well as Roman, had been brought to light, gathered into great collections, and made to do their part in the education of Europe. The limits of the Eternal City had been turned into one great treasure-house of precious reminders of former and presages of a future greatness. The visitor to Rome or to Florence might study from the originals the choicest forms in which the art of the ancient world had expressed itself.

It is hard to fancy that Erasmus, in his thoughts of Italy, can have failed to be drawn by the anticipation of living thus bodily in the presence of the human world from which he drew his literary inspiration and toward which all his serious thought went back as to its natural source. Yet the fact is that neither in the anticipation nor in the reality of his Italian journey do we find such reference to these things as would warrant us in thinking that they formed any essential part of his ideas about Italy. That sense of an overwhelming grandeur, a something indescribably greater than all that had come since,

which has fallen upon so many an Italian traveller, seems to have been entirely absent in his case. When Goethe entered Italy, it was with bated breath and reverent awe at the stupendous remains of a civilisation whose influence was even then potent in the lives of men. So far as Erasmus has left us any witness of himself his mind was occupied solely with the immediate profit of the moment: his doctor's degree, his new publisher, the petty comforts and discomforts of daily life.



FRONTISPIECE

FROM "L'ÉLOGE DE LA FOLIE," PUBLISHED AT LEYDEN IN 1715.

Still more curious is his attitude towards that other aspect of Italy which might have been expected to impress him even more. As a man of the Renaissance one might have looked to find Erasmus, even before his departure, in correspondence with some of the lights of the later Italian Humanism; yet, so far as we know, he went over the Alps a stranger, except for the slight reputation of his own writings, and chiefly of the Adages. The enormous activity of all those great producers in every field of art, who have made the turning-point of the fifteenth to the sixteenth century one of the great epochs in human history, seems simply to have escaped his notice. We do not hear of it as attracting him from the North; when he is in the midst of it, it finds no echo in his correspondence, and when he leaves it, there is nothing in his later writing to show that it had greatly affected him. With the really greatest men of the land he seems not to have come into any intimate personal relation, and he certainly avoided here, as he had always done elsewhere, any complication with political or social movements of any sort.

Our information in regard to the Italian journey and residence is curiously meagre. In the great collection of Erasmus' letters, there are but a half-dozen in the three years from 1506 to 1509. M. Nolhac[67] has published four others written by Erasmus to Aldus, his printer, but these latter are occupied almost wholly with unimportant business details. Four of the former group are written from Paris just after the party had left England and give us only some scattered hints as to Erasmus' departure

for Italy.

The long-sought opportunity came to him in a form which he had once vowed he would never accept, namely, through an engagement as private tutor to the two sons of Battista Boerio, the Genoese physician of King Henry VII. Beatus takes some pains to tell us that Erasmus was not to teach these youths, but it is not quite clear what else his function was. They had an attendant (*curator*) named Clyston, whom Erasmus describes in one of these early letters as the most pleasant, lovable, and faithful fellow in the world. The lads, too, were, he says, most modest, teachable, and studious. He has great hopes that they will fulfil the expectations of their father and reward his own pains. The voyage across the Channel was a dreadful one, lasting four days, so that a report spread in Paris that they were lost, and Erasmus appeared among his friends, he says, like one risen from the dead. The result was that he was taken with an illness, which he describes so exactly as to leave no doubt that he had a good clear case of the mumps.

From Paris the journey was by way of Lyons and the western Alps. We have a brief account of it in that singular hodge-podge, the catalogue of his writings, made by Erasmus eighteen years afterward and sent to John Botzheim of Constance. The story of the journey there given is only incidental to the account of a little poetical dissertation[68] on the approach of old age which he wrote on the way and sent back to Paris to his medical friend, William Cop. Erasmus was only about forty years old, but he felt himself getting on in life and declares here his determination to give up the charms of pure literature and devote the rest of his days to Christ

alone. Most serious men of the Renaissance from Petrarch and Boccaccio down had had their moments of self-reproach for their over-devotion to the heathen Muses and perhaps Erasmus' feeling on this point was as sincere as that of his colleagues. Surely his life up to this time had not been so frivolously classical as to cause him any deserved regrets. He represents this poem as written to relieve his mind from the unpleasantness of his companions, especially the distinguished Clyston, who was now already as dreadful a being as a few weeks before he had been charming. While Clyston was alternately brawling and drinking with an English man-at-arms whom the king had specially deputed for their protection, Erasmus was, he says, devoting himself to poetical reflection and composition. Another reference to this journey is probably found in the well-known colloquy "*Diversoria*," in which one of the speakers describes the charms of the French inns, their cleanliness, their good wines and cookery, and the great efforts of the landladies and their fair attendants to make things pleasant for the traveller. All this is then made the more effective by a counter-description of the swinish customs of the inns in Germany.[69] Again we have an illustration of Erasmus' æsthetic indifference. It is not a sufficient answer to say that joy in outward nature is a purely recent emotion. The whole art of the Renaissance is the witness that men had long since escaped from this form of mediæval bondage and were quite able to understand that they were living in a good world, made for their delight and not wholly under the dominion of Satan. A journey on horseback across the Alps! and, so far as we know, this prince of learned men, who could discourse so eloquently upon every human feeling, had not one emotion

beyond a desire to get across as soon as possible and a lively sense of the comforts and discomforts of his inns.

If a doctor's degree was one of Erasmus' objects in coming to Italy, he certainly lost no time in fulfilling it. The degree was conferred on him at Turin September 4, 1506.[70] Erasmus took especial pains to state in at least four letters that he took this degree to please his friends, not himself; but made no objection to its immediate use in his publications. From Turin he went on to Bologna where he proposed to settle for his own studies, as well as for those of his young pupils. The country was in a distressing state of confusion and that of a kind especially offensive to Erasmus. War was bad enough at the best, but a papal war was a scandal to the name of Christianity, and a fighting pope was to him a monster of iniquity. He held his pen quietly enough at the time, but the impression of this pope, Julius II., leading a campaign for the recovery of Bologna from the French never quite left him. It served him for a text whenever he felt free to speak his mind on the subject of war or on the decline of virtue in the church. A turn in affairs gave Bologna to Julius II. and furnished to Erasmus the opportunity of seeing the triumphal entry of the pope into his city. He simply reports the event to Servatius, his old comrade at Steyn, without mentioning that he had witnessed it, and only long afterward casually refers to his presence, in the course of a formal defence against the charge of abusing the papacy.

> "In the passage ... I compare the triumphal entries (*triumphos*) which, in my presence, Julius II. made first at Bologna and afterwards at Rome, with the majesty of the apostles who converted the world by divine

> truth and who so abounded in miracles that the sick were healed by their very shadow, and I give the preference to this apostolic splendour; yet I say nothing abusive against those [other] triumphs, although to speak frankly I gazed upon them not without a silent groan."

Two little notes to Servatius at this time are quite in the usual tone of Erasmian discontent. He says that his principal object in coming to Italy was to study Greek but "*jam frigent studia, fervent bella*" "studies are cold, but wars are hot,"—he will endeavour to fly back again very soon and hopes to see his friend the following summer. While wars are planning study takes a holiday. He makes an identical promise to another friend and was probably quite sincere in fancying that Italy, like every other place he had tried, was a failure. Evidently he was in trouble about his pupils. Writing to one of them twenty-five years afterward[71] he says:

> "it was the fault of that fellow, whom you nickname the '*scarabeus*,' not only that I had to leave you sooner than I had intended, but that the pleasure of our companionship was so embittered that if I had not been kept by a sense of duty, I could not have endured that monster for a month. I have often wondered that your cautious father could have been so thoughtless as to intrust his most precious treasures to a man who was scarce fit to keep swine, nay, who was of such feeble mind that he rather needed a keeper himself."

The whole affair is almost an echo of the trouble with the "old man" at Paris and would be too trifling for notice were it not almost the only incident in connection with Erasmus' residence of more than a year at Bologna which has come down to us. Of course the climate was bad and especially unsuited

to his requirements.

The summer of 1507 found Erasmus still at Bologna. It was an exceptionally hot season—so he says—and the plague broke out with violence. It is apropos of this plague and an incident which he relates in connection with it, that we come once more to the famous letter, mentioned early in our narrative,[72] in which Erasmus begs to be released from the obligation of wearing the monastic dress. The letter is addressed to Lambertus Grunnius, a papal secretary at Rome, and contains, by way of introduction, that long series of details about the compulsory entrance into the monastery of a youth called Florentius, which has been generally accepted as a truthful narrative of the writer's own experience. We have already followed the indications of this letter with some care down to the point where Erasmus was safely invested with the monastic garb and had made up his mind to make the best of it. At this point, with one of those jumps so common in his style, he comes to the time of his Italian visit and continues:

> "Some time afterward it happened that he went into a far country for the purpose of study. There, according to the French custom, he wore a linen scarf above his gown, supposing that this was not unusual in that country.[73] But from this he twice was in danger of his life, for the physicians there who serve during a plague, wear a white linen scarf on their left shoulder, so that it hangs down in front and behind, and in this way they are easily recognised and avoided by the passers-by. Yet, unless they go about by unfrequented ways they would be stoned by those who meet them, for such is the horror of death among those people, that they go wild at the very odour of incense because it is burned at funerals. At one time

> when Florentius was going to visit a learned friend, two blackguards fell upon him with murderous cries and drawn swords and would have killed him, if a lady fortunately passing had not explained to them that this was the dress of a churchman and not of a doctor. Still they ceased not to rage and did not sheathe their swords until he had pounded on the door of a house near by and so got in.
>
> "At another time he was going to visit certain countrymen of his when a mob with sticks and stones suddenly got together and urged each other on with furious shouts of 'Kill the dog! Kill the dog!' Meanwhile a priest came up who only laughed and said in Latin in a low voice: 'Asses! Asses!' They kept on with their tumult, but as a young man of elegant appearance and wearing a purple cloak came out of a house, Florentius ran to him as to an altar of safety, for he was totally ignorant of the vulgar tongue and was only wondering what they wanted of him. 'One thing is certain,' said the young man: 'if you don't lay off this scarf, you'll some day get stoned; I have warned you, and now look out for yourself.' So, without laying aside his scarf, he concealed it under his upper garment."

Such is the cock-and-bull story with which Erasmus, we know not how many years later, amused the excellent Grunnius as a preface to his petition for a papal dispensation from the duty of wearing the monastic dress. It is too silly even for Mr. Drummond, who very properly says that it is quite too much to believe either that Erasmus would be in a plague-stricken city when he could get out of it, or that any Italian could be so blind as not to know a monk from a doctor! Certainly Erasmus would never wait to be pounded in the street before finding out what dress he might safely wear. The reply of Grunnius shows how the whole matter looked at Rome.

> "MY DEAREST ERASMUS: I never undertook any commission more gladly than the one you have intrusted to me and scarcely ever succeeded in one more to my own mind. For I was moved not so much by my friendship for you, strong as that is, as by the undeserved misfortune of Florentius. Your letter I read from beginning to end to the pope in the presence of several cardinals and men of the highest standing. The most holy father was extremely delighted with your style and you would hardly believe how hot he was against those man-stealers; for greatly as he favours true piety, by so much the more does he hate those who are filling the world with wretched or wicked monks to the great injury of the Christian faith. 'Christ,' he says, 'loves piety of the heart, not workhouses for slaves.' He has ordered your permit to be made out at once and *gratis* too.... Farewell, and give Florentius, whom I regard as I do yourself, an affectionate greeting from me."

However much of truth or of fiction there may have been in this famous letter, we may be tolerably sure that Erasmus thought of it very much as he would of his Colloquies, as a piece of literary work with a purpose at the bottom of it. At the time he sent it, perhaps 1514, his views were well known to the papal circle, and the abuse of monks was far from unwelcome to the "enlightened" views of a monarchy as worldly as any in all Europe. Doubtless Erasmus knew his Rome well enough before he ventured to send such a fulmination as this into the midst of it.

Of his other occupations at Bologna we know little. He does not appear to have been a regular student at the famous university, but rather to have worked by himself and to have got what help he could from a Greek teacher named Bombasius, with whom he had later some correspondence.[74]

"I never passed a more disagreeable year," he said long afterward; but we have learned the formula by this time and could hardly expect any other opinion from him of a year in which he had reached the goal of his desires, was free from all burdens except the oversight of two excellent pupils, was at one of the principal seats of learning, in as good health as usual and working away at several pieces of composition which he had undertaken of his own free choice. It is as certain that this was a profitable year to Erasmus as it is that he profited by those early monastic years of which he affected later to have only the gloomiest recollections.

If any proof of this were wanting it would be found in the earliest acquaintance of Erasmus with the famous Venetian printer and publisher, Aldus Manutius, which begins at the close of the year at Bologna and was to continue for many years to the great pleasure and profit of both parties. Erasmus' first request to Aldus, introduced by plentiful compliments upon his work, is that he will undertake to reprint the translation of two tragedies of Euripides which had already been published by Badius at Paris. That unlucky publisher, it seems, had offered to make a second and better edition, but Erasmus confides to Aldus his dread that Badius would only patch up old errors with new ones, and says[75]:



ALDUS P. MANUTIUS.

FROM AN OLD PRINT.

> "I should feel that my productions were on the way to immortality if they should see the light by the aid of your types, especially those small ones, the most tasteful of all. Let it be so done that the volume shall be very small and let the thing be put through with very slight expense. If it shall seem good to you to undertake the business, I will furnish *gratis* the corrected manuscript which I am sending by this messenger and will only ask for a few copies to give to my friends."

He urges Aldus to haste because he may have to leave Italy very soon.

Everything thus points to an entire absence of plan in Erasmus' mind. His only fixed intention was to go to Rome at Christmas, as he informs Aldus in his next letter. The great publisher had evidently agreed to print the tragedies and had made certain suggestions in regard to readings, which indicate at once how much more than a mere printer or publisher he was. Erasmus replies with his own views on the passages in question and with very warm words of admiration for Aldus. He wants these plays, he says, as New Year gifts to his learned friends at Bologna, and these include "all who either know or profess the classic literature." At Rome, also, he will want to have some little work to recall him to his former acquaintances and to make new ones; so he begs Aldus for a short introductory note, which he will leave entirely to his discretion. It is an interesting comment on Erasmus' relation to the Italian scholars that he should have needed a publisher's introduction to commend him to them. Will Aldus be so good as to send him twenty or thirty

copies *de luxe* (*codices estimatos*) for which he will pay in advance, c.o.d. or in any way Aldus may direct? A singular reference in this letter is worth noting for the light it sheds upon—I know not exactly what aspect of Erasmus' character. He says:

> "Leave out the epigram at the end of the tragedies. It was written by a certain young Frenchman, at that time a servant of mine, whom I had led to believe, by way of a joke, that these verses ought to be printed, and I had given them to Badius at my departure in the youth's presence to make him keep on hoping. But I wonder whatever put it into Badius' head to print them, for I told the man that I was only playing a joke on the lad."

In both these letters there is shown a studied disrespect for Badius and an evident effort to gain the good will of Aldus, to whom Erasmus speaks as to a superior person. "No doubt you will find many errors, but in this matter I do not even ask you to be cautious."

This friendly beginning with Aldus had its immediate consequence for Erasmus. He gave up his intention—if he had ever had it—of going to Rome at Christmas, 1507, and we next find him in the early part of 1508 at Venice. He had thrown up the care of the young Boerios, for reasons, perhaps, connected with his dislike of their attendant, but certainly without any break with the lads themselves.

The specific purpose of Erasmus in going to Venice was to prepare a new edition of his Adages, the first edition of which we noted as made at Paris in 1500. Eight years of continuous occupation with classic literature, and especially the progress he had meanwhile made in the study of Greek, had given

him an immensely increased acquaintance with the kind of material he wished to use for this collection. How far he had prepared the way by correspondence we do not know; but it would seem that he went at the work at once and kept on with it very steadily for about nine months. The peculiar nature of the Adages, a mere collection of disconnected paragraphs without any natural order or arrangement of any sort, made it possible for Erasmus to work in a fashion very different from his usual one. It was simply a question of getting the thing along bit by bit, and so we find him sending in a daily instalment of "copy" and taking away a daily batch of proof. The first typographical corrections were made by a paid proof-reader, then the author corrected, and finally Aldus himself read the proof, not so much, as he once said in reply to a question of Erasmus, to ensure correctness as for his own instruction.

We gain from many scattered indications a picture, on the whole very attractive, of this new activity.[76] It was Erasmus' first experience as a fellow-worker with anyone, and it had its uncomfortable aspects of course, or he would not have been Erasmus. His critics, notably Scaliger, would have it afterward, on the authority of Aldus himself, that Erasmus was little more than a paid assistant in the printing-office, and one is at a loss to know why so honourable an occupation should have seemed an occasion for reviling him or worth his own while to deny. The obvious refutation lies in the great amount of work required by the Adages themselves. He must have been busy enough to refute other charges of Scaliger as to his laziness. Whatever else he may have been, he was not lazy then nor at any other time of his life. As to still

another accusation we may perhaps have our doubts. Scaliger says: "While you were doing the work of half a man, reading [proof?] in Aldus' office, you were a three-bodied Geryon for drinking."

The view of Erasmus at Venice which is reflected in Scaliger's tirade may have come from the undoubted familiarity of Erasmus' relation with Aldus and his family. Probably the most vivid conception of such an early printing-office may be gained to-day by a visit to the great house of Plantin at Antwerp, now happily preserved by the piety of the municipality and kept as nearly as possible in the condition it was in at the time of its great activity but little later than that of the house of Aldus. It is an ample burgher residence, with spacious living-rooms and every indication of a generous family life; but under the same roof and in close connection with the living apartments are also the rooms devoted to business. The working force was in an intimate sense the "family" of the publisher, and from the earliest moment of his arrival Erasmus seems to have formed one in the Aldine corps. The principal account of this Venetian life is, unfortunately to be found in the colloquy, "The Rich Miser," one of the most scurrilous of all Erasmus' writings. The person here exposed to the biting sting of his humour is Andreas d'Asola, the father-in-law of Aldus Manutius. He seems to have been the economic head of the Aldine household and, in some form, a partner in the business, as were also his two sons, Federigo and Francesco. Erasmus was received into this family on the same terms, apparently, as other workers. The household consisted of thirty-three persons. Beatus represents this arrangement as a kindness to Erasmus, to save him from going to a hotel and, at all events, he remained a fellow-member of this clan

as long as he stayed in Venice. There was certainly no compulsion upon him to do so unless he pleased, and common courtesy ought to have prevented him from holding up to the ridicule of the world a family and a people to whom, as he elsewhere freely acknowledges, he owed every kind of assistance in his work and every personal attention. The principal speaker in the *Opulentia sordida* is one Gilbertus, who presents himself to his friend Jacobus in such lean and pitiful guise that the friend inquires whether he has been serving a term in the galleys. "No," he replies, "I have been at Synodium, boarding with Antronius." The weather had been for three months continually cold, so that he was nearly frozen to death; for the only firewood they had had was green stumps which Antronius rooted up by night out of the common land. In summer it was worse on account of vermin, but Antronius never minded that, he was brought up to it; and besides he was always off trading in everything that would bring him in a penny of profit. Even on the funerals that went out of his house he made his gain, and these were two or three at least in the most healthful year; for he played such tricks with his wine that some were always dying of the stone. Yet he weakened his wine by throwing in a bucketful of water every day, and adulterated the meal of which his bread was made by mixing chalk with it. The son-in-law Orthrogonus, who stands for Aldus himself, comes in for his share of abuse for aiding and abetting in this villany. Frequently Antronius would come home pretending to be very ill and without appetite, and then the whole family would have to starve on grey peas with a little oil on them. Finally, however, dinner would be served, but such a dinner! First a soup of water with lumps of old cheese soaked in it, then a piece of

fortnight-old tripe covered up with a batter of eggs to cheat the eye, but not enough to deceive the sense of smell, and, to close, some of the same stale cheese. The luckless boarder saved his life by having a quarter of a boiled chicken served up with each meal, but even this was a poor wretched fowl and he was stinted in his meagre ration. Even his own private fresh eggs were stolen by the women and rotten ones given him instead, and his own cask of good wine was broached by the same thieves and drunk up without remonstrance from the host.

The worst of it was that when they found out that the poor Northerner was trying to keep soul and body together by buying extra things, they set a doctor upon him to persuade him not to be such a glutton. The doctor was a very good-natured fellow and finally compromised on a supper of an egg and a glass of wine, admitting that he allowed himself this indulgence, and, as Erasmus testifies, kept himself fat and hearty on such a diet. The dialogue concludes with good Erasmian hedging; for the grumbler confesses that if the food had been of good quality he would have got on very well with the quantity, and, after all, eating was largely a matter of habit and he, being used to a different method, simply could not do with this. The final fling at poor Andreas is to say that his sons, for whom he was doing all this scraping and pinching, would make up for their scanty fare at home by throwing their money away in riotous living outside.

Make what allowance we may for the humorous exaggeration of this tirade, it cannot give us any but the lowest notion of its author's fineness of feeling. The bit of truth contained in it was probably that to Erasmus the usual manner of living of the well-to-do

Italians seemed meanly insufficient, while to the Italians his natural demands seemed those of a glutton and a wine-bibber. Very likely his friends, in the kindness of their hearts, called in a physician to persuade him to consider his health by living more as they did. It is simply the ever-repeated struggle of the Northerner, accustomed to much animal food and to strong drink, to understand the frugal ways of the South. Our interest in the whole incident is to notice that here Erasmus contracted the disease which to his great bodily distress, but also, it must be admitted, often to his great moral comfort, he was to carry about with him to his death. He writes from Basel in 1523 to Francesco d'Asola, one of the youths to whom he gives such a villainous character in his *Opulentia sordida*: "I have not forgotten our former intimacy, nor would my gravel let me do so if I would, for I first got it there and every time it comes it reminds me of Venice." His own explanation of this attack is the badness of his fare, especially the wine, which, he says, caused two or three deaths from stone every year in the Aldine family; but we may be permitted a doubt whether it was not rather due to his own imprudence and his refusal to adapt himself to the simple manners of the country.[77]

The Aldine printing establishment was a kind of literary club-house for the finer spirits of the Republic, and Erasmus was here introduced to them all. All were interested in his work and helped him with manuscripts and suggestions; to such a degree, indeed, that this was one of the counts in Scaliger's indictment against him. Such aid may, however, easily be explained by the peculiar nature of the Adages. Every available source, written, printed, or oral, was properly laid under contribution for a work which was essentially a compilation.

Of these men, none was of the first rank as a scholar; they were the fair representatives of that humanistic generation which had come into the great inheritance of culture prepared for it by two previous generations. The early original impulse with its extravagant individualism had settled down into a calmer, wider, and more polished method of thought and work. Culture had made its way into all departments of life and proved its right to exist by useful service. Of the Venetian scholars we need mention but few. Two Greeks, Marcus Musurus and Johannes Lascaris, were famous, the one as a Greek teacher, the other as the literary purveyor of Lorenzo the Magnificent and, at the time of Erasmus, as ambassador of King Louis of France to the Republic. Girolamo Aleander, then a man of twenty-eight, was preparing himself to teach Greek at Paris and, in fact, went thither in 1508 with letters of introduction from Erasmus. The two were to meet on another field when Aleander as legate of Leo X. at the court of Charles V. was to be the chief agent in the papal policy against Luther and was to reproach Erasmus in bitter terms for his half-way policy towards the Reformation. Erasmus believed that he was the author of the attacks of Scaliger, of whom he knew nothing, and says in this connection that they were co-frequenters at Aldus's and that he knew him as well as he knew himself.

Everything goes to show that the nine months of the Venetian visit were months of eager work, relieved by intercourse with men of genuine culture and of unbroken friendliness. That Erasmus should have dwelt more upon the petty inconveniences of his life than upon these weightier things is quite in character. The real monument of his Venetian days is the great second edition of the Adages, in

substantially their final form.

From Venice Erasmus moved in the early autumn to Padua, the university city of the Venetian territory. His immediate business there was to take charge of a pupil, the young illegitimate son of King James IV. of Scotland. This amiable youth, Alexander by name, was already, at eighteen, burdened with the title of Archbishop of Saint Andrews. He had come to Italy to study, and was commended to Erasmus by his father to receive instruction in rhetoric. Erasmus once uses him as an illustration of near-sightedness: "he could see nothing without touching his nose to the book." Yet he was a most clever fellow with his hand. Writing in 1528 to his Nuremberg friend Pirkheimer about certain alleged manuscript forgeries, Erasmus tells a pretty tale of Alexander, which shows a very pleasant relation between them:

> "he once showed me a printed book which I knew for certain I had never read; but in the numerous marginal notes I recognised my own handwriting. I asked him where he had got the book. 'I acknowledge the writing,' I said, 'but the book I have never read nor had in my possession.' 'Oh, yes,' he replied, 'you read it once, but you have forgotten it; otherwise where did this writing come from?' Finally, with a laugh, he confessed the trick."

Marcus Musurus, his acquaintance at Venice, was here at Padua the best friend and helper of Erasmus. He was in full activity as professor of Greek, and though we have no record of any regular instruction to the visitor, it is certain that Erasmus applied to him for many details of his own work and held him always in grateful memory. Indeed his short residence of but a few weeks at Padua seems to have

been an exception to the rule of tediousness. He refers to Padua afterwards as the seat of a more serious scholarship than was to be found at other Italian university towns. The formation of the League of Cambrai between King Louis XII. of France, Pope Julius II., the Emperor Maximilian, and the King of Spain against the republic of Venice broke up the quiet circle of Paduan scholars. Troops of the allies began to make their appearance in Venetian territory and Erasmus, reluctantly he says, was forced to move southward. He travelled in the suite of the boy-archbishop, stopping first at Ferrara, where he met a choice circle of resident scholars, among whom was the young Englishman, Richard Pace. It was at Pace's house that he was presented to the Ferrarese Humanists. A very pretty little story is recalled by one of them, Cœlius Calcagninus, who in writing to Erasmus in 1525 reminds him of their meeting in Ferrara, and gives him a brief account of the other scholars whom he had met there.

> "We were talking," he writes, "of Aspendius the harp-player, and the question came up as to the meaning of *intus canere* and *extra canere*, when you suddenly drew forth from your pouch a copy of your Adages, just printed at Venice. From that moment I began to admire the genius and learning of Erasmus, and scarce ever have I heard mention of his name without recalling that conversation almost with reverence. My witness is Richard Pace, that man most learned himself and by nature made to be the promoter of the studies of the most learned men."

Only a few days were spent at Ferrara and still less time at Bologna. The party reached Siena at the very end of 1508 or the beginning of 1509, and there settled definitely for the work of the young

archbishop. We have a very engaging picture of Erasmus as a teacher of rhetoric in his comments upon the Adage, "Thou wast born at Sparta; do honour to it."[78] He represents his pupil as a model of all the virtues and gives us again an insight into his method of teaching. It is always the same which he had himself employed in learning, the method of persistent practice in repeating and writing the language itself. A style was to be formed only by becoming absolutely familiar with the classic model.

Yet the life at Siena, serene and charming as it may have been for the pupil, was, if we may judge by his expressions in other connections, more or less a bore to the master. He liked to think of himself as an authority on the art of teaching, but he seems always to have regarded teaching as being, for himself, an interruption to the higher interests of his life. After a few weeks he was restless again, and begged permission of his pupil to go on alone to Rome.



CARDINAL REGINALD POLE.

FROM "ERASMI OPERA," PUBLISHED AT LEYDEN, 1703.

It is easy for a modern to picture the charm which the Eternal City with its countless memorials of the ancient world must have exercised upon a man whose life was devoted to the study of that world, who spoke and wrote its language, and who drew from it almost the whole material of his intellectual occupation. None of the biographers of Erasmus has been quite able to resist the temptation to tell what he must have thought and felt in this august presence; but candour compels us to say that his own witness on this point is as meagre as can well be imagined. Only one or two scattered expressions give us any reason to think that his impressions of Rome were at all of the kind they ought in all reason to have been. It was the pontificate of Julius II., a man indeed chiefly devoted to the political interests of his great place, but also an eager patron of art and learning, doing his part in the attempt, never quite successful, to make Rome a real centre of culture. What was true of the pope was true also of that group of great prelates who formed around him a court more splendid and not less worldly than that of any purely temporal ruler. Say what one may and, in all truth, must say of the corruption and scandal of the Roman institution, it was a life of immense activity and, for a thinking man, one of great interest. Rome was alive with building; painting and sculptural decoration were being carried to a height unheard of in human history. The ancient monuments were, it is true, fast disappearing to make room and to furnish material for new construction, but enough was left to give the interested traveller abundant suggestion of what had been. That Erasmus saw and, after his fashion, noted

these things is certain; but he felt no impulse to dwell upon them or to speak of them to others. His life during this first[79] visit at Rome was more completely that of the literary traveller and sight-seer than it had ever been anywhere. There is no pretence that he busied himself with study or with composition. So far as he had any aim it seems to have been to make acquaintance with men of his own kind and their patrons,—nor is there the slightest room for suspicion that in making these connections he had in view any ulterior advantage to himself. His best introduction was the book of Adages, by this time widely known and everywhere justly welcomed as a monument of vast learning, immense industry, and an originality of thought not less noteworthy.

Perhaps the most intimate companion of these Roman days was Scipio Carteromachos, a Tuscan scholar, with whom Erasmus had made acquaintance at Bologna, and for whom he expresses unusual regard. "He was a man," he writes, "of curious and accurate learning, but so averse to display that unless you called him out you would swear that he was quite ignorant of letters." They had met again at Padua, and now lived for awhile at Rome apparently in the greatest intimacy, sharing the same bed at times, though this it would seem was not an unusual proof of friendship with Erasmus. Through Carteromachos he was introduced to many others, scholars of the same type and frequenters of the papal court. The result was that he found himself brought into relation with the most distinguished Roman circle. He makes the most of this fact afterward in defending himself from the charge of unfaithfulness to the papal cause, and there would seem to be no room for doubt that he was at least a

well tolerated guest of the men who were giving the tone to the ruling society of the capital. He claims intimate acquaintance with Tommaso Inghirami, the most popular preacher of the city, the type of religious orator who gave scandal to the more serious by garnishing his oratory rather with classic allusion and quotation than with proofs and texts of the Bible. In his treatise on a false purity of style called *Ciceronianus*, Erasmus gives us a choice specimen of this kind of preaching.[80]

He says that he was urged by his learned friends at Rome to attend the discourse of a famous pulpit orator whose name he would rather have understood than expressed. The subject was the death of Christ. Pope Julius II. himself was present, a most unusual honour, and with him a great crowd of cardinals, bishops, and visiting scholars. The opening and closing parts of the discourse, longer than the real sermon itself, were occupied with praises of Julius, whom the orator called

> "'Jupiter Optimus Maximus, brandishing in his all-powerful right hand the three-forked fatal thunderbolt and by his nod alone doing what he will.' Everything that had happened in recent years, in France, Germany, Spain, Portugal, Africa, Greece, he declared had been done by the will of that man alone. All this was said at Rome, by a Roman, in the tongue of Rome, and with the Roman accent. But what had all this to do with Julius, the high-priest of the Christian religion, the vicar of Christ, the successor of Peter and Paul?—or with the cardinals and bishops, the vicegerents of the other Apostles? As to the topic he had undertaken to treat, nothing could be more solemn, more real, more wonderful, more lofty, or more suited to kindle emotion. Who, though he were endowed with but a very common kind of eloquence, could not with such an argument have drawn tears

from men of stone? The plan of the discourse was this:—first to depict the death of Christ as sad and then by a change of style to describe it as glorious and triumphant—in order, of course, that he might give us a specimen of Cicero's δεινώσεως, by which he was able to carry away the emotions of his hearers at will.

"HYPOLOGUS:—Well, did he succeed?

"BULEPHORUS:—For my part, when he was working his hardest upon those melancholy feelings which the rhetoricians call πάθη, to tell the truth I was more inclined to laugh. I did not see a person in that whole concourse one whit the sadder, when he was piling up with the whole force of his eloquence the unmerited sufferings of the innocent Christ. Nor, on the other hand, did I see anyone the more cheerful when he was wholly occupied with showing forth His death to us as triumphant, praiseworthy, and glorious....

"Not to make more words about it, this Roman talked in such a very Roman fashion that I heard nothing about the death of Christ. And yet, because he was so eagerly striving after a Ciceronian diction, he seemed to the Ciceronians to have spoken marvellously. Of his subject he said hardly a word; he seemed neither to understand it nor to care for it. Nor did he say anything to the point nor rouse any emotion. The only reason for praising him was that he spoke like a Roman and recalled a something of Cicero. If such a discourse had been delivered by a schoolboy to his mates it might have been praised as an evidence of a certain talent; but on such a day, before such an audience, and on such a topic, I pray you, what sense was there in it?"

Among the cardinals two are especially mentioned as friendly to our traveller, Raffaelle Riario, nephew of Julius II., and the Venetian Grimani. If we may trust Erasmus' allusions, he was in the way of frequently going in and out at the

houses of great men, but his character as a man of letters, whom it was their pride and pleasure to favour, seems to have been strictly maintained. In the great throng of followers of a princely establishment, one wandering scholar more or less made no great matter, and it would not do, from the words "hospitality" and "familiarity" to argue any very close personal intimacy.

What strikes one most forcibly is the almost total absence of anything like discussion on public affairs. The only topic on which Erasmus thinks it worth while to make any report is classical studies, and on this he gives us only brief detail. There is no indication that this visit to Rome had any decisive influence upon Erasmus' attitude towards the Church. That was already determined. Nothing could be more distinct than his declarations in the Enchiridion and now, quite recently, in the Adages. Rome could hardly fail to furnish him with new suggestions and illustrations, but it was as far from forcing him into any new attitude of opposition as it was from so influencing Luther on his visit a year later. Both saw many things which startled and shocked them, but Erasmus had already reached the limit of his critical development and Luther had hardly as yet begun to formulate his criticism of the Roman institution.

The only exception to the rule of exclusion from public affairs is found in the invitation of Cardinal Riario to write a dissertation on the subject of the proposed war against Venice. It was a most ticklish commission, and Erasmus' solution of it was more than Erasmian. He wrote two treatises, one for the war and the other against it, that those who were to pay their money might have their choice. He put

more heart into the second, he says, but the advice of the first was followed. Both these treatises were lost, he tells us, by the treachery of some person. There was an unfounded rumour that the grim old soldier-pope, finding Erasmus' sentiments against war very little to his taste, sent for the author and warned him in future to let politics alone; but it is highly improbable that if Erasmus had had an interview with the pope, even under so untoward circumstances, he would have failed to make some mention of it.

Yet it would be far from true that Erasmus lived in Rome with his eyes shut. Numerous little allusions to Roman and Italian traits in his later writings show that he was here, as everywhere, very much of a human being, keenly alive to what was going on about him and mindful of its use on future occasions.

The young archbishop was soon recalled to Scotland, and four years afterward he met his death, fighting bravely by his father's side on the fatal field of Flodden. Before leaving Italy he desired to see Rome, and in his company Erasmus, who had meanwhile returned to Siena, went back again as learned guide and companion. They seem to have gone southward as far as Naples, but to have made only a flying visit even in Rome. Erasmus remained there after his pupil had left, and it is during this final visit that the question of a permanent residence begins to be discussed.

As to the possibility or probability that Erasmus would definitely settle at Rome, there is room for difference of opinion. If one may judge from his own allusions there was no country, in which he made any considerable stay, which did not at one time or

another occur to him as a possible residence for his declining years, and on this general principle, why not Rome as well as another place? Our study of his character up to this point, however, should lead us at once to understand that, of all places in the world, Rome was least suited to his peculiar genius. Although he was quite capable of defending both sides of any argument, he could not be happy where he must either do this all the time or else commit himself without reserve to the dominant tone of a society which would eventually absorb him completely. Furthermore, the almost inevitable condition of a Roman residence was the holding of an ecclesiastical office and this, no matter how high it might be—the higher in fact the worse—was as far as possible from the line of Erasmus' ambition. Beatus says he was offered the very high function of papal penitentiary, with a hint that this might be a stepping-stone to higher dignities. When we consider the kind of official places filled by many of the Italian humanists, such an offer does not seem improbable. Less clear is one's feeling about a proposition made by the Venetian Cardinal Grimani that Erasmus should attach himself to his personal following and, presumably, continue to live the life of an independent scholar. Erasmus' account of his interview with the cardinal is worth while for us because of its many details. It was written in 1531, after the death of Grimani, and is given in a letter[81] apropos of a reference to the cardinal's services to the cause of letters, especially in maintaining so large and valuable a library.





CARDINAL PETER BEMBO.

FROM "ERASMI OPERA," PUBLISHED AT LEYDEN, 1703.

"When I was at Rome I was invited once and again by him, through Pietro Bembo, if I am not mistaken, to an interview with him, and though I was at that time very averse to seeking the company of great men, I at last went to his palace more from shame than from desire. Neither in the courtyard nor in the vestibule did the shadow of a human being appear. It was the afternoon hour. I gave my horse to my man and went up alone, found no one in the first hall, nor in the second, and still on to the third, finding not a door closed and wondering at the solitude. Only in the last did I find one man, a Greek physician I believe, with shaven head, guarding the open door. I inquired what the cardinal was doing. He replied that he was within talking with some gentlemen, and as I said no more he asked what I wished. 'To make my compliments to him,' I said, 'if convenient, but as he is not at leisure, I will call again.' Then, as I was about to go and was looking out of the window, the Greek returned to me and waited to see if I had any message for the cardinal. 'There is no occasion to interrupt his conference,' I said; 'I will come again soon.' Finally he asked my name and I gave it to him. When he heard it he rushed in before I knew it and soon coming out said I was not to go away and I was summoned at once. As I came in the cardinal received me not as a cardinal and such a cardinal might receive a man of the lowest condition, but as a colleague. A chair was set for me and we talked more than two hours, during which he did not permit me to take off my hat. For a man at the very height of fortune his graciousness was marvellous. Among the many things he said about study, showing that he had then in mind what I learn he has since done about his library, he began to urge me not to leave Rome, the nurse of genius. He invited me to share his palace and the enjoyment of all his fortunes, adding that the warm and moist climate of Rome would suit my health, and especially that part of the city where he had his dwelling, a palace built

> by a former pope who had chosen the site as being the most healthful in the city. After we had had considerable discussion he sent for his nephew, who had just been made archbishop, a youth of an almost divine disposition. As I started to rise he forbade me, saying:—'It is becoming for the pupil to stand before the master.' At length he showed me his library of books in many tongues.
>
> "If I had known this man earlier I should never have left a city which I found favourable to me beyond my deserts. But I had already arranged to go and matters had gone so far that I could hardly have remained honourably. When I said that I had been summoned by the king of England, he ceased to urge me, but begged me over and over again not to suspect him of not meaning what he had said nor to judge him according to the usual manners of courtiers. With difficulty I got away from the conference; but when he was unwilling to detain me longer, he laid it upon me with his last words that I should see him again on the subject before I left the city. I did not return, unhappy man that I was, lest I should be overcome by his kindness and change my mind. But what can one do against the fates!"

This interview was held at the last moment of Erasmus' stay in Rome, before his departure for England. His account makes it clear that he had not known Grimani before, so that we cannot reckon him among Erasmus' Roman patrons. Nor can we give too much weight to the promises of employment. From the connection in which Erasmus introduces the story it seems quite probable that the cardinal had some idea of making use of him in connection with his library; but the great scholar had no fancy for being anybody's librarian. His laments that he had not listened to Grimani's proposition may safely be treated as conventional.

From Rome Erasmus journeyed rapidly by way of Bologna, through Lombardy, over the Splügen Pass to Chur, Constance, and Strassburg, where he took ship on the Rhine for Holland. We hear of him at Louvain and Antwerp and then in England early in July, 1509. What was the fruit of his nearly three years in Italy? He had perfected himself in Greek, as far at least as he needed to go for the purposes he had most at heart. He was Doctor Erasmus, and needed no longer to feel himself overshadowed by the superior display of some inferior talent. He had given to the world in his Adages a great and serious work, which was welcomed with the greatest approval by those most competent to judge. He had seen for himself something of the life of that people which had done most to bring pure learning to honour. Finally he had made personal connections within the world of scholars, which were likely to be of great future service to him.

It would be most interesting if we could perceive with any distinctness the direct effect of this experience upon Erasmus' literary production, but such effect cannot be traced in any instructive way. There are of course references to Italy to be found henceforth in many of his writings, but it would be too much to say that the Italian visit was in any way epoch-making for his literary character. Literature was not a thing of nationalities; it was cosmopolitan, and the scholar was as much, or as little, at home in one place as in another. The genius of Erasmus ripened slowly and naturally, following the lines of its early choice and moving on without noteworthy interruption to its highest achievement.

Still, few biographers have failed to fancy a connection of cause and effect between the Italian

impressions of Erasmus and the famous satire, in which almost at once on his arrival in England he gave free rein to his criticism of church and society. Certainly his illustrations in the Praise of Folly point often to abuses which he might have seen and felt in Italy. His direct attacks upon popes and cardinals can hardly fail to have gained an added point from his observation at first hand. What is not clear is that such stimulus to his reforming zeal was anything more than incidental.



ERASMUS.
HOLBEIN'S ILLUSTRATIONS TO THE "PRAISE OF FOLLY."

In all the earlier writing of Erasmus we have noted especially the quality of the moral preacher. Whatever he touched took on inevitably the tone of exhortation. And this same quality continues to appear in all his work, whenever the subject rises, even ever so little, above the level of mere grammatical detail. One ought to have this

prevailing seriousness of purpose especially in mind in coming to such a piece of work as the Praise of Folly.[82] Of all Erasmus' writing, none was and is more widely known than this. It is called a satire and was intended to make men laugh. Erasmus had to apologise for it, as he did for most things he wrote, and in the introductory epistle to his dear More he apologises in advance for allowing himself so lively a diversion. There can be no doubt that the men of his day were vastly amused by it. It had for them the charm that always belongs to literary references to familiar types and figures, especially if these references are couched in colloquial phrase. Erasmus was tolerably sure of his audience, and could count upon applause from every class for the amusement it got out of his criticism of all other classes of men. Yet it is a little difficult for one of us to raise more than an honest smile at this elaborate fooling. After all, one feels the sermon underneath, and pays his tribute to the author, not primarily as a humourist, but as a man of sense who lightens his style a little, to be sure, yet remains all through plainly conscious of his mission. If one seeks an analogy, one may say, perhaps, that the Praise of Folly is about as funny as an average copy of Punch.

Erasmus' account of the origin of the Μωρία is as trifling as in the case of most of his works. He tells More that he thought it out during his journey from Italy to England in 1509, and he put it into form at More's house in London soon after. The title, Μωρίας ἐγκώμιον, he explains as a pun on More's name, the humour of it being that More was "as far from the thing as his name was near it." The book is written under the form of an oration, a *declamatio* the author calls it, delivered by Folly in person to an imaginary audience made up of all classes and conditions of

men. Folly is a female, and this is quite in harmony with most of Erasmus' references to the sex. She wears cap and bells as her academic garb and brings to the lecture-room her attendant spirits, Self-love, Flattery, Oblivion, Laziness, Pleasure, Madness, Wantonness, Intemperance, and Sleep. Folly is the offspring of Wealth and Youth, born in the Fortunate Isles, where all things grow without toil, and nursed by the jovial nymphs, Drunkenness and Ignorance.

The oration begins by Folly commending herself as indispensable to the well-being of men. Their very existence is owing to her, for no man would put his head into the halter of marriage if he thought it over carefully beforehand as a wise man would; and no woman would marry if she carefully considered the sorrows of childbirth. Marriage therefore is owing wholly to Madness, the companion of Folly. But no woman, having once experienced the pains of child-bearing, would ever submit herself to them again but for another of Folly's ministers, Oblivion, who comes in thus to save the race. From this first example we can see how Erasmus plays with the meaning of the word "folly." It is quite impossible to define it by any one term which would cover his numerous variations, but we may see plainly from the start that it is very far from being what we mean, in plain modern English, by the word "foolishness." It comes nearer to the meaning we find in Shakespeare of "innocent" or "thoughtless." "Folly" is the opposite of studied calculation for a mere material end. It is the impulse by which men perform their noblest actions. It is imagination, idealism, sacrifice of self for others. Nowhere does Erasmus lay down any such general definition as this, but his examples show that some such meaning was in his mind, and the Folly whom

he allows to praise herself is therefore really a very praiseworthy person. She hates the materialism of the Philistine—the cool, calculating merchant-spirit which would reduce life to a thing of dollars and cents—and she finds her illustrations of what is noble pretty nearly where an optimistic philosopher of modern times would find them.

The happiest times of life, says Folly, are youth and old age, and this for no reason but that they are the times most completely under the rule of folly, and least controlled by wisdom. It is the child's freedom from wisdom that makes it so charming to us; we hate a precocious child. So women owe their charm, and hence their power, to their "folly," *i. e.*, to their obedience to impulse. "But if, perchance, a woman wants to be thought wise, she only succeeds in being doubly a fool, as if one should train a cow for the prize-ring, a thing wholly against nature." A woman will be a woman, no matter what mask she wear, and she ought to be proud of her folly and make the most of it.

In dealing with Friendship, Folly first reminds her hearers that every man has his faults and plenty of them, and that everyone is all too keen in spying out the faults of others and forgetting his own. But now there could be no such thing as friendship "were it not for that which the Greeks so beautifully call εὐήθεια, and which may be translated 'folly' or 'good nature.'" Here Erasmus himself makes "*stultitia*" the equivalent of "*morum facilitas*." And not the relation of friends merely, but of husband and wife, ruler and ruled, scholar and tutor, all human relations, in short, are made tolerable by this rule of human kindness. And as the blindness of love to others makes human life bearable, so Self-love, one of

Folly's intimates, is the indispensable aid to happiness, since if a man were continually ashamed of himself, of his person, his country, he would never rise to any worthy action. Courage is the very inspiration of Folly, and the proof is the stupid bungling of great thinkers when they try to do things. Socrates could not make a political speech, and showed his wisdom by declaring that a wise man ought to keep out of public business. Plato's famous saying: "happy the state that is ruled by a philosopher, or whose ruler is given to philosophy," is false, for history shows that there were never more unfortunate states than those so governed. Theorisers, in short, have ruined what they undertook to manage, but states have been saved by such divine folly as that of Quintus Curtius, who, possessed by some demon of vainglory, sacrificed himself to the infernal gods. Wise men would condemn such acts, but the pens of eloquent men have glorified them. Strange as it may seem, even the virtue of prudence is owing to folly,

> "for the wise man goes to the books of the ancients and gets out of them nothing but wordy discussions, while the fool, grappling with the world in hand-to-hand conflict, learns, if I mistake not, the true prudence." "Modesty and fear are the two great obstacles to the understanding of affairs; but Folly, being hindered by neither of these, blushes at nothing and attempts everything."



A THEOLOGIAN.
HOLBEIN'S ILLUSTRATIONS TO THE "PRAISE OF FOLLY."

The wise man thinks of reason only and leaves all the passions to Folly, but when this kind of thing has its perfect work, as among the Stoics, then you have left

> "not so much a man as a new kind of god that never yet existed anywhere and never will; or rather, to say it plainly, a marble image of a man, dull and almost

> devoid of human sensibility; a man who measures everything by the line, never makes any mistakes himself, but has the eye of a lynx for the least failings of others. That's the kind of a beast your truly wise man is!"

But who has any use for such a creature? Who would have him for a ruler, a general, a husband, a friend?

> "Who would not prefer one taken out of the very midst of the crowd of fools, who being a fool himself would know how to command and obey fools, who would be agreeable to his kind, namely, the great majority of men, pleasant to his wife, merry with his friends, a lively table-companion, a good-tempered comrade, in short a man '*qui nihil humani a se alienum putet*'—'who holds nothing human foreign to himself.'"

This comes as near a definition of his "*stultus*" as any hinted at by Erasmus. In this sense the book might have been called "the praise of human nature," for "wisdom" is treated systematically as meaning something contrary to natural human instinct. Such over-wise wisdom embitters life, but folly makes it sweet and precious.

> "Now, I think, you see what would happen if men were wise all the time. Faith! we should have need of another clay and another Prometheus for a potter. But I, Folly, sometimes by ignorance, sometimes by thoughtlessness, sometimes by forgetfulness of evils or the hope of good, and scattering the sweetest pleasures, so comfort men in the greatest misfortunes that they are not glad to die even when the measure of the Fates is fulfilled and life has actually left them. The less reason they have to cling to life the more they rejoice in living, so far are they from being wearied with its burden."

Real misery is to be out of harmony with Nature—shall we call man miserable because he cannot fly like the birds, nor walk on all fours like beasts? "We might as well call a war-horse unhappy because he doesn't know grammar and cannot eat pie." So Erasmus goes on, in extravagant praise, to glorify Nature as contrasted with Art. That life alone is happy which comes near to Nature, as that of bees and birds; the nearer these natural creatures are brought to the life of man, the more they degenerate. Of all men the happiest are those we call "*moriones*," "*stultos*," "*fatuos*," "*bliteos*"; they have no fears, no ambitions, neither envy nor love. They are always merry; everyone likes them and pets them; the very beasts recognise in them a kind of sacred being. Princes cannot live without them, and value their plain-speaking more than the flatteries of their counsellors.

How much pleasure comes in this world from hobbies! One man delights in hunting, with all its absurd ceremonies; another has a rage for building; others are chasing after new inventions, hunting for a fifth essence. Others take to gaming and go to ruin with it, but Folly is not quite clear whether to claim these as her children or not. She has no doubt, however, about those who show their folly by superstitious observances in religion, and here, it will be observed, Erasmus' definition of folly gradually shifts. From this point on it begins to slide over into a meaning something more nearly like what we should be inclined to give it. Folly herself cannot be consistent when she comes to religious fraud. Self-deception is a very useful and pleasant thing, but no gentleness of judgment is due to those

> "who hug the silly though pleasant persuasion that if

> they see a wooden or painted Polyphemus-Christopher, they will not die that day; or who salute a statue of St. Barbara with a fixed formula of words if they get home safe from a battle; or, if they call upon Saint Erasmus on certain days with candles and prayers, fancy that they will soon get rich. Now they have invented a George-Hercules, like a new Hippolytus, and come precious near worshipping the very horse of him, decked out with breastplates and ornaments." "But what shall I say of those who flatter themselves so sweetly with counterfeit pardons for their crimes, who have measured off the duration of Purgatory without an error as if by a water-clock, into ages, years, months, and days like the multiplication-table?... Now suppose me some tradesman, or soldier, or judge, who by paying out a penny from all his stealings, thinks the whole slough of his life is cleaned out at once—all his perjuries, lusts, drunkennesses, all his quarrels, murders, cheats, treacheries, falsehoods, bought off by a bargain and bought off in such a way that he may now begin over again with a new circle of crimes!... And isn't it much the same thing when the several countries claim for themselves each its special saint with his special function and his special forms of worship?—as, for example, this one is good for the toothache, that one helps women in travail, another restores stolen property; this one shines upon shipwreck and that one takes care of the flocks and so on—for it would be too long a story to go through the whole list. There are some that are good for more things than one and of these especially the virgin mother of God, to whom the mass of men now pay more honour than to the Son."

And yet after all, the things men get from the saints are only the appurtenances of Folly.

The world is full of fools, yet the priests are glad to get them all for their own profit.

> "But if some hateful wise man were to arise and

> say what is true:—'to live well is the way to die well; you will best get rid of your sins by adding to your money hatred of vice, tears, vigils, prayers and fasting, and a better life; the saint will help you if you imitate his life'—I say if a wise man were to come prating such stuff as this, how much happiness he would destroy and what trouble he would bring upon mortals!"

There is no class of fools to whom Erasmus pays his respects with heartier good will than to those whom he calls "grammarians." Folly claims these for her choicest sons. Nothing could be more wretched than their profession were it not for their foolish self-esteem and the skill with which they make others have as good an opinion of them as themselves. The pettiness of their aims, the nastiness of their schoolrooms, the tumult of their pupils, are all concealed by the friendly aid of Folly, who makes them believe themselves "rulers of a kingdom as great as that of Phalaris or Dionysius."



EVERYONE HAS HIS HOBBY.
HOLBEIN'S ILLUSTRATIONS TO THE "PRAISE OF FOLLY."



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HOLBEIN

> "What a joy if they find out who was the mother of Anchises or discover some little word unknown to the vulgar, for instance, '*bubsequa*' (a cowherd), '*bovinator*' (a brawler), '*manticulator*' (a cut-purse), or dig up somewhere a piece of an old rock, cut with worn-out letters—by Jove! what bragging, what triumphs, what glorification! as if they had conquered Africa or taken Babylon."

The grammarians enjoy nothing so much as rubbing each other's back—unless it be roundly abusing each other.

The quibblings of the philosophers are among Folly's choicest products, and from these she runs on

naturally to Erasmus' especial black beasts, the scholastic theologians. Quite in the spirit of the *Epistolæ obscurorum virorum*, but more decently, he enumerates the problems which, so Folly says, chiefly interest them,—

> "whether there was any instant of time in the divine generation? whether there was more than one 'filiation' in Christ? is it a possible proposition that the Father could hate the Son? Could God have taken the form of a woman, a devil, an ass, a squash, or a stone? How the squash would have preached, done miracles, hung upon the cross? What would Peter have consecrated if he had celebrated the Eucharist while Christ was still hanging on the cross? etc."

Not the eyes of Lynceus, which could see through a stone wall, could penetrate the refinements of these people. And these difficulties are all increased by the multitude of the schools,

> "so that one might sooner get out of a labyrinth than out of the windings of Realists, Nominalists, Thomists, Albertists, Occamists, Scotists. And these not all by any means, only the chief of them. In them all there is so much learning, so much refinement, that I should say the very apostles themselves would have to be of another spirit if they were compelled to discuss these matters with this new race of theologians. Paul knew something about faith; but when he says 'faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen,' that is far from being a definition fit for a *Magister*; and though he knew well enough about charity, his definition and division of it in the thirteenth chapter of his first letter to the Corinthians was by no means good dialectics." "The apostles knew the mother of Jesus, but which of them has shown as philosophically as our theologians have done, how she was preserved from the sin of Adam? Peter received

> the keys, and from one who would not have given them to an unworthy keeper, but I doubt whether he ever reached the subtilty of knowing how one who has no knowledge can hold the keys of knowledge." "The apostles worshipped, but in spirit, following simply that apostolic rule:—'God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth'; but it does not appear that it was revealed to them that an image drawn with a crayon on the wall was to be worshipped, provided only it have two fingers held upright, hair flowing, and three rays in the halo about its head. For who can understand these things unless he has ground out six and thirty years in the study of physics and the superhuman notions of Aristotle and the Scotists?
>
> "Meanwhile the actual words of the apostles are utterly neglected. While they keep up their fooleries in the schools, they fancy that, like Atlas in the poets, they are holding up the tottering Church with their syllogistic pillars, and what joy they take in moulding and remoulding Scripture according to their will as if it were made of wax; yet their own conclusions, if a few schoolmen have subscribed to them, they think more weighty than the laws of Solon or the decretals of popes, and like censors of the world, if anything does not square to the line with their conclusions implicit and explicit, they declare as by an oracle 'this proposition is scandalous; this is lacking in reverence; this smacks of heresy; this hasn't the right sound.' So that, by this time, neither Baptism, nor Gospel, nor Paul, nor Peter, nor St. Jerome, nor Augustine—nay, not even the most Aristotelian Thomas himself, can make a man a Christian unless the reckoning of these bachelors be added."

The same method of direct denunciation, with no special reference to the main thesis of Folly, is pursued in the case of the monks, or "religious," both titles false, Erasmus says, for the greater part of them are as far as possible from religion, and there is no

kind of men whom you are more apt to meet in all places. They pride themselves upon their ignorance, carry the psalm-books they cannot read into the churches, and bray out their words as if they could thereby please the ear of God. Some of them crowd the taverns, waggons, and ships, showing off their poverty and filth and howling for alms. Yet the merry knaves try to pass themselves off as living the life of the apostles.

> "What a joke it is that they do all things by rule, as it were by a kind of sacred mathematics; as, for instance, how many knots their shoes must be tied with, of what colour everything must be, what variety in their garb, of what material, how many straws' breadth to their girdle, of what form and of how many bushels' capacity their cowl, how many fingers broad their hair, and how many hours they may sleep. Now who cannot see what an unequal equality this is, when there is such a variety of persons and tastes? and yet with all this nonsense, they not only make light of others, but come to despise one another, and these men who profess apostolic charity make a terrible row at a dress girded in another fashion or at a colour a little darker in shade. Some of them are so very 'religious' that they wear no outer garment but one of hair-cloth, with soft linen underneath; others on the contrary wear linen without and woollen within. Others again would as soon touch poison as money, but meanwhile make free with wine and women. They are all trying not to agree in their manner of life; none of them to follow the example of Christ, but all to be different one from the other....
>
> "The greater part of them have such faith in their ceremonies and human traditions that they think one heaven is not reward enough for such great doings, never that the time will come when Christ shall set all this aside and claim his rule of charity. One will show his belly stuffed with every sort of fish; another will

> pour out a hundred bushels of psalms; another will count up myriads of fasts and make up for them all again by almost bursting himself at a single dinner. Another will bring forward such a heap of ceremonies that seven ships would hardly hold them; another will boast that for sixty years he has never touched a penny except with double gloves on his hands; another wears a cowl so greasy and filthy that no sailor would think it decent. Another will boast that for eleven lusters he has led the life of a sponge, always fixed to the same spot; another will display his voice hoarse with much chanting; another a drowsiness contracted from solitary living; another a tongue palsied by long silence. But Christ will interrupt their endless bragging and will demand: —'whence this new kind of Judaism? One law and that my own I recognise, and that is the only thing I hear nothing about. In that day I promised openly and using no twisted parables, the inheritance of my Father, not to cowls and prayers and fastings, but to deeds of love.' And yet no one dares reproach those people, who belong, as it were, to another commonwealth—and especially the Begging Friars, because they know everybody's secrets through what they call 'confessions.'"

Erasmus more than hints that the friars had ways enough of playing fast and loose with the secrets confided to them, and, running together his assaults upon the schoolmen and the monks, shows up the scholastic preaching of the friars by some excellent specimens.

> "I myself have heard one distinguished fool—I beg his pardon, a scholar I would say—who, in a famous sermon on the mystery of the Holy Trinity, in order to show his uncommon learning and please the ears of the theologians, took a quite new method, namely from the letters, syllables, and discourse itself and then from the agreement of nouns and verbs, of

adjective and substantive, to the great admiration of some, but causing others to grumble in the words of Horace: 'what is all this rot about?'

"At last he got the thing down so fine, that he showed as plainly as any mathematician could chalk it out, that the mystery of the whole Trinity is expressed in the rudiments of grammar. This most highly theological person sweat away for eight months over that speech, so that the whole sight of his eyes ran into his wits and he is now as blind as a mole; but the creature cares naught for his eyesight and thinks his glory very cheaply bought.

"Then I have heard another, an octogenarian and such a theologian that you would think Scotus had been born again in him. He set out to explain the mystery of the name of Jesus and showed with marvellous subtilty that in those letters lay concealed whatever could be predicated of him. For a word that is inflected with but three cases is evidently the image of the divine Trinity. Then because the first case, *Jesus*, ends in *s*, the second, *Jesum*, in *m*, the third, *Jesu*, in *u*, beneath this fact there lies an unspeakable mystery, the three letters indicating, of course, that he is the beginning, middle, and end. Still there remained a mystery more obscure than all this, according to the principles of mathematics: he so divided the word Jesus into two equal parts that the third letter was left alone in the middle; then he showed that this was called by the Hebrews *syn* and that *syn* in the language, I believe, of the Scots [*Scotorum*], means *sin*, and hence it was plainly demonstrated that Jesus was he who should take away the sin of the world."

The assault on the friars ends with some amusing criticism of their manner of public speaking, which they seem to have acquired by misapplying and exaggerating the good principles of rhetoric they have somehow picked up here and there.

As to secular princes and courtiers, Folly borrows

from the oration of "her friend Erasmus" to Duke Philip, and adds little to the commonplaces of criticism upon their wild and reckless living and their disregard of the good of their subjects. She carries her argument along from secular to clerical princes and finally reaches the pope, to whom she pays her respects in this monumental passage:

> "Those supreme pontiffs, who stand in the place of Christ, if they should try to imitate his life, that is his poverty, his toil, his teaching, his cross, and his scorn of this world, or if they should think of the meaning of 'pope,' that is 'father,' or even of 'most holy,' what position in the world could be more dreadful? Who would buy it with all his resources, or, when he had bought it, would defend it by sword and poison and every violence? What joys they would lose, if once wisdom should get hold of them! Wisdom, say I? nay, even a grain of that salt Christ tells us of. What wealth, what honours, riches, conquests, dispensations, taxes, indulgences, horses, mules, guards, pleasures, they would lose!... and in their place they would have vigils, prayers, fasts, tears, sermons, study, groans and a thousand other painful toils of the same sort.
>
> "And we ought not to forget that such a mass of scribes, copyists, notaries, advocates, promoters, secretaries, mule-drivers, grooms, money-changers, procurers, and gayer persons yet I might mention, did I not respect your ears,—that this whole swarm which now burdens—I beg your pardon—honours the Roman See, would be driven to starvation. This would be an inhuman and an abominable deed, but still more execrable would it be that those chief princes of the Church and true lights of the world should be reduced to scrip and staff. As it is now, if there is any work to be done, it is left to Peter and Paul, who have plenty of leisure for it; but if there is anything of show or of pleasure, they keep that for themselves. And so it happens that, through my assistance, there is scarce

> any class of men who live more jovially and less burdened with care. They think they are fulfilling the rule of Christ if they play the part of bishops with mystical and almost theatrical decorations, ceremonies, titles of benediction, of reverence, of sanctity, with blessings and cursings. Doing miracles is quite antiquated and out of date; to teach the people is hard work; to interpret the holy scripture is a matter for the schools; praying is tedious; shedding tears is a wretched business fit for women; to be poor is base; to be conquered is dishonourable and unworthy of him who will scarce allow the greatest of kings to kiss his blessed feet; to die is unbecoming and to be lifted on a cross is infamous."

The end of the Μωρία is an attempt on Folly's part to support her case by references to authority, and especially, of course, to the classics and to Scripture. It is laboured, and neither very ingenious nor very amusing. The joke-machine goes a little hard at this stage of its progress—yet the solid seriousness of the author's purpose is as clear here as anywhere. In his references to Scripture he cannot resist the temptation to give a parting fling at the foolish interpretations which it was the most important work of his life to correct. For instance, he makes Folly say:

> "I was myself but lately present at a theological discussion—for I often go to such meetings—when someone asked what authority there was in Holy Writ for burning heretics instead of convincing them by argument. A certain hard old man, a theologian by the very look of him, answered with great scorn, that the apostle Paul had laid down this law when he said '*hereticum hominem post unam et alteram correptionem devita*'—'avoid an heretic after one or two attempts to convince him.' And when he had yelled out these same words over and over again and some were

> wondering what had struck the man, he finally explained '*de vita tollendum hereticum*'—'the heretic must be put out of life.' Some burst out laughing, but there were not wanting some to whom this commentary seemed perfectly theological."

An opportunity for Erasmus to express his usual detestation of war is furnished by his references to the papal warfare, which seemed to him the most unjustifiable of all forms of military action. Indeed one may fairly say that in this year, 1509, Erasmus had clearly in mind and had already given expression to the views which were to form the ground-work of the Reformation. This was the year before Luther's journey to Rome, and Erasmus himself was just fresh from the impressions of an Italian residence. The worldly lives of clergymen, from pope to friar, the burden of monastic vows, the ignorance of theologians and their scholastic backers, the wickedness of indulgences, the follies and superstitions of saint-worship, the cruel weight of ceremonies which had no support in any worthy authority—all these things were as boldly pointed out by Erasmus in 1509 as ever they were to be shown by any reformer of a later day. The Praise of Folly carried his proclamation into a thousand hands that would never have touched the more sober, but not more serious, criticism of less broadly human critics.

Naturally the Praise of Folly called forth a certain criticism from individuals belonging to some of the classes attacked. To this criticism Erasmus replied only by renewed and more bitter comment in the same spirit. Quite different, however, was the admonition he received from his excellent friend, Martin Dorpius of Louvain, and different to

correspond was the spirit of his reply.[83] He addresses Dorpius throughout as a sincere man and scholar, whose view had been obscured by the misunderstandings of others; in fact, when you came to the bottom of it, of one man, by whom is doubtless meant the unhappy scapegoat, Nicholas Egmund. Dorpius had disapproved the *Moria* chiefly on account of what seemed to him its flippant tone and the tendency it must have to excite hostility against really good and valuable things. Erasmus defends himself on the ground that the flippancy is only apparent, a mere lightness of touch to commend the serious purpose underneath. He had been bitterly abused, but he abuses no man; on the contrary, he has taken great pains to avoid any personal attack or even an attack upon any class of men as such.

"I had in view no other object in the *Moria* than I have had in other works, but used only a different method." He mentions specially the *Enchiridion*, the *Institutio Principis*, and the Panegyric on Philip of Burgundy, serious works enough in all conscience. He gives the familiar story of the composition and first publication of the book. He had just returned from Italy, ill and worn out by the journey. He was at More's house and began to play with the idea of the *Moria*, not with any intention of publication, but just to while away the time.[84] He showed his friends what he had written, only that he might enjoy his laugh the better in company. They liked it, and not only urged him to finish it, but sent it over to Paris, and there it was printed, but from corrupt and even mutilated copy. How displeasing it was Dorpius may judge from the fact that within a few months it was reprinted seven times in different places. "If you think this was a foolish performance on my part, I shall not deny it."

Yet it has been approved by the most famous theologians, men of the highest character and learning, "who have never been more friendly with me than since its publication, and who like it far better than I do." He would give their names and titles were it not that this might expose them to the abuse of

> "those three theologians or rather, when you come to that, of *that one*." "If I should paint him in his true colours no one could wonder that the *Moria* is displeasing to such a man; nay, I should be sorry if it did not displease such people, though it does not suit me either. Yet it comes the nearer to pleasing me because it does not suit such characters as that."

If Dorpius could only look into his soul he would see how many things Erasmus has *not* touched upon, lest he give offence, and lest he say anything indecent or seditious.

Our analysis of the *Moria* is well sustained by Erasmus' attempt here to show that by *stultitia* he does not mean mere human foolishness. "There is no danger that any person will here imagine that Christ and the apostles were really fools." They only had a certain element of weakness common to all humanity, and which, compared with the eternal wisdom, may well seem not altogether wise. The tone of the whole defence is admirably calm, and shows a sincere regard for Dorpius, though, like certain islanders, he does need to have a joke explained now and then.

Erasmus did not exaggerate the immense and immediate popularity of the *Moria*. Our bibliography enumerates forty-three editions in the author's

lifetime, and it has been translated and reprinted since then an infinite number of times. Holbein amused himself by decorating the margin of his copy with these rude but clever wood-cuts which have come to be the permanent types of the various orders of Erasmian fools.

CHAPTER VI
ENGLAND (1509-1514)—THE NEW TESTAMENT—THE "DE COPIA VERBORUM ET RERUM"

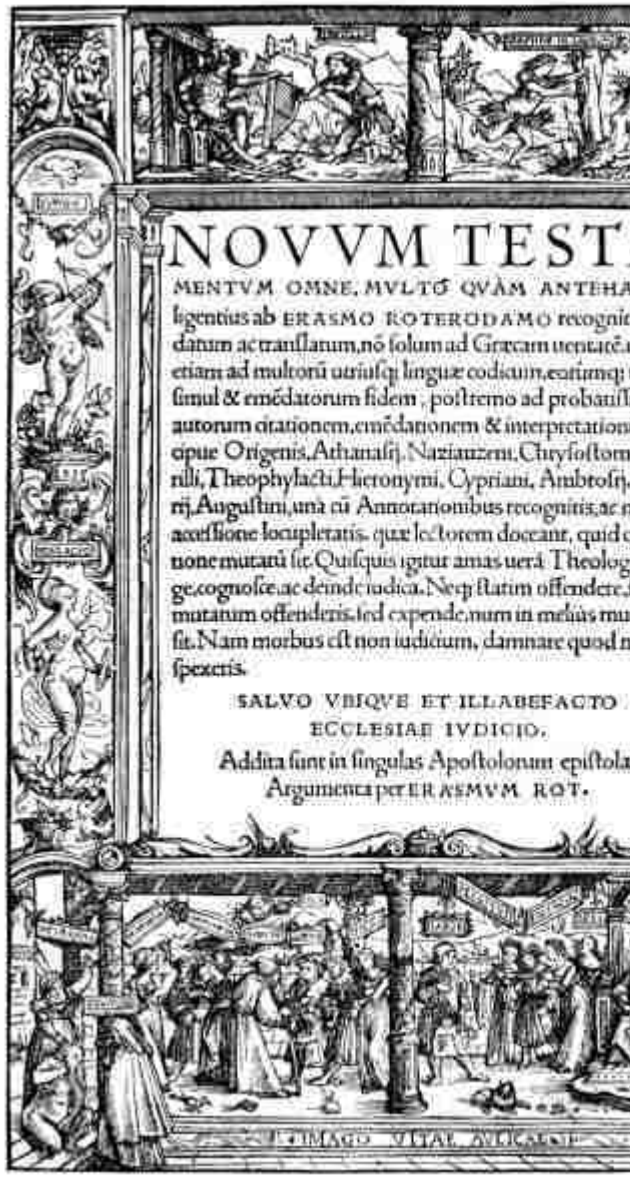
THE third visit of Erasmus to England was brought about, if we may trust his own account of it, by very urgent requests on the part of his English friends. He liked to speak of the "mountains of gold" which had been promised him if he would only come thither, and it was a delightful grievance for him to fancy that he had been torn from his beloved Italy, where he had consistently complained of his lot, and to which he looked back as the source of all his later physical ills, only to suffer a new series of misfortunes in England. The fact very likely was that, hearing of the change of government in England, and having done what he went to Italy to do, he hoped for some advantage from a move, and sounded his English friends on the prospect. Our earliest clue is a letter from Mountjoy,[85] to which, curiously enough, the date 1497 has been affixed in the collection. Mountjoy speaks of receiving two letters from him, which are, unfortunately, lost to us, and also of having written him personally a congratulatory letter on the completion of his Adages, which letter, together with the bearer, had been lost on the way. It is evident, therefore, that so far as Mountjoy was concerned, Erasmus had not, in any strict sense, been "invited" to come into England. Evidently he had complained of his misfortunes in Italy, and consulted

with Mountjoy about a change:

> "Your letters gave me at once joy and pain. That you should, as you ought, familiarly and as a friend, confide to your Mountjoy your plans, your thoughts, your misfortunes and troubles, was a joy indeed; but to learn that you, my dearest friend, to whom above all I desire to be of service, were assailed by such varied shafts of fortune, that was a grief."

Even before the king's death a letter[86] had been sent to Erasmus by the Prince of Wales, but it contained nothing more than a formal compliment upon the great clearness of his style, and a mild reproof that he had had the bad tact to recall to him the recent loss of his royal brother, the King of Castile. Next time, he hopes, he may write of something more agreeable.

But, if he was not "called" to England, certainly Erasmus had reason to believe he would be welcome there. The accession of the young king, whose generous disposition and taste for the refinements of life were well known, seemed to open up a vista of promise for all kinds of talent. Mountjoy writes[87]:



TITLE-PAGE OF NEW TESTAMENT, 151

"I have no fear, my dear Erasmus, but that when you hear that our prince Henry *octavus*, or rather Octavius, has by the death of his father succeeded to the kingdom, all gloom will at once vanish from your mind. For what may you not promise yourself from a prince whose extraordinary—nay, almost divine character is well known to you; to whom especially you are not merely known, but known familiarly—why, you have even received letters from him written with his own hand—a thing which has happened to few men. If you knew how like a hero he now appears, how wisely he conducts himself, how he loves truth and justice, what favour he is showing to men of letters, I dare swear, though you have no wings, you would fly over to us in all haste to greet this new and auspicious star.

"Oh! my dear Erasmus, if you could only see how wild with joy everyone here is, how they are congratulating themselves on having such a prince, how they pray for nothing more earnestly than for his life, you could not help weeping for joy. The very air is full of laughter, the earth dances, everything flows with milk and honey and nectar. Avarice slinks away far from the people; generosity scatters wealth with lavish hand. Our king is eager, not for gold, not for gems and precious stones, but for virtue, glory, and immortality. I will give you a taste:—the other day he was wishing himself more learned—'nay,' I said, 'that is not what we wish for you, but rather that you may welcome and encourage learned men.' 'Why should I not,' he replied, 'for indeed without them I can scarce exist.' What nobler word could have fallen from a prince's lips? But I am a rash fellow to venture out upon the ocean in my slender bark; let this task be reserved for you. I wanted to preface my letter with these few words in praise of our divine prince, so that, if any gloom remains in your heart, I might straightway banish it, or, if it is all gone, that I might not only confirm the hope you have formed, but more and more increase it....

> "I could console you and bid you be of good cheer, did I not believe that whatever you could dare to wish for, you have already on your own account very reasonable hopes of attaining. You shall think that the last day of your troubles has dawned. You shall come to a prince who will say:—'here are riches; be the chief of my poets.'"

The letter then briefly summarises the contents of the lost epistle and continues:

> "I will now go back to your work, which all are praising to the skies. Above all the archbishop of Canterbury was so pleased and delighted, that I could not get it out of his hands. 'But,' you will say, 'so far nothing but praises.' The same archbishop promises you a living if you will return and has given me five pounds cash to be sent to you for the journey. I add as much myself, not really as a gift, for this is not the kind of thing to be called a gift, but only that you may hasten to us and no longer torment us with longing for you.
>
> "Finally, there remains only this bit of advice to give: don't imagine that anything can be more grateful to me than your letters or that I could be offended by anything from you. I am exceedingly troubled that your health has become impaired in Italy; you know I was never greatly in favour of your going there. But when I see how much work you accomplished and how much fame you have won there, by Jove! I am sorry I did not go with you. For I think that such learning and such fame would be well bought with hunger, poverty, and pain, nay, even with death. Please find enclosed a draft for the money; look out for your health and come to us as soon as you can."

Certainly a more than friendly letter. True, Mountjoy makes no definite promises on his own account, but his glowing picture of the great times coming for

English letters was enough to fire the ambition of a less credulous scholar than Erasmus. The definite promise from Archbishop Warham of a church-living and the earnest of a gift for travelling expenses were attractions not to be resisted.

Erasmus arrived in England in 1509, and remained there until the early part of 1514. Of these nearly five years we have but little satisfactory account. There is no indication that it was anyone's affair to look after him in any way. We know that he lived chiefly at Cambridge and London. He may even have made a short trip to the Continent in the interval. He was evidently much concerned with money matters, making continual complaints of poverty; but at the same time he lived in apparent comfort, not to say a kind of luxury. What he meant by poverty was the absence of a sufficient estate from which to live as he would have liked to live. He certainly had money more or less regularly from Mountjoy, and at some time during his English residence he was also handsomely furnished with a regular income by Warham. The peculiar thing about these English pensions was that they were generally paid when due, and that was more than could be said of any of the other benefits promised to Erasmus, either before or afterward.

The arrangement with Warham was one quite in accord with the practice of the day in such cases, but not altogether in harmony with some of Erasmus' lofty pretensions about pecuniary burdens. When Warham offered Erasmus the "living" of Aldington in Kent, it was rather a severe test of the famous critic's sincerity in his utterances on church morality. A more flagrant case of abuse of church funds, so far as the principle was concerned, could hardly be

imagined. Here was a needy foreigner, who had, to be sure, the ordination of a priest, but who from the moment of his ordaining had never done a single clerical act, to be set over a congregation of English souls, only that their contributions might go to support him in a life of scholarly production. To be sure there were excuses enough in the habits of the day, but it was precisely as a critic of such corrupt practices that Erasmus was now before the world. Another palliation may be found in the nature of the work which the scholar hoped to do in the leisure thus acquired. He was laying great and far-reaching plans for such an advancement of theological study as should bring in a really new era of Christian faith and practice. Still all such reasoning could not obscure the real fact that to accept such a parish living meant to take money for which no proper equivalent was given to those who furnished it. This was not Warham's money, but only a trust in his hands for the benefit of the souls of Aldington.



WILLIAM WARHAM, ARCHBISHOP O

FROM A PAINTING BY HOLBEIN, IN THE L

Erasmus' own account[88] of the transaction represents himself as very reluctant to take the benefice, and Warham as insisting upon it so urgently that he finally could no longer resist. Fortunately we have the original documents[89] in Warham's own words, and there is no hint of any reluctance on Erasmus' part. The fact was, at all events, that he took the living, did nothing by way of service, and in a few months resigned it in exchange for an annual pension of twenty pounds. Warham's account of the matter goes far beyond the ordinary limits of a deed of record, and is in fact nothing less than a frank apology for a practice which he did not himself approve. It was far too common for a parish priest to resign a living with duties in exchange for a substantial life-pension without duties, and Warham declares his determination not to permit this sort of thing in the diocese of Canterbury. He makes, however, an exception in Erasmus' case, he says, for several reasons: First, he is

> "moved by the countless good qualities of Erasmus, a man of consummate ability in Latin and Greek literature, who adorns our age with his learning and talent like a star, to draw back a little from our general principle. And no one ought to think it strange if in the case of so rare a man and one placed beyond every hazard of genius, we thought we ought to change somewhat of our previous custom. For when we had conferred on him a benefice with the cure of souls, namely, the church of Aldington, although he was extremely learned in theology, as in every other branch of learning, still as he could not preach the word of God to his parishioners in English or hold any communication with them in their own tongue, of which he is entirely ignorant; for this reason desiring

> to give up the before-mentioned church, *he begged us to provide for him an annual pension* in the same. We thought that *to agree to his suggestion* would be profitable to the souls, and at the same time he would be able the more freely to pursue those literary studies to which *he is completely devoted*. We were also not a little moved by his unusual affection toward the English, for he had given up Italy, France, and Germany, where he might have lived prosperously enough, and preferred to betake himself hither, that he might pass the remnant of his life here among friends, and that these in turn might enjoy the companionship of so learned a man."

Here is the plain evidence of a serious document of record that Erasmus not only took his pension gladly, but actually begged for it, and it is quite in harmony with this that we afterwards find him quarrelling with his successor about certain tithes which the latter thought were to be deducted from the twenty pounds.

This document bears date the last day of July, 1512, so that Erasmus was unquestionably well provided for from that day on. The date of his first induction into the parish was March 22, 1511, and as he thus had a right to the whole income of the place during a year and a third, there is no reason why he should not have had a tidy sum to his credit.

The letters of Erasmus during this English visit are few and give but little insight into his way of life. The most interesting of them are those written from Cambridge to another foreigner, an Italian, Andreas Ammonius, who, like himself, had wandered to England to seek his fortune, and had become a Latin secretary to the young King Henry VIII. In addition to this function he appears later as holding some papal commission in England. With this cheerful and

practical specimen of the gay Italian Humanism of the day our scholar corresponded with great freedom. Ammonius was not troubled by Erasmus' dread of place-holding, and was frankly enjoying the sunshine of the court. He seems to have advised Erasmus to try his fortune also in London. Erasmus replies:

> "As for your serious advice that I should pay my court to Fortune, I acknowledge the true and friendly counsel, and I will try it, though my mind rebels against it most strongly and predicts no good and happy outcome. If I had exposed myself to the risks of Fortune I should have put myself under the laws of a game, and, if I had got beaten, should be making the best of it, knowing, as I do, that this is just Fortune's trick, to set up some and restore others as she pleases. But I thought I had provided myself against having anything to do with this wanton mistress, since Mountjoy had brought me into harbour and into a settled thing. Nor does the kindness of Fortune towards others, no matter how unworthy, trouble me one particle, so help me God! The success of you and the like of you brings me a real and uncommon pleasure. Even if I were compelled to go into a calculation of my merits, my present fortune would seem beyond my deserts, for I measure myself by my own foot and not by your praises."

Little inclined as Erasmus was to try his hand at court, it was not for lack of theories as to how one might best get on there. He gives Ammonius the benefit of them in this classic passage[90]:

> "Now then I, the sow, will proceed to teach Minerva; but, since you forbid it, I will not philosophise too much. The first thing is, give your forehead such a rubbing that you will never blush at anything. Mix yourself in everybody's business. Elbow

> aside everyone you can. Love no one and hate no one with your whole heart, but measure all things by your own advantage. Let the whole ordering of your life be turned to this one aim. Give nothing without hope of a return; agree to all things with all men. 'But,' you say, 'these are commonplaces.' Well, then, since you insist upon it, I will give you a special piece of advice, but in your ear, mind you. You know the jealousy of these Britons; make use of it for your own good. Ride two horses at once. Hire various suitors to keep at you. Threaten to leave and begin to pack up. Show letters calling you away with great promises; take yourself off somewhere, that absence may sharpen their desire for you."

This is a very exact description of Erasmus' own tactics in the Battus days, and continues to fit his action very well whenever he was considering a change of residence.

In 1511 he writes to Ammonius:

> "If you have any trustworthy news, I wish you would let me know it. I want especially to hear whether Julius is really playing Julius, and whether Christ keeps up his ancient custom of specially trying with the storms of adverse fortune those whom he desires to make specially his own."

Writing from Queen's College in August, 1511, he says:

> "I am sending you some letters which I have written to Bombasius [his learned friend, we remember, in Bologna]. As to myself I have nothing new to write, save that the journey was most uncomfortable and that my health is so far very dubious on account of that over-exertion. I expect to make a somewhat longer stay in this college, but as yet I have not given much of myself to my hearers,

> desiring to look out for my health. The beer in this place I don't like at all and the wine is far from satisfactory. If you can order me a flagon of Greek wine, the very best you can find, you will make your Erasmus happy, but let it be very far from sweet. Don't worry about the money; I will pay in advance if you like."

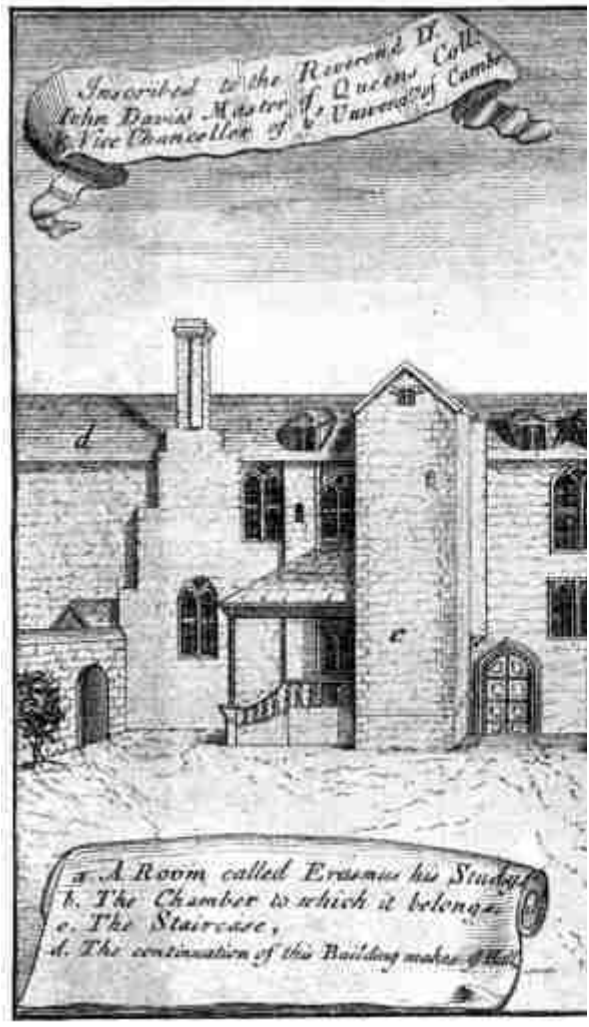
Ammonius sent the wine, not so much as Erasmus had expected, but refused with some heat to hear of pay, and we have Erasmus' reply:

> "You have given me a double pleasure, most amiable Ammonius, by sending with your merry wine letters far merrier still, and smacking exactly of your genius and disposition, and these in my judgment are the sweetest that ever were. As to my mention of pay which makes you so angry, indeed I was not ignorant of your character, which is worthy of a kingly fortune. But I supposed you were going to send me a great flagon, enough to last me several months—yet even this is too large for a modest man to receive without pay.... I marvel that you stick to your nest so perpetually and never take a flight away. If you should ever be pleased to visit this Academy you would be welcomed by many, by me first of all. You bid me come back to you if I get too tired here, but I can't see any attraction for me in London except the companionship of two or three friends."

Ammonius accompanied the English army in the Flemish campaign of 1513, and Erasmus writes to him in camp, thanking him for the vivid description of army life which he has sent home, and introducing him to various friends of his own in the Low Countries.

> "O happy man," he says, "if God permits you to return safely to us! What merry tales your experience

of these horrors will supply you with for the rest of your life! But, my dear Ammonius, I beseech you again and again, as I have cautioned you in my recent letters, by the Muses and Graces, look out that you do your fighting from a safe distance. Be as furious as you like—with your pen,—and slay with it ten times ten thousand men a day." As for himself, he says he is hanging on at Cambridge, "looking about me every day for a convenient chance to fly away. Only no opportunity offers. I am kept also by the thirty nobles which I am expecting at Michaelmas. I am so on fire with zeal to re-edit Jerome and to illustrate it with commentaries, that I seem to be inspired by some god. I have now nearly completed the revision and have collated many ancient texts, and all this at great expense to myself."



QUEEN'S COLLE
FROM KNIGHT'S

At Cambridge, as elsewhere, Erasmus seems always to have been on the eve of flight, working

away at what interested him, but neglecting everything else as far as possible.

"I wrote to you once and again in camp," he says to Ammonius, "but meanwhile was in a no less serious warfare here with my emendations of Seneca and Jerome than you with the Frenchmen. Although I was not in camp, Durham has given me ten crowns from the French plunder;—but I'll tell you all about this when I see you, and meanwhile will be on the lookout for your military letters.—Good-bye, best of friends. I don't need to ask of you what you are always doing of your own accord, and yet I do ask that if any chance offers you will help me along with a word of recommendation. For these few months I have cast anchor securely. If things go well, I will fancy that here is my native land, which I have preferred to Rome and where old age is coming upon me; if not I will break away, it doesn't much matter whither, and will at all events die somewhere else. I will call upon all the gods to bear witness to the confidence by which *he whom you know* has ruined me. If I had promised with three words what he has repeated so often and in such sounding phrases, I know that what I promised I would have performed. May I be damned if I wouldn't rather die than let a man who was dependent on me go destitute. I congratulate you, dear Ammonius, that Fortune, not always so unjust as she is to me, is now, as I hear, smiling upon you. Good-bye again."

"For months now," he writes, "I have been living the life of a snail, shut up at home and brooding in silence over my studies. There is a great deal of solitude here; many are away through fear of the plague,—though even when everyone is here it is a solitude. The expense is intolerable and there is not a farthing of profit. Think of it! I swear by all that's sacred that in the five months since I came here I have spent sixty nobles and have only received one from some of my hearers and that with much reluctance on my part. It is certain that during this winter I shall

> leave no stone unturned and, as they say, shall weigh the anchor of my safety. If things go well, I shall make myself a nest somewhere; if not, I shall certainly fly away from here, I know not whither; if nothing else I will at least die elsewhere."

Ammonius reports upon his progress in begging for Erasmus, and Erasmus, quite in the tone of the old correspondence with Battus, thanks him and urges him to further effort.

These dolorous letters bear date 1511, but cannot all belong in that year, and month and day are often obviously incorrect. Dated early in 1512 we have a letter to the abbot of St. Bertin. After explaining why he had not reported himself earlier, Erasmus goes on to say:

> "If you care to hear how I am getting on: Erasmus is almost completely transformed into an Englishman, with such distinguished consideration am I treated by very many others, but especially by my incomparable (*unicus*) Mæcenas, the archbishop of Canterbury,—patron not of me alone, but of all learned men, among whom I hold the lowest place, if indeed I hold any place at all. Eternal God! how happy, how productive, how ready is the talent of that man! What skill in unravelling the most weighty matters of business! what uncommon learning! what unheard-of graciousness towards all! what geniality in company, so that,—a truly royal quality,—he sends no one away from him sad. And besides all this: what great and ready generosity! Finally, in such a conspicuous position of fortune and rank, how absolutely free from haughtiness,—so that he seems to be the only one who is ignorant of his own greatness. In caring for his friends no one is more faithful or more constant. In short he is indeed *Primas*, not in rank alone but in all praiseworthy things. Since I have this man for a friend, why should I not deem myself exceptionally

fortunate, even if there were nothing more?"

It is idle to attempt to determine which of these moods represents the real state of mind of Erasmus at Cambridge. Probably he was at his old tricks of making himself valued by threatening to leave an unbearable situation, and at the same time making that situation appear as delightful as possible to anyone outside who might conceivably raise a bid for him in another quarter. He tells Ammonius again how charming Italy was to him and what a prospect he had given up there to come to England. He thinks he will come to London, and begs Ammonius to find him a warm lodging not too far from St. Paul's. He cannot go to Mountjoy's so long as "that Cerberus" is there. Evidently he did not have the run of many hospitable homes in London.

As regards Erasmus' official position at Cambridge there is some room for doubt. He appears in the lists of university officers as the "Lady Margaret's Professor of Divinity," but precisely what this means is not clear. The Lady Margaret was the Countess of Richmond, mother of King Henry VII., never queen herself, but claiming the doubtful honour of blood-relationship to sixty or seventy persons of royal lineage. This benevolent lady, influenced undoubtedly by the advice of John Fisher, afterward Bishop of Rochester, had founded in 1503 a readership in divinity at each of the great English universities. The endowment had been intrusted to the abbey of Westminster with instructions to pay over the salary to the holder. The election to the office was to be biennial, and besides the chancellor all doctors, bachelors, and inceptors in divinity were to have the right to vote. The place was to be no sinecure. The reader must read *libere*, *sollenniter*, and

aperte. He was to have no fees beyond his salary, and must read such works in divinity as the chancellor with the "college of doctors" should judge necessary. He must "read every accustomed day in each term, and in the long vacation up to the eighth of September, but might cease in Lent, if the chancellor should think fit, in order that during that season he and his auditors might be occupied in preaching." Evidently it was contemplated that the reader of the Lady Margaret should devote himself wholly to this work. The salary was the very respectable sum of sixty-five dollars a year, enough to provide a modest living for a man of quiet habits. We are almost wholly without information as to Erasmus' performance of the duties of this office. Everything points toward the belief that in the sense described by the act of foundation he never filled it at all. The only references he makes are to his attempts to teach Greek, certainly not one of the functions of the Lady Margaret Professor. It has often been assumed that[91] Erasmus' complaints about his Cambridge life were caused by a sense of failure in his work as a teacher. We are prepared to believe from all his previous experience that he never cared to succeed as a teacher, and, further, we may be tolerably sure that, for this quite sufficient reason, he was not a very good teacher. He held his readership, we may believe, for two terms of two years each—if indeed he held it at all—and meanwhile tried to give Greek lessons, but could get neither pupils nor pay. Mr. Mullinger says, "Disappointed in his class-room, he took refuge in his study," as if his literary work were a kind of last resort on the failure of his true profession.



JOHN FISHER, BISHOP OF ROCHESTER.

FROM THE DRAWING BY HOLBEIN, IN WINDSOR CAS

The truth would seem to be just the opposite of this. What really commanded the allegiance of all that was best and most effective in Erasmus' makeup was his study and writing. His proper medium of self-expression was his pen, and until he took his pen in hand he was not his best self. If he was capable of any sincere utterance he was sincere when he said to Ammonius that he felt himself moved by an almost divine inspiration when he got going on his Jerome. A few more glimpses at the working of his mind at Cambridge and we will pass on to see what he accomplished there in the way of contributions to learning.

Besides Ammonius his other most important correspondent during this time was his old friend, John Colet, now definitely settled in London as dean of St. Paul's and greatly absorbed in the work which was to be his most lasting monument, the new school for boys. The correspondence seems to have begun by a begging letter from Erasmus in which he had gone beyond the limits of good taste, and to which Colet had replied with some heat. It is not beyond our belief that Erasmus may have given his letter a jocose form, and that Colet, Englishman as he was, had not seen the joke. At all events, Erasmus writes:

> "You answer seriously a letter written in jest. Perhaps I ought not to have joked with so great a patron, yet it pleased my fancy just then to try a little 'Attic salt' on such a very dear friend, being mindful rather of your gentle character than of your high position. It will be the part of your friendliness to make allowances for my awkwardness. You write that I am in your debt whether I like it or not. Indeed, my

dear Colet, it is hard, as Seneca says, to be an unwilling debtor, but I know no man to whom I would more willingly be in debt than to you. You have always had such kind feelings towards me that, even if no good offices had been added, still I should have been greatly your debtor; but now you have added so many services and kindnesses that if I did not acknowledge them I should be the most ungrateful of men. As to your embarrassments I both believe in them and grieve for them, but my own difficulties were so much more pressing that I was compelled to take advantage of yours. How unwilling I was to do this you may gather from the fact that I was so long in asking what you had long since promised. I don't wonder that you, occupied as you are with so many affairs, should have forgotten your promise; but when we were in your garden talking about the *Copia*,[92] I proposed to dedicate some juvenile work to our youthful prince, and you asked me to dedicate the new work to your new school. I answered with a smile that your new school was a trifle poverty-stricken and what I needed was someone who would pay cash down. Then you smiled. Then, when I had told over many reasons for expense, you said with some hesitation that you could not give me as much as I needed, but would gladly give fifteen angels. When you repeated this with an eager face, I asked if you thought that was enough. You answered eagerly again that you would willingly pay that. Then I said I would gladly take it. This reminder will perhaps bring the matter to your memory. I might pile up more arguments, if you had not faith in me of your own accord. There are some, and friends, too,—for I have no dealings with enemies and don't value their words one hair,—who say that you are a little hard, and in giving money a trifle exacting. They say that this does not come from meanness—so I understand them—but because from the very gentleness of your nature you cannot resist those who press and urge themselves upon you, and are the less generous with your modest friends because you cannot satisfy both.... If it would not burden you to send me the remnant of what you

> promised, as my affairs are at present, I will take it, not as a debt, but as a gift to be repaid when I can do so. I was sorry to hear, at the end of your letter, that you were so unusually burdened by business cares. I could wish you were as far as possible removed from the cares of this world, not for fear that the world's allurements can lay hold upon you, but because I should like to see such genius, eloquence, and learning as yours wholly devoted to Christ. If you cannot escape, look out that you do not sink deeper and deeper. It might be better to fail than to buy success at so great a price, for the highest good is peace of mind. These are the thorns that accompany riches.... I have finished the collation of the New Testament and am going on to Jerome. When I have finished him I will fly to you."

Singular that in all Erasmus' complaints of his Cambridge life he makes no reference to any failure on the part of the authorities to pay him his due stipend. It seems clear either that he held no position which carried a salary with it, or that his begging was for "extras" beyond the modest needs of a celibate scholar. Some light is thrown upon this point in a letter to Colet, dated October, 1513, but quite as likely belonging, as Mr. Drummond suggests, in 1511.

> "I am now wholly absorbed in the *Copia*, so that it seems like a regular enigma to be in the midst of plenty [*copia*] and yet in the depths of want. And would that I might bring both to a conclusion at once; for I will quickly make an end of my *Copia* if only the Muses will favour my studies more than Fortune has up to the present time favoured my estate....
>
> "In your offer of money I recognise your ancient good feeling toward me and I thank you with all my heart. But there is one phrase, though you use it in jest, that stings me to the soul:—'if you would beg

humbly.' Perhaps you mean, and very properly, that to bear my lot with such impatience comes wholly from human pride, for, indeed, a gentle and Christian spirit makes the best of everything. Still more, however, I marvel how you put together humility and shamelessness: for you say, 'if you would beg humbly and make your demand shamelessly.' If, according to common usage, you mean by humility the opposite of arrogance, how are impudence and modesty to be put together? But if by 'humbly' you mean 'servilely' and 'abjectly' you differ very much from Seneca, my dear Colet, who thinks that nothing comes higher than what is bought with prayers, and that he does a far from friendly service who demands of his friend that lowly word, 'I beg you.' Socrates once said, conversing with some friends:—'I should have bought me a cloak to-day if I had had the money,' and Seneca says:—'he gave too late who gave after those words.' ...

"But now, I pray you, what could be more shameless than I, who have been a public beggar all this time in England? From the archbishop I have had so much that it would be more than infamous to take any more, even if he should offer it. From N. I have begged boldly enough, but as I asked without shame so has he without shame repulsed me. Why now I seem too shameless even to my dear Linacre, who, when he saw me going away from London with barely six angels in my pocket, and knew how feeble my health was, and that winter was coming on, yet eagerly warned me to spare the archbishop, to spare Mountjoy! But I will rather pull myself together and learn to bear my poverty bravely. Oh! that was a friendly counsel! This is why I especially loathe my fate, that it does not permit me to be a modest man. As long as my strength would carry me, it was a pleasure to hide my need—now I cannot do that unless I choose to neglect my life. And still I am not yet so lost to shame that I ask all things of everyone. From others I ask not, lest I get a refusal, but from you with what face, pray, can I ask? Especially since you yourself have none too much of this kind of goods.

Yet, if it is boldness you like, I will end my letter with the very boldest clause I can. I cannot so put aside all shame as to beg of you with no excuse,—but I am not so proud as to refuse a gift, if such a friend as you should give it me willingly, especially in the present state of my affairs."



CARDINAL XIMENES.

FROM A PORTRAIT BY O. E. WAGSTAFF, IN THE FI

These selections from the English correspondence have made it clear that Erasmus in England was precisely what he had always been, a keen-sighted observer of men and things, a hater of all shams but his own, a sturdy beggar, a jovial companion and correspondent when he was in the mood, above all an independent liver and thinker, dreading any routine that was not self-imposed, but capable of steady and persistent work when he could put his time on congenial tasks. Of these labours, to which he devoted himself in England, the new edition of the Greek New Testament, or, as he preferred to call it, the "New Instrument," held the first place in his interest. It was not to be published until 1516, a year or more after he had left England, and Erasmus says that he consulted manuscripts in Brabant and Basel before printing; but it seems tolerably clear that a considerable part of the preparatory work was done at Cambridge. He writes to Colet,[93] as early as 1511: "I have finished the collation of the New Testament," by which he must mean that he had done all that he intended to do at it in England. In speaking of the work at Basel he refers to the great haste with which it was pushed, the object being, probably, on Froben's part, to get ahead of a similar undertaking reported to be under way in Spain. This latter work, to be known as the "Complutensian Polyglot," was going on under the direction of Cardinal Ximenes at Alcalá (Complutum). It was to include the whole Bible, and though the New Testament was completed in 1514 it was held back to appear with the rest in 1520. When Erasmus says[94] that he used "very many manuscripts in both languages, and those not the readiest to hand, but

the most ancient and most correct," he is speaking after the standards of his day. In fact, recent scholarship has shown that he not only used very defective manuscripts of no great antiquity, but that he failed to make adequate use of the best one at his disposal.[95]

In spite of the fact, then, that the actual work of publication was done at Basel, we may fairly count this great work as one of the fruits of the English period. Rightly to estimate the value of this service to the cause of a reasonable Christianity, we must consider for a moment the conditions of biblical scholarship in the year 1511. That the ultimate appeal in matters of Christian faith lay to the inspired word of the recognised canon of Scripture, no one doubted for a moment. True, the governing powers of the Church had insisted that alongside this source of truth there were two others of equal importance, the tradition of the Church and the authority of the Roman papacy; but Church and papacy had always been conceived of as expressing their own judgment through their interpretation of Scripture. Nothing which they could lay down could ever be in contradiction to the true teaching of the canonical writings. A modern mind would say, therefore, that nothing could have seemed more important to these interpreting agents than to know precisely what the writers whom they were interpreting had said and meant. One would think that every effort would have been made from the beginning to secure and maintain a version of the Scriptures in their original form, of such unquestionable accuracy that all deviations of interpretation could be anticipated and checked.

The immense prestige which the Roman

government of the Church might thus have secured to itself was deliberately thrown away. Not only did the chief church authority do nothing itself to promote so practical and so profitable an undertaking, but it systematically checked the efforts of individuals and groups of scholars to contribute toward this end. It rested all its own interpretation upon a translation into Latin, the so-called *Vulgata*, which had been made by Jerome in the years just before and just after 400, and repeatedly declared by the Church to be the sole authorised version. This translation was, so far as the New Testament was concerned, a revision of earlier Latin versions carefully compared with the Greek originals. The Old Testament was translated from the original Hebrew with close reference to the Septuagint and the early Greek commentators. The obvious motive of the Church in clinging to this defective presentation of its own supreme authority was the motive of uniformity. The longer the correction of errors could be postponed, the more hope that no effective criticism of institutions resting, perhaps, on errors would arise.

Of all tendencies in human society none was so greatly and so justly dreaded by church authority as the tendency to criticism. And by criticism we do not mean a carping opposition. We mean only what the word properly denotes: inquiry into the exact facts about any given subject. In proportion as the great structure of ecclesiastical authority had grown more complicated, this nervous dread of free inquiry had increased. Nor was the central authority alone responsible for this state of mind. Every part of the church organisation had done its share to fix this notion of an unchanging uniformity upon the Christian world. The whole philosophy of the Middle

Ages, which prided itself, above all else, upon being a Christian philosophy, had exhausted itself in giving a pseudo-scientific form to the most unscientific view of truth the world had ever seen.

The great service of Erasmus was, therefore, that he proposed to find out as nearly as he could what the writers of the New Testament had actually said. Of course his apparatus for this inquiry was still, from the point of view of modern science, very defective. He had no earlier scientific commentators to consult, with the single exception of Laurentius Valla, the Italian humanist, who a few years before had published annotations to the Greek text. His criteria of judgment had to be evolved from his own sense of accuracy as he went along. All that vast assistance to intelligent editing which in recent times has come from the cultivation of the historic sense was wanting to him. Nothing was farther from Erasmus' mind than any radical discussion of Christian doctrines. He continually declares his fixed determination to abide by the faith of the Church, and whatever adverse criticism he had to make was against evil practices which always seemed to him only perversions of the essential Christianity of apostolic times. So we are not to look to his New Testament for startling innovations. What gave offence to his enemies was the same quality which gave value to the book,—namely, the single effort to put things as they were. What the "men of darkness" who had come largely to control the practical working of religious affairs least of all desired was precise truth to facts. They were getting on comfortably with a version of truth which suited them very well, and were not inclined to see their precious ease invaded by any restless seeking for ultimate accuracy. They felt, and quite truly, that

any jarring of the foundations might bring the whole structure of ceremonies and usages in which they were thriving, about their ears. Erasmus might protest as he would, but the instinct of self-preservation on the part of those who were enjoying the high places of the Church was rightly alarmed.



DEVICE OF THE HOUSE OF FROBEN.

The other work on which Erasmus spent most of his time in England was his share in a new edition of St. Jerome, which was being brought out by the great printing house of Froben at Basel. It will be more in order, perhaps, to speak of this when we have followed Erasmus to the Continent and seen him established in the full career of an editor and author which was to occupy the remainder of his life. It may not be out of place here to quote his own description of the principles which governed him in his editorial work. He was accused of inaccuracy and undue haste in giving to the world the results of unripe scholarship. He acknowledges the facts, but defends himself as follows,[96] speaking at the moment of the epistles of Jerome:

> "I gave such care to this work [the edition of 1524] that the attentive reader may easily see that I did not undertake this revision in vain. The control of ancient manuscripts was not lacking, but these could not preclude the use of conjecture in some places; but these conjectures I so modified in the notes that they could not easily deceive anyone, but could only stimulate in the reader a zeal for investigation. And I hope it may come to pass that someone equipped with more correct texts may restore also those points which have escaped me. To these I will gladly render the praise due to their industry and they will have no reason to find fault with my attempts; for while I have been fortunate in restoring many points, in some I have been compelled to follow the ancient proverb: —'not as we would, but as we can.'
>
> "For there are men of such a disposition that if they can add anything to the efforts of their predecessors, they claim all the praise for themselves and make a tremendous fuss if one has even nodded at any point or not accomplished what one has undertaken. I know not whether we ought to despise more the rudeness of such persons or their ingratitude.

No one stands in their way, if they wish to produce something better. They say that nothing ought to be published that is not perfect. Now, whoever says that, simply says that nothing at all should be published; nor was ever anything properly edited down to the present day. I was editing these things for Batavians, for monks and theologians, who were for the most part without classic learning; for liberal study had not yet penetrated so far as these.

"If one will just consider, he will see that I am entering upon no unworthy or unfruitful field. Will not Italian critics give the same indulgence to barbarians which they have been compelled, willing or unwilling, to give to their own scholars, to Filelfo, to Hermolaus, or to Valla, whenever during the past sixty years they have aided the learning of the community by their zeal in translating Greek authors or emending Latin ones? Those who publish nothing avoid all blame, but earn no praise;—nay, while they are barely avoiding the blame of men, they fall into the worst kind of blame;—unless, indeed, he is less blameworthy who gives to his famished friends nothing from his splendid table, than he who freely and gladly gives what he has and would be glad to give more sumptuous things if he had them.... I confess myself greatly indebted to Beatus Rhenanus, who has given us Tertullian emended at many points, though it is incomplete and beside that is thick-sown with blunders. He does no injury to his reputation who gives a service proportioned to his day and opens the way to others to do more finished work. Nor have I suffered from any more unjust critics than those who publish nothing and do not even teach, as if they begrudged any usefulness to the world, or as if whatever they gave to the community were a loss to themselves. And if ever they detect a human error, what snickerings, what abuse, what a rumpus!"



DEVICE OF FROBEN.

These are really admirable sentiments, worthy of a man of literary courage and generosity. On the whole Erasmus lived up to them. He was impatient of criticism and inclined to believe his critics actuated by motives of personal dislike; but where he felt the friendly note in criticism he was ready to accept it and to discuss the point in the spirit of worthy rivalry. Much that he wrote was hasty and incomplete, but *he wrote*, and he did indeed open the way for others of less individual quality to follow his leading.

As a fruit of the English residence, we must briefly notice the treatise, *de duplici copia verborum et rerum*,[97] written by Erasmus, as he says, at the request of Colet, and dedicated to him in a really beautiful and touching preface. The *Copia* of Erasmus is a text-book of rhetoric, intended for advanced Latin scholars who have already mastered the principles of grammar and are well on the way to the acquisition of a good style. Its value for our purpose is in giving a clue to the principles of composition which were to govern Erasmus in all his writing; and thus preparing us to interpret what he says with the greater intelligence. No opinion as to his meaning on any question can be worth much which is not based upon a clear comprehension of his literary method. He was a literary artist and we are here introduced to some of the most valuable secrets of his art. They must never be forgotten when we try to find out what he really means at a given moment.

The word *copia* is a difficult one to translate. Its first meaning of "abundance" is liable, as Erasmus begins by showing, to be understood as mere verbosity.

> "We see not a few mortals, who, striving to emulate this divine virtue with more zeal than success, fall into a feeble and disjointed loquacity, obscuring the subject and burdening the wretched ears of their hearers with a vacant mass of words and sentences crowded together beyond all possibility of enjoyment. And writers who have tried to lay down the principles of this art have gained no other result than to display their own poverty while expounding abundance."

He proposes to give only certain directions, and to illustrate them by formulas which may prove convenient to writers. *Copia* includes the ideas of richness and variety, but must avoid the errors of mere quantity and change. Not all fulness contributes to completeness of effect, and not all variation in style helps towards real illustration of the thought. Here, as elsewhere, we find Erasmus the true apostle of common-sense. After all, the purpose of rhetoric is primarily to say something worth saying, and to say it in such a way that it will commend itself to the reader. The purpose of these directions will therefore be to show how the essential point may be condensed into few words and yet nothing be left out, and how, on the other hand, one may expand into *copia* and yet have nothing in superfluity.

The first rule of the *Copia verborum* is

> "that speech should be fitting [*apta*], good Latin, elegant and pure [*pura*].... What clothing is to the body, style is to the thought; for just as the beauty and dignity of the body are heightened or diminished by dress and care, so is thought by words. They are therefore greatly mistaken who think it makes no difference in what words a given thought is expressed if only it can be understood. So also there is the same principle in changing the dress and in varying the

> speech. It is our first care that our dress be neither mean, nor unsuited to our figure, nor of a wrong pattern. It would be a pity if a figure good in itself were to be spoiled by mean garments; it would be ridiculous if a man were to appear in public in woman's dress, and a disgrace if one were to be seen in a preposterous garb or with his clothes turned back side before.
>
> "And so, if anyone tries to put on an affectation of *copia* before he has attained the purity of the Latin tongue, he is, in my judgment, no less ridiculous than a poor beggar, who, having not a single garment fit to wear, should thereupon change one set of rags for another and come out into the market-place to show off his beggary for wealth. And the oftener he should do this, would he not seem so much the more foolish? I think he would. And just as foolish are those who affect *copia* and yet cannot say in plain words what they want to say. As if they were ashamed to appear to stammer a little, they make their stammering only the more offensive in every possible way, as if they were on a wager with themselves to talk as barbarously as ever they can. I like to see a wealthy house furnished in great variety, but I want it all to be elegant and not to be filled up with articles of willow and fig-wood and vessels of Samian crockery. At a splendid banquet I like to have many kinds of food brought on, but who could bear it if anyone should serve a hundred sorts of food not one of which was fit to eat?"

Having thus admirably laid down the rule of moderation and good taste, Erasmus goes on to details. He shows what kinds of words are to be avoided and to what extent. His comments on the use of obscene words are interesting in view of the general practice of his time and, indeed, upon occasion, of his own practice. Certain words are obscene because they represent obscene things;

others because they are twisted from their harmless meanings. "What then is the principle of obscenity? —nothing more nor less than the usage, not of anybody and everybody, but of those whose speech is correct." Of himself it must be said that in general he lived pretty well up to his principles. Where he offends in this respect it is generally in a kind of composition, as, for example, in many of the Colloquies, in which he simply lets himself go, producing his effect by a freedom which he carefully avoids in other forms of writing. He was, if one may say so, artistically obscene.

In spite of his admiration for pure Latinity, he does not hesitate to admit Greek words according to a rather dangerous canon. Greek words, he says, may be used when they are more significant, or shorter, or stronger, or more graceful, "for no Latin word can equal the grace of a Greek word." In short,

> "whenever any certain appropriateness [*commoditas*] invites us we may properly interweave Greek with Latin, especially when we are writing to learned men; but when we are not so invited and deliberately weave a discourse that is half Latin and half Greek, this may perhaps be pardoned in youths who are training themselves to readiness in both languages, but for men this kind of display is, in my judgment, far from becoming and is as undignified as if one should write a book in prose and verse mixed up together, as, in fact, has been done by some learned men."

As to repetition, a trick of rhetoric often employed by Erasmus, he disapproves it in theory, but admits that it may be done "when the repetition helps the thought and when the weariness of it can be avoided by a certain variety." Cicero repeats, but

he says "things similar, not the same things."

> "I insist upon this the more earnestly because I have heard preachers of considerable fame, especially in Italy, wasting their time in affected synonyms of this sort, as, for example, if one interpreting the word of the Psalmist, 'create in me a clean heart, O God!' should say, 'create in me a clean heart, a pure heart, a spotless heart, a stainless heart, a heart free from baseness, a heart unspoiled by vice, a heart purified, a heart made clean, a heart like snow,' and then should do the same in other words, this kind of *copia* is not far removed from mere babble."

So he goes on, through the whole range of figures of speech, laying down a general principle and illustrating it with a wealth of classical learning that is simply overwhelming. It is rather dreary reading, but is relieved every now and then by flashes of sense and humour that must have commended the book to all fair-minded men. "No word ought to seem to us harsh or obsolete which is to be found in an approved author. On this point I differ far and wide from those who shudder at every word as a barbarism which is not to be read in Cicero."

When he has made his principles clear he proceeds to illustrate still further by ringing all possible changes on a model sentence, *tuæ literæ me magnopere delectarunt*, to the extent of a printed folio page. The development of *semper dum vivam, tui meminero*, fills two folio pages. The pupil who should carry out these illustrations intelligently would be almost a master of Latin prose. The greater part of the rest of the *copia verborum* is filled with formulas for the expression of a multitude of ideas most likely to occur in the work of the classical pupil. This is pure hack-work, a mere mechanical enumeration,

but likely to be of great use to those for whom it was intended. It would be an admirable thing if our own high-school pupils could be made to commit great parts of the *de copia verborum* to memory.

The plan of the *Copia rerum* is similar to that of the former part. It is an elaborate analysis of the various ways in which discourse may be enriched and amplified. Erasmus puts much less of himself into this part, but at the close sums up the argument with his usual good sense and judgment.

> "He who likes the brevity of the Spartans will first of all avoid prefaces and expressions of feeling in the manner of the Athenians. He will state his case simply and concisely. He will use arguments,—not all but at least the chief ones, and will present these not in detail, but compactly, so that the argument shall be almost in the very wording, if anyone cares to work it out. Let him be content to make his point and be very sparing with amplifications, similes, examples, etc., etc., unless these be so essential that he may not omit them without offence. Let him also abstain from all kinds of figures which make language rich, splendid, telling, elaborate, or attractive. Let him not treat the same subject in various forms, or so explain single words by expressions of meaning, that much more is understood than is heard and one thing may be gathered from another. On the other hand he who seeks for *copia* will desire to expand his material pretty nearly according to the rules I have laid down.
>
> "But let each beware, lest through affectation he be carried over into the fault which lies nearest him. Let the lover of brevity see to it that he does not merely use few words, but that he says in the fewest words the very best thing he can.... For nothing is so conducive to brevity of style as aptness and elegance of words, and if we add simplicity, it will be easy to avoid obscurity, a vice which is very apt to follow a striving after brevity. But here again we must look out

> that our speech does not grow cold through lack of all warmth of feeling. Therefore let the matter be so put before the eye that, of itself, it may silently take a certain hold upon the mind. Let all be sweetened with the Attic charm."

The *Copia* proved its value by a great and rapid sale. It was first printed in 1511, and went through nearly sixty editions in the author's lifetime. Since then it has been repeatedly reprinted and epitomised. Coming as it did so soon after the Praise of Folly, and written as it was in the intervals of very serious occupation with the New Testament and Jerome, it gave to the world a very striking proof of Erasmus' immense versatility of talent and wide-reaching intellectual interests. Taken together these works make it quite clear that when Erasmus left England in 1514 he had commended himself to every class of thinking men by some direct appeal to what specially concerned it.

In all the biographies of Erasmus it seems to be tacitly assumed that he was on intimate terms with Thomas More during this long residence in England. In fact, however, contemporary evidence on this point is almost entirely wanting. There is but one letter from Erasmus to More in this period, and none whatever from More to him. If it be said that there was no need of correspondence, since the friends could meet at any time in London, the same is true of Colet and Ammonius, from and to whom we have so many letters. When Erasmus goes to London it is Ammonius who finds him a lodging; he it is who sends him his wine and helps him to a horse. More was certainly greatly occupied with public affairs at this time, but he found leisure to write his Utopia, which was published in 1515, very soon after

Erasmus' departure from England. The real relations between these men, who, in spite of similar tastes, were of quite different character, seem to have been expressed rather in their later correspondence than in any close intimacy at this time.

During this residence in England occurred doubtless the visits of Erasmus to the shrine of the Virgin Mary at Walsingham and to that of Thomas à Becket at Canterbury, which are immortalised in the very famous colloquy, *Peregrinatio religionis ergo*, the Religious Pilgrimage.[98] Though published some years afterwards, there is every reason to believe that this dialogue faithfully represents the writer's state of mind in 1513-14. The essential part of it is the skilful balancing between conformity to prescribed usage and an open contempt for the whole paraphernalia of relics, miracles, votive offerings, and lying tales, of which these and similar places were the centres. Erasmus represents himself as a devout believer in the Holy Virgin and in the holiness of saints; but as a total sceptic regarding the whole machinery of their worship. His cautious language and his protestations of charity for ignorance and human frailty cannot in the least conceal his real disgust at these perversions of an honest and honourable sentiment.

In the visit to Canterbury, Erasmus represents himself as accompanied by a high clerical dignitary of England, whose open expressions of distrust and scandalised piety he endeavours to moderate. That this person was Colet is made clear by a later reference. The fact serves to connect Erasmus with the feeling, growing henceforth more intense and finally culminating in the suppression of the English monasteries, that a vast perversion of true religion had taken place. It was only a question of time when

the evil would become intolerable. Erasmus doubtless contributed his share in the fostering of this rebellious feeling; but he was far from being alone in his opinions. The enlightenment of his generation was all pointing the same way. All that was needed was a formulation into some definite programme of action, and for this, of course, Erasmus was conspicuously incompetent. The impulse was to come from a mixture of motives, many of them as unworthy as those they sought to replace.

In his treatise on the True Way of Prayer, 1523, Erasmus sums up his attitude on the question of relic-worship in a few words[99]:

> "In England they expose to be kissed the shoe of St. Thomas, once bishop of Canterbury, which is, perchance, the shoe of some harlequin; and in any case what could be more foolish than to worship the shoe of a man! I have myself seen them showing the linen rags on which he is said to have wiped his nose. When the shrine was opened the Abbot and the rest fell on their knees in worship, raised their hands to heaven, and showed their reverence by their actions. All this seemed to John Colet, who was with me, an unworthy display; I thought it was a thing we must put up with until an opportunity should come to reform it without disturbance."

This is the key-note of the "Erasmian Reform," and we shall hear it sounded many times again before the moment of action arrives.

CHAPTER VII
BASEL AND LOUVAIN—THE "INSTITUTIO PRINCIPIS CHRISTIANI" 1515-1518

ERASMUS left England in early summer, 1514, on good terms with his English friends but without making such connections as could have served to keep him permanently in the country. He was bound to have explanations ready for any emergency, but we need not trouble ourselves to seek other reasons for his leaving England than that he did not wish to stay. He had accumulated a considerable stock of manuscripts and knew that he could get them into print better at Basel than in London. If we may trust a letter[100] sent back to Ammonius from the castle of Ham, in Picardy, of which Lord Mountjoy was governor, he came near losing these precious papers through what he always fancied to be the special malice of the English customs officials; but happily they were safely restored to him.

The short stay at Ham is memorable for a famous letter written from there to Prior Servatius of the monastery at Steyn, where, we remember, Erasmus had passed the few years of his monastic experience. We gather from this letter that Servatius, a former companion of his at Steyn, had written to offer him a residence there where he might pass the remnant of his days in peace. Erasmus, in respectful and serious language, reminds Servatius that he had never really

felt any calling to the life of seclusion, and goes over the familiar ground of his bodily and mental unfitness for it, the absurdity of supposing that a boy of seventeen could know himself well enough to decide once for all so momentous and complicated a question, and the compelling attraction of a free life devoted to intercourse with the highest things. He shows that his life has been, humanly speaking, a worthy one: he has cultivated virtue and avoided vice; he has had a delicate body to take care of and knows that Holland would be death to him. As to the conventual life itself, Erasmus lets himself go in sweeping condemnation, yet preserving still a certain dignity that is far more convincing than any extravagant abuse.[101]

> "You, perhaps, would think it the highest felicity to die among the brethren. In fact not only you but almost everyone is deceived and imposed upon by this notion that Christ and true piety are to be found in certain places, in dress, in food, in prescribed ceremonies. We fancy a man is ruined, if he put on a black gown instead of a white one, if he change a cowl for a hat, if he from time to time change his residence. But I dare say the opposite, that great injury to Christian piety has come from those so-called 'religious' acts, although they were, perhaps, first introduced with a pious purpose. Gradually they have increased and broken up into six thousand diversities. The approval of the supreme pontiffs has been given to them, but in many ways quite too easily and indulgently; for what is more corrupt and impious than those loose religious practices? Why, if you speak only of praiseworthy, even of the most praiseworthy ones, I know not what image of Christ you will find in them beyond certain chilling and Judaising ceremonies. By these things they please themselves and condemn others,—although it is the teaching of Christ that all the world is as one great house, or as it

> were one monastery, and all men are its canons and its brethren; that the sacrament of baptism is the supreme act of religion and that we are to consider, not *where* we live, but *how* we live."

He justifies his wandering life by the good character he has everywhere maintained.

> "If I am not approved by everyone—a thing I do not strive for—surely I am in good standing with the chief men at Rome. There was not a cardinal who did not receive me as a brother, though I had no such ambition for myself, especially the cardinal of St. George, the cardinal of Bologna, cardinal Grimani, the cardinal of Fornovo [?], and he who is now supreme pontiff, to say nothing of archdeacons and men of learning; and this honour was paid, not to wealth, which I neither have nor desire, nor to ambition, to which I was ever a stranger, but to letters alone, which our countrymen laugh at, but the Italians worship.
>
> "In England there is not a bishop who is not glad to salute me, who does not seek me as a table-companion, who does not wish me as an inmate of his house. The king himself, just before my departure from Italy, wrote me a most affectionate letter with his own hand, and still speaks of me in the most honourable and friendly fashion. As often as I pay my respects to him he embraces me most affectionately and looks at me with such friendly eyes that you can see that he thinks as well of me as he speaks. The queen wished me to be her teacher; everyone knows that, if I had chosen to spend even a few months at the royal court, I might have heaped up as many benefices as you please, but I subordinate everything to the opportunity of leisure for study."

Then follows a very glowing account of the money he has received in England from Warham, Mountjoy, and others.

> "The two universities, Oxford and Cambridge, are vying with each other to get possession of me; at Cambridge I taught for many months Greek and sacred literature, and that for nothing as I am determined always to do.[102] There are colleges there, in which there is so much of true religion that you could not fail to prefer them to any 'religious' life, if you should see them. There is at London John Colet, dean of St. Paul's, a man who combines the greatest learning with the most admirable piety, a man of great influence with all men; he is so fond of me, as everyone knows, that he lives not more intimately with anyone than with me, —to say nothing of countless others, lest I weary you at once with my boasting and my much speaking."

As to his writings he calls the attention of Servatius to the *Enchiridion* as adapted to lead many to piety, the *Adagia* as useful to all kinds of learning, and the *Copia* as serviceable to preachers. The Praise of Folly he naturally and prudently leaves unmentioned.

> "During the last two years, besides much other work, I revised the epistles of Jerome, marking with an obelus spurious and interpolated passages. By a comparison of ancient Greek texts I have emended the whole New Testament and have annotated more than a thousand passages, not without profit for the theologians. I have begun commentaries to the epistles of Paul and shall complete them when I have disposed of the others. For I have made up my mind to spend my life in sacred studies and to this end I am devoting all my spare time. In this work men of great repute say that I can do what others cannot; in your kind of life I should simply accomplish nothing at all. I am on intimate terms with many learned and serious men, both here [England?] and in Italy and in France, but I have thus far found no one who would advise me to return to you, or think it the better course. Nay, more,

> even your predecessor, Nicholas Wittenherus, always used to advise me rather to attach myself to some bishop, adding that he knew both my nature and the ways of his brethren."

Finally he goes into the old story of his monastic gown, "laid aside in Italy lest I be killed, in England because it would not be tolerated," and concludes by repeating his determination not to return to a kind of life in which, now more than ever, there was no place for him.[103] This letter shows us how Erasmus could paint his English life when it was a question of raising his market price. The same note of self-valuation is sounded in a letter to his old friend, the abbot of St. Bertin in Flanders, written from London in 1513 or 1514. He is seriously considering returning to his own country and would be glad to do so, if only the prince—presumably Charles of Burgundy, the future emperor—would give him a fortune sufficient for his modest leisure (*ociolum*). "Not that Britain displeases me or that I am tired of my Mæcenases." He gets enough and could get more, if he would go round about it ever so little,—we remember his letters to Ammonius,—only times are bad; an island is an isolated kind of place anyway, and wars are making England doubly an island. Then comes one of his usual tirades against war in the abstract.

Gradually an almost conventional form of reference to England develops itself in his writing. From a letter[104] written to Cardinal Grimani in 1515, evidently after he had been in Basel and returned to England again, we quote a specimen. He begins with an apology for not accepting the invitation given by the cardinal at their first and only meeting to return to him with a view to remaining in

Italy.

"I will explain this to you very simply and, as befits a German, frankly. At that time I had fully decided to go to England. I was called thither by ancient ties of friendship, by the most ample promises of powerful friends, by the devoted favour of the most prosperous of kings. I had chosen this country as my adopted fatherland; the resting-place of my declining years [he was forty-one at the time]. I was invited, nay I was importuned in repeated letters and was promised gold almost in mountains. From all this I, hitherto a man of severe habits, a despiser of wealth, conceived a picture in my mind of such a power of gold as ten streams of Pactolus could hardly have washed down. And I was afraid that if I should return to your Eminence I might change my mind.

"For if you so weakened, so fired my mind at that first interview, what would you not have done, if I had come into closer and more permanent relations? For what heart of adamant would not be moved by the gentle courtesy of your manner, your honeyed speech, your curious learning, your counsel so friendly and so sincere; especially by the evident good-will of so great a prelate. I already felt my decision perceptibly weakening and began even to repent of my plan and yet I was ashamed to seem so inconstant a person. I felt my love for the City, which I had hardly thrust aside, silently growing again, and in short, had I not torn myself away from Rome at once, never should I have left it. I snatched myself away, lest I should be blown back again and rather flew to England than journeyed thither. [Flying we have seen, was Erasmus' favourite method of travelling on paper.]

"Now, then, you will ask, have I repented of my decision? Do I regret that I did not follow the advice of so loving a counsellor? Lying is not my trade. The thing affects me variously. I cannot help a longing for

> Rome as often as the great multitude of attractions there crowds upon my thoughts."

Then he enumerates freedom, libraries, literary associations, and so on.

> "These things make it impossible that any fortune, however kind, could banish this Roman longing from my heart. As to England, though my fortune has not been so bad as to make me regret it, yet, to tell the truth, it has not at all corresponded either to my wishes or the promises of my friends."

He recounts the favours, actual and expected, of his English patrons, especially of Warham, to whom he here pays one of his usual glowing tributes: "So it came about that what I had abandoned at Rome from so many distinguished cardinals, and so many famous bishops and learned men, all this I seemed to have recovered in this one man." After all, the picture grows a little brighter as he goes on. Now he is ready for Rome again. True, things are looking up again in England,—he wishes it to be quite clear that he is not being turned out of the country, but he hears that under the patronage of the great Leo all talent is streaming towards Rome. He tells what he has done and what he proposes to do, puts in a good word for the persecuted Reuchlin, and promises to be in Rome the coming winter (1515).

A letter of the same date to Raphael, the cardinal of St. George, repeats the same impressions of England—vast promises, of which we have no other documentary evidence, and disappointments, equally without witness. On his own evidence we know of a sufficient provision in England to supply all modest requirements of a scholar, and we have a right to

take him at his word that he wanted nothing more.

From Ham, Erasmus made his way pretty directly to Basel, taking the route by the Rhine valley. His travelling experiences are summed up in the very amusing Colloquy called *Diversoria*, "The Inns," which has been so effectively employed by Mr. Charles Reade in his "The Cloister and the Hearth." The especial point of this dialogue is the difference between the inns of France and of Germany. As to the former, Erasmus takes those of Lyons as typical. Bertulphus begins by saying that he cannot see why so many people want to stay two or three days at Lyons—for his part, he always wants to get to his journey's end as fast as he can. William replies:

> "Why, I wonder how anyone can ever tear himself away from there."
>
> BERT. "Why so?"
>
> WILL. "Because it is a place from which the companions of Ulysses could not be torn away; there are sirens there. One could not be better treated in his own house than there in an inn."
>
> BERT. "What do they do?"
>
> WILL. "At table there was always some woman present, who enlivened the meal with her humour and her charms. Then you find there the most agreeable manners. The first one to meet you is the lady of the house, who salutes you, bids you be merry and excuse the faults of what is set before you. Then follows the daughter, an elegant person, so gay in speech and manner that she would have cheered up Cato himself. They converse with you not as with strange guests, but as with familiar friends."
>
> BERT. "I recognise the refinement of the French."
>
> WILL. "But, as these could not always be present on

account of domestic duties and the welcoming of other guests, there was always at hand a maid-servant thoroughly posted in all kinds of chaff; she alone could take up the jokes of everyone, and kept things going until the daughter came back. The mother was quite along in years."

BERT. "But how about the provision? for one can't fill one's belly with stories."

WILL. "Really splendid. I can't understand how they can entertain at so small a price. Then after dinner they amuse you with merry tales, so that you cannot get tired. I thought I was at home and not in a strange land."

BERT. "How about the chambers?"

WILL. "Always some girls about, laughing, frolicking, and playing. They asked of their own accord if we had any soiled linen, washed it, and brought it back resplendent. Need I say more? We saw everywhere only girls and women, except in the stables, and even there the maids were often bursting in. When you go away, they embrace you and dismiss you with as much affection as if you were all brothers or the nearest of relatives."

BERT. "I dare say that suits the French well enough, but for my part I like better the customs of the Germans as being more suited to men."

WILL. "I have never happened to be in Germany, so, if you don't mind, pray let us hear how they receive a guest."

BERT. "I cannot say whether it is the same everywhere, but I will tell what I have seen. No one welcomes the newcomer, nor do they seem to want guests; for that would seem to them mean and low and unworthy the seriousness of a German. When you have been calling a long time, someone sticks his head out of the little window of the room where the stove is, like a tortoise out of its shell. They live in these

rooms almost until midsummer. You have to ask him whether you may stay, and if he doesn't say 'no' you know that you are to have a place. You ask where the stables are and he shows you with a motion of his hand, and you may take care of your horse as best you can. In the larger inns a man shows you to the stables and points out a poor enough place for your horse. The better places they keep for the late-comers, especially for the nobility. If you complain, the first thing you hear is, 'If you don't like it here, go to another inn.' In the cities it is all you can do to get a little hay and you have to pay for it about as much as for grain. When you have cared for your horse you go over into the common room, riding-boots, baggage, mud, and all."

WILL. "In France they show you a separate room where you can change your dress, brush up, get warm, and even take a nap if you please."

BERT. "There's nothing of the sort here. In the common furnace you pull off your boots, put on your slippers, change your dress if you will; your dripping clothes you hang by the stove and betake yourself there to dry off. Water is ready if you wish to wash your hands, but generally so nasty that you have to go hunting about for more water to wash away that first ablution."

WILL. "It's a fine thing for men not to be spoiled by luxury!"

BERT. "If you arrive at four o'clock in the afternoon you'll not get your supper before nine or ten."

WILL. "Why is that?"

BERT. "They get nothing ready until they see all their guests, so that they may serve them all at one time."

WILL. "They are trying to cut it close."

BERT. "You're right, they are. Sometimes they will crowd into that sweat-box eighty or ninety persons,

footmen and horsemen, merchants, sailors, carters, farmers, boys, women, sick and well."

WILL. "Why, that's a regular monastery!"

BERT. "There is one combing his hair; another wiping off his sweat, another pulling off his cowhides or his riding-boots; another smells of garlic. In short there is a confusion of men and tongues as once in the tower of Babel. But if they see a foreigner of a certain dignity they all fix their eyes upon him, staring at him as if he were some new kind of animal brought from Africa; even after they have sat down at table they screw their necks about and continue their gazing, even forgetting to eat."

WILL. "At Rome, or Paris, or Venice, no one marvels at anything."

BERT. "Meanwhile it is a crime to ask for anything. When the evening is far gone and there is no prospect of any further arrivals, there appears an old servant, with white hair, a shaven head, a crooked face, and dirty clothes."

WILL. "Such a fellow ought to be cupbearer to a Roman cardinal!"

BERT. "He casts his eyes about and counts the guests, and the more he finds the more he heats up the stove, though the weather be boiling hot. For in Germany it belongs to good entertainment to set everyone to dripping with sweat, and if anyone unaccustomed to this steaming opens a crack of a window to save himself from suffocation, he hears at once: 'Shut it! shut it!' and if you answer: 'I can't stand it!' you hear: 'Go find another inn then!'"

William enlarges *ad nauseam* on the dangers of this herding of men together, but Bertulphus answers:

"They are tough people; they laugh at these things and take no thought of them.... Now hear the rest of the story. This bearded Ganymede comes back and spreads as many tables as are enough for the guests—but, ye gods! not with linen of Miletus; one would say with the canvas of old sails. To each table he assigns at least eight guests. They who know the ways of the country drop where they are put; for there is no distinction of rich and poor, master or servant."

WILL. "This is that ancient equality which tyranny has now driven from the world. I suppose that's the way Christ lived with his disciples!"

BERT. "After all are seated, that crooked old Ganymede appears again, and again counts his company. Then he gives each one a wooden bowl, a spoon of the same metal, and a glass cup—some time afterward some bread, which everyone eats up to pass the time while the soup is cooking; and so they sit sometimes the space of an hour."

WILL. "Does no guest meanwhile ask for food?"

BERT. "Not one who knows the ways of the country. At last they bring on wine—good God! what a taste of smoke! The sophists ought to drink it, it is so keen and sharp. If any guest, even offering extra money, asks for another sort, they first put him off, but look at him as if they would murder him. If you press them they answer—'So many counts and marquises have put up here and there was never a complaint of my wine; if you don't like it, get you to another hostelry.' They think their own nobles are the only men in the world and are always showing you their coats of arms."

So the banquet moves on to its end, through alternate courses of meat and soup, giving Erasmus abundant opportunity for gibes at his despised Germans. Could any good thing come out of a land where people washed their bed-linen once in six

months? We may be tolerably sure that these early impressions of Erasmus were not without their effect upon his conception of the meaning of the Reformation. Indeed, he was not the only one who was inclined to reject the whole movement of Luther from the start, partly for the reason that it came from the reputed coarse and drunken folk of Germany.

Erasmus remained in Basel only a few months. In March, 1515, he was again in England. The visit at Basel was, however, of lasting import to him in many ways. It made him familiar with the place which, more than any other, was to be his home during his remaining life. He found himself honourably treated, the climate suited him, good wine could be procured without too great difficulty, and he was near a group of scholars who were to be among his most efficient helpers in all his future work. Foremost among these was John Froben, the great printer and publisher, to whom we owe many of the very finest products of the early sixteenth century press. Froben was a man of the Aldus type, a scholar himself and with a talent for enlisting scholars in his service. Two pictures, one from the brush of Holbein, and one from the pen of Erasmus, have given us a clear impression of this amiable but forceful personality. Erasmus wrote after his death[105]:



Epitaphium Io. Frobenii
per Eras. Rot.

Arida Ioannus tegit hic Lapis ossa Frobeni.
Orbe viret toto nescia fama meri.
Moribus hanc nimeis meruit studiosa iuuandis
Quæ nunc mæsta iacent erba parente suo.
Rettulit, ornauit veterum monumenta sophorum
Arte, manu, curis, ære, fauore, fide.
Huic vitam in coelis date numina iusta perennem
per nos in terris fama perennis erit.

— Officinae Frobenianae faueamus. quae non solum non cessabit ob liberi sui decessum, sed summa vi adnitetur. ut quod ille instituit sem in maius melius q provehatur.

Ex autographo Eras.

PORTRAIT OF FROBEN BY HOLBEIN. EPITAPH BY ERASMUS—FAC

HANDWRITING.
FROM KNIGHT'S "LIFE OF ERASMUS."

"The loss of my own brother I bore with great equanimity; but I cannot overcome my longing for Froben. I do not rebel at my grief, reasonable as it is, but I am pained that it should be so great and so lasting. As it was not merely affection which bound me to him in life, so it is not merely that I miss him now that he is gone. For I loved him more on account of the liberal studies which he seemed given us by Providence to adorn and to promote, than on account of his kindness to me and his genial manners. Who would not love such a nature? He was to his friend just a friend, so simple and so sincere that even if he had wished to pretend or to conceal anything he could not do it, so repugnant was it to his nature; so ready and eager to help everyone that he was glad to be of service even to the unworthy, so that he was a natural and welcome prey to thieves and swindlers. He was as pleased to get back money from a thief or from bad debtors as others are with unexpected fortune.

"He was of such incorruptible honour that never did anyone deserve better the saying 'He is a man you could throw dice with in the dark,' and, incapable of fraud himself, he could never suspect it in others though he was often deceived. What the disease of envy was he could no more comprehend than a man born blind can understand colour. Even serious offences, he pardoned before he asked who had committed them. He could never remember an injury, nor forget even the smallest service. And here, in my judgment, he was better than was fitting for the wise father of a family. I used to warn him sometimes that he should treat his sincere friends becomingly, but that while he used gentle language towards impostors he should protect himself and not at the same time get cheated and laughed at. He would smile gently, but I told my tale to deaf ears. The frankness of his nature was too much for all warnings. And as for me, what

plots did he not invent, what excuses did he not hunt up to force some gift upon me? I never saw him happier than when he had succeeded by artifice or persuasion in getting me to accept something. Against the wiles of the man I had need of the utmost caution, nor did I ever need my skill in rhetoric more than in thinking up excuses to refuse without offending my friend; for I could not bear to see him sad. [One feels that Erasmus' rhetoric was running away with him a little at this point.] If by chance my servants had bought cloth for my clothes, he would find it out and pay the bill before I suspected it; and no entreaties of mine could make him take payment for it. So it was if I wanted to save him from loss; I had to make pretences and there was such a bargaining; quite different from the usual course, where one tries to get as much as possible and the other to give as little as possible. I could never bring it to pass that he should give me nothing; but that I made a most moderate use of his kindness, all his household will bear me witness. Whatever work I did for him I did for love of learning. Since he seemed born to honour, to promote, and to embellish learning, and spared no labour or care, thinking it reward enough if a good author were put into the hands of the public in worthy form, how could I prey upon a man like this?

"Sometimes when he showed to me and other friends the first pages of some great author, how he was transported with joy! how his face glowed! what triumphant words! You would say that he had already taken in the profits of the whole work in fullest measure and was expecting no other return. I am not exalting Froben by decrying others; but it is notorious what incorrect and inelegant editions some publishers have sent us even from Venice and from Rome. From his office, within a few years what volumes have gone forth, and in what noble form! And he has always kept his house free from books of controversy, by which others have gained great profit, lest the cause of good literature and learning should be defiled by any personal hostilities.... Surely it will be an act of

> gratitude for us all to pray for the welfare of the departed, to celebrate his memory by due praises, and to lend our favour to the house of Froben, which is not to be closed by the death of its master, but will ever strive to its utmost to carry forward what he has begun to still greater and better things."

This charming companion picture to the account of the Aldine establishment in Venice is probably in the main correct. It suggests the relation between publisher and author, which we have already tried without entire success to make clear. Apparently, on his own statement, Erasmus was in a way an employee of Froben. The anxiety which he betrays not to seem to take pay from the publisher, was plainly the same feeling which made him reject with such scorn the charge of Scaliger, that he had been in Aldus's employ. He was not ashamed of his work, any more than a European physician of a generation ago was ashamed of his; but he desired to have this work viewed as a labour of love, and any reward—which, of course, he could not entirely do without—was to be considered as a gift freely offered, and to be accepted only under a kind of protest.

Besides Froben himself, we find Erasmus making friends with the brothers Amerbach, sons of Froben's predecessor in the business. Writing to Pope Leo X., [106] to ask his acceptance of the dedication to the works of Jerome, Erasmus enumerates his co-labourers in the great undertaking:

> "The weightiest contribution was that of the brothers Amerbach, at whose expense and by whose labours, in common with those of Froben, the work was mainly carried through. The Amerbach family was, as it were, pointed out by the fates, that Jerome might live again through their exertions. The excellent

> father had his three sons educated in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, for this very purpose. Upon his death he commended the work to his children as an inheritance, devoting to its accomplishment all his resources. And these admirable youths entering upon the fair field committed to them by an admirable father, are labouring diligently therein, and have so divided the Jerome with me that they are doing everything except the epistles."

It would appear, then, that Erasmus' share in the Froben Jerome was the personal responsibility for the epistles, the writing of a dedication which was, after all, not addressed to Pope Leo, but to Archbishop Warham, and the use of his name as a general recommendation of the whole. Perhaps also he exercised a general supervision over the work of the others.



BONIFACE AMERBACH OF BASEL.

FROM "ERASMI OPERA," PUBLISHED AT LEYDEN, 17C

It was here also, probably, that Erasmus had his first personal relations with John Reuchlin, a man after his own heart, but already too much involved in active controversy with established powers to make him altogether a safe investment for a prudent scholar who could see something worth having on both sides of every question. Erasmus speaks of him to Leo[107] as

> "that illustrious man, almost equally skilled in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, and so well versed in every sort of learning that he can hold his own with the best. Wherefore all Germany looks up to him and reveres him as the phenix and the chief glory of the nation."

In the letters to Cardinals Grimani and Raphael, dated just a month earlier than this to Leo, Erasmus speaks much more heartily of Reuchlin. He has been expressing his determination to devote the remainder of his days to what our fathers used to call "curious learning," unless envy, "more fatal than any serpent," shall prevent,[108]

> "as I have lately seen with the utmost regret in the case of that great man John Reuchlin. For it was fitting and it was time that this man of reverend years should enjoy his noble studies and should be reaping the happiest harvest from the faithful planting of his youthful labours. A man skilled in so many tongues, and in so many kinds of learning, ought to have been able, in this autumn of his days, to pour forth into all the world the rich products of his genius. He ought to have been spurred on by praise, called out by rewards, fired by others' zeal. And I hear that men have arisen —I know not who they are—who, unable of themselves to bring anything great to pass, are seeking

> for reputation by the basest of methods. Immortal God! what a tumult they have stirred up and on what frivolous grounds! From a little book, a mere letter, which he neither published nor wished to have published, such a storm has arisen! Who would ever have known that he wrote this letter if those fellows had not published it to the world?
>
> "How much better it would have served the cause of peace, supposing he had erred in any way,—as all men do err,—to conceal this, or frankly interpret it, or surely to pardon it out of consideration for the distinguished virtues of the man. I am not saying this because I have found any errors in him; that is for others to decide; but this I will say, that if anyone after the same malicious fashion,—and as the Greeks say, ἀποτόμως, should explore the books of St. Jerome, he would find many a thing very widely differing from the views of our theologians. To what end then was it that a man venerable in years and in letters should for an affair of no moment, be dragged into turmoils of this sort, in which he has now, I believe, lost seven years. Would that he might have spent this labour and this time in furthering the cause of honest study! Instead of this, he, a man worthy of all reward, is involved in vexing quarrels to the great grief and anger of all learned men, and indeed of all Germany. And yet all have hopes that through your assistance, so distinguished a man may be restored to learning and to the world."

This appeal to Rome in behalf of Reuchlin was doubtless a piece of pure friendly service on Erasmus' part. So far the cause of Reuchlin was the cause of sound learning, pure and simple, and appealed therefore powerfully to all Erasmus' sympathies. Later, when the names of Reuchlin and Luther came to be joined together as of allies in one great movement, then we shall find Erasmus hesitating and even declaring himself wholly ignorant of the real

questions in dispute. Already, we notice, he carefully avoids the question whether Reuchlin may have erred in any way—that was not his affair.

One other of Erasmus' early Basel acquaintances was Beatus Rhenanus, of Schlettstadt, in Alsatia. Erasmus mentions him to Pope Leo as "a young man of rare learning and the keenest critical scent."

Precisely what was accomplished at Basel during the eight months or so of Erasmus' first visit we cannot say. It seems to have been a period of beginnings. He writes to Ammonius in October:

> "I was getting on finely here until they began to heat up their stoves. Jerome is in progress. They have already begun on the New Testament. I cannot stay on account of the intolerable stench of the stoves, and I cannot leave on account of the work that is begun and which cannot possibly be carried through without me.... If my health permits, I shall stay here until Christmas; if not, I shall either return to Brabant or go straight to Rome."

Evidently, in spite of congenial work, carried on under the most favourable conditions, the restless creature was already uneasy and looking about him for chances, which he was quite sure not to improve. If we could take him at his word a hot room was of more account in his plans than the proper completion of his work. Happily his deeds speak loudly in his own defence and we know by the results that he must have been very busy during his first Basel days.

In March, 1515, the dates of his letters show him again in England, for what purpose we do not know. His connection with Cambridge was broken, his

pension was secured, he was not, so far as we know, seeking any further employment. Possibly he may have been re-examining manuscripts for his New Testament. It is fairly certain that he was on the continent again by the early summer.

If we follow, even with allowance for palpable errors, the dating of Erasmus' letters we should have to conclude that he was in England for a while in 1516, and again in 1517. Meanwhile he would have been twice in Basel and have spent more or less time at Louvain, Brussels, and elsewhere. Mr. Drummond accepts this result, but, even with Erasmus' restless temper, it seems hardly possible that he could have accomplished the work he did, with the continual interruptions inevitable to such frequent and prolonged journeyings. On the other hand we find it brought up as a charge against him by his critics that he wasted his time in aimless wanderings. He defends himself by declaring that he never undertook a journey without good and sufficient reasons connected with the work of his life.

We shall probably be safe in thinking that Erasmus had a great gift of settling promptly to work and putting other things out of his mind while the spell of work was on him, the marvellous gift of concentration which has made more reputations than the gift of genius. Still, if we consider the peculiar demands of the work of editing texts, the necessity of an apparatus of books, the accumulation of material, all of which ought to be at hand for correction and comparison, the disadvantages of frequent change become more obvious and Erasmus' wanderings are so much the more inexplicable.

His correspondence during these three years,

from 1515 to 1518, is full of references to the question of a permanent residence. To judge from these one would suppose him to be firmly fixed in the notion of a settlement for life. Now it is England, now Flanders, now Basel, now Paris, with ever and anon the distant thought of Italy rising in the background as a possibility. We should not be going far wrong if we were to describe this period as that in which Erasmus was enjoying to the full a newly acquired sense of power and value. Not until after the appearance of his New Testament in 1516 could he feel that he had demonstrated to the world at once the grasp of his scholarship and the deep seriousness of his purpose. It was probably true then, as it may not have been quite true when he was bidding on himself to Servatius two years before, that any country in Europe would be glad to have him, and almost on his own terms. He liked to feel himself a citizen of the world and was tasting the joys of a universal popularity, too great to last for ever.

Here and there we get glimpses of his way of life, which indicate a very considerable degree of prosperity. A letter[109] written to young Beatus and dated at Louvain in the autumn of 1518 gives a detailed account of his journey thither from Basel.

> "I left Basel," he says, "in a languid and enervated condition, like a man who has not yet got on good terms with out-of-doors, so long had I been shut up in the house, and yet busied with incessant work. [This refers to a long illness which had kept him indoors through the summer.] The sail was not unpleasant, only that towards noon the heat of the sun was rather oppressive. We dined at Breisach,—the worst kind of a dinner. The stench was enough to kill you and the flies worse than the stench....

"Towards night we were turned out into a chilly town, whose name I didn't care to know, nor if I knew it, should I care to speak it. There I was just about killed."

Here follows a description, almost the same as that in the *Diversoria*, of the horrors of a German inn, always with the unlucky stove as the central figure.

"In the morning we were routed out of bed by the shouts of the sailors and I went on board ship without supper and without sleep. We reached Strassburg at about nine o'clock in the forenoon and were pretty well entertained there, especially as Schürer furnished the wine. A part of the fraternity was on hand and soon they all came to welcome us.... Thence we went on to Speier by horse and saw never a shadow of a soldier though dreadful rumours were abroad. My English horse was just about used up and scarcely got to Speier. That scoundrel of a blacksmith had so abused him that both his ears were burned with a hot iron. At Speier I took myself quietly out of the inn and went to my friend Maternus near by. There the dean, a man of learning and culture, entertained me for two days with great kindness. We met there by chance Hermann Busch. Thence we journeyed by carriage to Worms and Mainz. There happened into the same carriage a certain Ulrich, a secretary of the emperor, whose surname was Farnbul—as who should say, 'Fern-Hill.' He paid me the greatest attention on the journey and at Mainz would not suffer me to go to the common inn, but took me to the house of a certain canon and saw me to the boat when I started off. The weather was very agreeable and the voyage well enough only that the sailors tried to make it longer than was necessary, and the smell of the horses was unpleasant....

"At Boppard I was walking on the river-bank while they were locking up a boat and someone who knew me gave my name to the toll-collector. This man's

> name was Christopher and, I believe, Cinicampius, or in the vulgar tongue, Eschenfeld. It was marvellous how the fellow jumped for joy. He dragged me to his house and there on a little table, among his toll-receipts, lay the writings of Erasmus. He cries out that he is a blessed man, calls his wife, his children, and all his friends. To the clamorous boatmen he sends two jugs of wine and when they burst out into new clamours he sends some more, and promises that on their return he will remit the toll because they have brought him so great a guest. From here I was escorted as far as Coblenz by John Flaminius, head of a convent of women there, a man of angelic purity, of sound and sober judgment, and of unusual learning. At Coblenz Matthias, a chaplain of the bishop, took me to his house,—a young man, but of settled ways, of accurate Latin learning, and thoroughly trained in the law as well. There we had a merry supper. At Bonn the canon [one of his fellow-travellers] left us, in order to avoid the city of Cologne, which I also desired to avoid. My servant had, however, gone ahead thither with the horses; there was no safe person on the boat whom I could send after him, and I had no confidence in the sailors. On Sunday morning before six o'clock, in dismal weather, I arrived at Cologne, went to an hotel, gave orders to the servants to get a two-horse carriage, and called for breakfast at ten. I went to mass, but no breakfast! Nothing was done about the carriage. I tried to get a horse, for mine were of no use,—no result. I saw what was up; they were trying to keep me there. At once I ordered my horses to be got ready, packed one portmanteau and gave over the other to the innkeeper; then on my lame nag I hurried off to the Count of Neuenaar, a ride of five hours. He was staying at Bedburium and I spent five days with him so pleasantly and quietly that I got through a good part of my revision there; for I had brought with me a part of the New Testament."

From this point the real troubles of the journey began. Erasmus had suffered from boils at Basel and

his two days of riding from Strassburg to Speier had aggravated them. Now he caught a heavy cold by foolish exposure to wind and rain in an open carriage. "Some Jupiter or evil genius robbed me, not of half my senses as Hesiod says, but of the whole; for one half he had stolen when I ventured into Cologne." The story is too long for our purpose and quite too minute for our taste, though as a study in pathological history it might interest a modern physician. The poor man's digestion was completely upset; his boils troubled him so that he did not know whether riding or driving was the worse. Finally, in the last stage, he found a four-horse carriage going to Louvain, got a place in it, and arrived there more dead than alive. Of course he was afraid of the plague, and, indeed, the first physician summoned quietly told the people of the house that he had the plague, promised to send a poultice, but came near him no more. Others were called and gave various opinions. A Jew doctor said he only wished he had as sound a body. One did one thing and one another until finally, "disgusted with doctors I commend myself to Christ the Great Physician." After this sensible conclusion, he began to grow better, was soon taking food, and at once began to work on his New Testament proofs. He had warned his friends not to come to see him, but they came and sat with him and so made the four weeks of his imprisonment pass quite happily.

This account of the journey from Basel to Louvain indicates with tolerable distinctness that Erasmus commanded considerable resources. He had more than one horse and at least one servant. The horses were shipped on the boat whenever he travelled by water, and apparently this was regarded as the safer way to travel. He speaks with especial relief of

meeting no soldiers on the land journey. Carriages he seems to have hired; but he twice uses expressions which go to show that such carriages were not exclusively for the use of the hirer. He says that Ulrich Farnbul came by chance into the same carriage with him, and again on the last stage he himself gets into a carriage going to Louvain. It is too early to think of regular public conveyance, but apparently a traveller did not object to sharing his carriage and expense with another. Our interest is to observe that such travelling must have implied a large outlay and must have gone far to account for Erasmus' persistent complaints of poverty.

From Louvain Erasmus wrote back a semi-humorous little letter to his friend, the learned toll-gatherer of Boppard[110]:

> "What could have been more unexpected than that I should find at Boppard an Eschenfeld, a student of my works?—a publican devoted to the Muses and to liberal learning! Christ made it a reproach to the Pharisees that harlots and publicans should go before them into the kingdom of heaven; tell me, is it not equally shameful that priests and monks should be living for luxury and the service of their bellies, while publicans are embracing the cause of liberal learning? They are consecrating themselves wholly to guzzling, while Eschenfeld divides himself between the Kaiser and his studies! You showed plainly enough what opinion you had formed of me; and I shall have done well, if the sight of me has not rubbed off a little of it.
>
> "But, alack! alack! that jolly red wine of yours mightily tickled our boatman's wife, a full-breasted and bibulous female; she wouldn't share a drop of it, though they kept calling for some. She drank all she wanted and then what a row! She nearly slew a maid-servant with a mighty ladle and we could hardly stop the fight. Then when she got on board she went for

> her husband, and came near throwing him into the Rhine. There you see the power of your wine.

It is worth noticing that Erasmus represents his settlement at Louvain as the result of a freak on the part of those evil fates of which he liked to fancy himself the especial victim. To make his climax more effective he pictures the joys of meeting his Louvain friends:

> "What dinners! what a welcome! what talks I was promising myself! I had decided, if the autumn should be a pleasant one, to go over to England and to accept what the king has so many times offered me—but oh! deceitful hopes of mortal men—etc!"

He has an illness of a few weeks, during most of which time he is steadily at work, and then he goes quietly back to his lodgings in the University and we hear no more of England. We know of no renewed offers from King Henry, nor indeed, so far, of any direct offers from him whatever.

While Erasmus was at Basel, he was, so he tells us, invited by Duke Ernest of Bavaria to come to his university at Ingolstadt. He speaks of this in a letter to the bishop of Rochester, as one among the numerous indications of the favour with which the first edition of the New Testament had been received. He had so many offers that he could not remember them. "Some bishop in Germany whose name I have forgotten" wanted him for his university. He knows he is unworthy of all these honours, but is pleased to find that all his pains have earned the approval of good men. "Many are now reading the sacred Scriptures who confess that they would never have read them otherwise, and many

persons everywhere are beginning to study Greek."

In a letter[111] to Ammonius from Brussels in 1516 Erasmus tells of an offer of a bishopric in Sicily:

> "Do you want to laugh? When I got back to Brussels, I went to call on my Mæcenas, the chancellor [Selvagius]. He turned to the councillors who were standing about and said: 'This man doesn't know yet what a great man he is." Then to me: 'The Prince is trying to make you a bishop and had already given you a very desirable see in Sicily. But then he discovered that this see was on the list of those which are called "reserved," and has written to the pope to get his approval for you.' When I heard this, I could not help laughing; yet I am glad to know the good feeling of the king towards me—or rather of the chancellor, who, in this matter, is the king himself."

Somewhat less apocryphal than these stories is the report of an offer from King Francis I. of France. It comes to us in a letter written by the French scholar, William Budæus, to Erasmus while he was in the Low Countries. Budæus says that William Parvus (Guillaume Petit), an ecclesiastic who stood very near the king, had told him that one day in the course of a conversation about literary men, the king had expressed his determination[112]

> "to gather the choicest spirits into his kingdom by the most ample rewards and to found in France a seminary, if I may so call it, of scholars. Parvus had long been watching for such an opportunity, being not merely a supporter of all learning, but also a special admirer of yours, and said that in his opinion Erasmus ought to be invited the very first one, and that this could most properly be done by Budæus ... and finally, that the king, moved by some noble impulse, was brought to the point of saying that this offer should be

> made to you by me in his name: that if you could be persuaded to come here to live and devote yourself to literary work here as you are wont to do over there, he would promise to give you a living worth a thousand francs and more. Now you understand that my influence comes in only so far as I assume the part of a mediator, not of a sponsor, and simply pass on to you in good faith what I have heard from Parvus."

Budæus then goes on to say that he has little to do with court affairs, but that if Erasmus likes it, he may well promise himself a fine position in Paris.

> "Immortal gods! what an honour for you! what a splendid fortune in the judgment of all learned men, to be summoned into a distant land by the greatest and most illustrious of kings on the sole recommendation of your learning!... As far as one can guess, he desires to be the founder of a splendid institution, so that in the future, quite otherwise than in the past, liberal learning may seem to be a thing of profit."

Lest Erasmus should fancy this wish of the king to be "a whim, rather than a carefully considered and settled judgment," he refers to the very favourable opinion of Erasmus held by Stephen Poncher, bishop of Paris, and quotes him as saying that the king had at heart the cause of elegant learning and had conversed with him on the subject of bringing together men eminent in scholarship.

> "I said to him at the time, that you might be called into France with an honourable provision and promised that I would take it upon myself and bring it to pass. I said that you had studied in Paris and knew France as well as the place of your birth. I think he will be most favourable to you.... I expect that William Cop, the king's physician, a man learned in both

> tongues, a friend and well-wisher of yours, will write to you about this and, others perhaps by the king's order; or even the king himself."

Cop did write, in contrast with the intolerable verbosity of Budæus, a very brief note, in which he says that the king, persuaded by Parvus and others, had ordered him to write and sound Erasmus as to the conditions under which he would be willing to come to Paris.

That seems to have been the whole story of Erasmus' "call" to Paris: a report by one man of a conversation with others, moderate expressions of good will on the part of the Parisian scholars, but hardly a definite promise of anything. At best, the proposal was that he should take a church living, and to this he was, more or less to his credit, always disinclined. His reply to Budæus is interesting. He says:

> "I had hardly got myself well out of that very wordy letter, which I guess will be as tedious to you in the reading as it was to me in the writing, when another letter of yours came to me in which you express the kind intentions of the Most Christian King towards me. I will answer briefly, not to bore both you and myself to death with verbosity and also because I have to write to many others. The king's purpose is worthy of a prince and even of such a prince as he. I approve it most highly.
>
> "His splendid plans for me I owe chiefly to you, my friend, who have pictured me, not as I am, but as you would wish me to be;—and that at your own risk as much as mine. The same subject was most eagerly pressed in the king's name by that most illustrious advocate, the bishop of Paris, whom you describe in your letter no less truly than graphically. It would be

> a long story to compress into one letter all the pros and cons. I see what your advice is, and I value it the more because it is given by a man at once very cautious, and very friendly to me. For if ever there is a place for the Greek proverb: 'The gifts of the unfriendly are no gifts at all,' I think it is in matters of advice. But while I confess that I am deeply indebted, not only to you all, but especially to your most excellent and generous king, I cannot make any definite answer until I have discussed the plan with the Chancellor of Burgundy, who has gone on a journey to Cambrai.... I will only say at present that France was ever dear to me on many accounts [we remember his affection for the Collége Montaigu, and his reference to that 'dunghill of a Paris'] and is now attractive to me for no reason stronger than that Budæus is there. Indeed there is no reason to make me out a stranger as you do for, if we may believe the map-makers, Holland too is a part of France."

Nor does Erasmus commit himself any more decidedly in the personal letter which he sent at the same time to King Francis.[113] The letter is filled with adulation, but expresses also the writer's honest approval of the king's momentary policy of peace. The final phrase, "to whom I wholly give and dedicate myself," must not be construed as having any meaning whatever. The offer was neither accepted nor repeated. We may well doubt whether in the year 1516 Erasmus would really have cared to attach himself to the French court or to any other on any terms.

He mentions in several places, as a sign of the great favour shown him by Francis I., the fact that he had received a most friendly autograph letter from the king. Such a letter has indeed been found among papers relating to Erasmus at Basel. How much it may have meant the reader may judge for himself:

"Cher et bon amy. Nous avons donne charge a notre cher et bien ame messire Claude Cantiuncula, present porteur, de vous dire et declairer aucunes choses de par nous, desquelles vous prions tres affectueusment le croyre, et y adjouster entiere foy, comme feriez a notre propre personne. Cher et bon amy, notre Seigneur vous ait en sa garde.

"Escript a Sainct Germain en Laye le 7me jour de juillet.

[In Erasmus' hand], "*Hec rex scripsit propria manu.*"

"Je vous avertys que sy vous voules venyr que vous seres le byen venu

"FRANCOYS.
"ROBERTET."

It has been usual to explain his reluctance to attach himself anywhere at this time, by certain obligations towards the young King Charles I. of Spain, later the Emperor Charles V., arising from his appointment to a counsellor's position in the royal household. That some such office was given him in or about the year 1516 is quite certain; but that he was ever asked for his advice may be doubted, and his own complaints would indicate that he never received any considerable emoluments from his office. A letter to the imperial counsellor Carondiletus in 1524 throws light upon both the French call and the imperial pension.[114]

"To reply at once to your letter and that of the Lady Margaret, I will say in few words that it is not merely smoke that the French are showing. On the contrary, some time ago, when Poncher, Bishop of Paris, was the French ambassador at Brussels, before Charles was emperor, he offered me in his own name, over and above the king's bounty, four hundred crowns besides all expenses, promising me also that

my leisure and my freedom of movement should be undisturbed.... The reason why the king of France called me so many times he explained by his messenger. He had determined to establish at Paris a College of the Three Languages, such as there is at Louvain, and he wanted me to be the head of it. I excused myself, however, remembering how much enmity and trouble I had borne there from some theologians on the score of the Busleiden College. Yet my servant, when he came back from France, reported on certain information that a treasury order for a thousand pounds was ready and waiting for me there.

"I have not so far been much of a burden on the treasury of my prince, for my pension has only once been paid therefrom. It has been procured by another process, without any expense to the treasury. It costs me a great deal to live here, especially on account of my frequent illnesses—though indeed I am in other ways not at all a good manager with money. I have already contracted a good many debts, so that, even if my health would permit me to leave, perhaps my creditors would not. I should, therefore, be very glad, if it can be done, to have the pension for at least one year paid over to this messenger, to relieve my immediate necessity. I send a letter of the emperor, making the same request."

Again in 1525 he writes[115]:

"By the first of September there will be due me eight hundred gold florins, the payment, that is, of four years. I don't see what good I am to get out of this delay unless perchance I am to need money in the Elysian Fields."

And once more in 1527 to Laurinus[116]:

"I have written to your brother as you wished, but I see no hope of the emperor's pension unless I return thither. For the matter was once for all brought up in

> council and the reply was made me in the name of the Lady Margaret that both the pension and other things worthy of me were ready for me if I would come back. So I do not think that your brother, eloquent and earnest patron as he is, ought to be wearied with this affair. The emperor has twice ordered the pension to be paid to me out of course, but he is more easily obeyed when he orders a tax than when he commands a payment."

We cannot for a moment believe that the holding of this honourary title required any personal attendance at the royal court which hindered Erasmus' freedom of motion when he desired to move. The principal fruit of his appointment was the little treatise called the *Institutio Principis Christiani*, [117] written, probably, in acknowledgment of the honour and dedicated to the young prince. This very amiable bit of advice is a companion-piece to the panegyric upon the prince's father written about twelve years before. It is unlike that early performance in being almost entirely free from exaggerated personal adulation; it is like it in the freedom with which it lays down for the guidance of the prince rules of conduct similar to those which ought to govern the individual Christian man in his dealings with the world of his fellow-men. Yet the principles are not the mere commonplaces of morality. The prince ought to be a good man in the Christian meaning of that term, but not merely good, as any private man might be. Erasmus has at every point a reason for the particular exercise of virtue he may be commending, and his illustrations, drawn chiefly from the best rulers of antiquity, are pertinent and show, of course, the widest and readiest command of the ancient literatures. To estimate aright the significance and value of Erasmus'

declarations on public policy, we must remember that we are dealing with a contemporary of Macchiavelli, whose *Principe*, with its total indifference to the moral point of view, was already written and undoubtedly in circulation in manuscript, though not printed until 1532. Whether it was known to Erasmus we cannot say. If it was, he could hardly have made a more complete reply to it than this. Macchiavelli took the world as it was, especially that Italian part of it which he knew best, and, assuming that the process of state-building which he saw going on all about him was to continue along similar lines, he simply laid down the principles of success in that process. Erasmus, on the other hand, assuming that human society was a moral organism, was not concerned chiefly with outward or momentary success, but rather with the higher moral function of the ruler. He believed that success founded upon morality would be higher and more enduring than that which rested upon mere expediency. The central point of view with Macchiavelli was the person of the prince; Erasmus thought of the prince only as the servant of his people. Both drew, or thought they drew, their inspiration from classic tradition; but Macchiavelli sought for his illustrations at those points of ancient history where his principles seemed to be worked out into great and enduring political structures, while Erasmus drew from the decay of precisely the same institutions his lesson of the permanence of moral obligation and of that alone.

Perhaps the best and most pertinent example of his method of treatment is found in the chapter on taxation. It will be evident that the questions which were disturbing his mind have not yet ceased to agitate the world. Substitute for "prince" the word

"government," and it will appear that most of the financial problems of our present day were burning questions in the days of Erasmus and Thomas More; for in More's Utopia we have in the main the same moral elevation applied to the same questions as in the *Institutio*. Erasmus says[118]:

> "The ancient writers tell us that many rebellions have arisen from immoderate taxation. The good prince ought therefore to see to it that the minds of his people should be as little as possible disturbed by these matters. Let him if possible govern without expense to them. The office of the prince is too lofty to be used for money-making. The good prince has for his own whatever his loving subjects have. There have been many heathen who put nothing into their treasuries from serving the state save glory alone; and some, like Fabius Maximus and Antoninus Pius, despised even this. How much more, then, ought the Christian prince to be satisfied with the consciousness of rectitude, especially since he serves a Master who leaves no good deed without ample reward. There are men who busy themselves with nothing but finding out new devices for cheating the people, and think they are best serving the prince by making themselves the enemies of his subjects. Let him who listens to them know that he is far from the true ideal of a prince.
>
> "The very best way to increase the revenue is to cut off unnecessary expense, doing away with burdensome service, avoiding wars and journeys that are like wars, checking the greed of officials, and trying rather to govern well what the prince has, than to get more. Otherwise, if he is to measure his taxes by his greed or his ambition, what limit or end of taxation will there be? For desire is infinite and is always pressing and straining at what it has once begun until, according to the old proverb, the overdrawn rope will break and the exhausted patience of the people burst forth into rebellion, whereby the

most powerful empires have been ruined.

"But, if necessity demands that something shall be exacted of the people, then it is the part of a good prince to do it in such a way that the least burden may fall upon those who have least. For it may be a good thing to summon the rich to frugality, but to compel the poor to hunger and the gallows is not merely inhuman, but dangerous as well.... Let him well ponder this, that an expense once incurred at some emergency as pertaining to the advantage of the prince or the nobility, can never be abolished. When the emergency is past, not only ought the burden to be taken from the people, but the outlay of that former period ought, as far as possible, to be remedied and made good. Let him who cares for his people beware of the corrupt precedent. If he rejoices in the calamity of his own citizens or gives no thought to it, he is as far as can be from being a prince, no matter by what name he is called.

"It ought to be provided for that there be not too great inequality of wealth;—not that I would have anyone deprived of his goods by force, but that care should be taken lest the wealth of the whole community be limited to a certain few. For Plato would have his citizens neither too rich nor too poor, because the poor man cannot be of profit to the state, and the rich man, after his kind, does not want to profit it. Nor do princes even gain wealth by exactions of this sort. If anyone would prove this, let him consider how much less his ancestors took from their subjects, how much more they gave, and yet how much more of everything they had, because a great part of these present taxes slips between the fingers of those who collect and receive them, but only a very small part ever gets to the prince himself.

"Then, whatever things are in common use by the mass of the people, these a good prince will tax as lightly as possible, as for example, corn, bread, beer, wine, clothing, and other things without which human life cannot go on. But now these things are especially

> burdened, and that in many different ways: first, by the very heavy exactions of the contractors which the people call assizes, then by duties which have also their contractors, and finally by monopolies which bring little to the prince, but crush the poor by higher prices.
>
> "So then, as I have said, let the income of the prince be increased by economy, according to the old proverb: 'Thrift is a great revenue.' But if some duties cannot be avoided and the interest of the people demands it, then let the burden fall upon foreign and outlandish wares, which have to do rather with the luxury and refinements of life than with necessity, and which are used by the rich alone, as for example, fine linen, silks, purple, perfumes, unguents, gems, and everything of that sort. For this burden is felt only by those whose fortunes can bear it and who by these payments are not reduced to want, but perchance are rendered more frugal, so that by loss of money, good morals are improved."

It would be going too far to say that these economic and financial views of Erasmus are purely original; they are doubtless gathered from his reading of the ancients, especially from Plato and Aristotle; they are, however, addressed with perfect directness to evils of his own time and they show us that his mind was working upon matters of large public import, as well as upon his more purely scholarly interests.

It would be impossible for Erasmus to go through any treatise on public affairs without saying something about the wickedness and folly of fighting, and so we find him concluding his *Institutio* with a chapter on the undertaking of war. It is his familiar argument, but especially follows the point that war should not be undertaken until all other methods of composing differences shall have failed.

"If we were of this mind there would hardly ever be a war anywhere." He shows very clearly how seldom the alleged cause of war affects the people of a country. Such causes are usually the private affair of princes.

> "Because one prince offends another in some trifle, and that a private matter, about relationship by marriage or some such thing, what is this to the people as a whole? The good prince measures all things by the advantage of the people, otherwise he were not even a prince. The law is not the same towards men and towards beasts.... But if some dissensions arise between princes why not rather resort to arbiters? There are so many bishops, so many abbots, scholars, serious magistrates, by whose judgment such a matter might far more decently be composed than by so much murder, pillage, and misfortune throughout the world."

Here is international arbitration, pure and simple, a doctrine not appearing in the Utopia, and, so far as I know, not to be found in any modern writer before Erasmus; a dream as yet in his time and long to remain so, but, in the vast ebb and flow of human affairs, coming ever nearer to some definite realisation.

Perhaps the most striking argument of Erasmus against war is the utter hopelessness of it as a means of gaining the ultimate good of the state.

> "'But,' they say, 'what safety will there ever be, if no one pursues his right?' By all means let right be pursued, if this be of advantage to the state, but let not the right of the prince be too costly to the people. And pray what safety is there now, when everyone is pursuing his right to the very death? We see wars arising from wars, war following upon war, and no

> limit or end to the confusion. So it is clear enough that by these means nothing is accomplished. Therefore other remedies ought to be tried. Even between friends there would be no bond unless they sometimes made concessions, one to the other. The husband often pardons certain things to his wife, that harmony between them may not be broken. What does war breed, but war? while gentleness calls forth gentleness and equity invites equity."

The closing paragraph has almost a ring of irony in view of the future course of the young prince, for whose edification all this wisdom was put forth.

> "I doubt not, most illustrious Prince, that you are of the same mind; for so you were born and so you have been taught by the best and most sincere teachers. As for the rest, I pray that *Christus optimus maximus* may prosper your noble efforts. He has given you an empire without bloodshed; his will is that you preserve it ever free from blood. May it come to pass that through your goodness and wisdom we may at last have a rest from these mad wars. Peace will be made precious to us by the memory of evils past and our gratitude to you will be doubled by the misfortunes of other times."

All this to Charles of Burgundy, already Most Catholic King of Spain, within a year to be elected Holy Roman Emperor, and destined for the next generation to turn Europe into a battle-field for objects in which no one of his numerous subject peoples had the remotest interest! Evidently the man who could give only such counsel as this was not likely to be sought as an intimate adviser of the prince. In fact we have no reason to suppose that Erasmus' settlement at Louvain had more than a nominal connection with his appointment as imperial

councillor. He was a councillor much in the sense of the modern German "Geheimrath."



EMPEROR CHARLES V.

FROM AN ENGRAVING BY BARTEL BEHAM, 1531.

Erasmus took up his residence at Louvain in 1516, not, so far as we know, in the capacity of a regular teacher, though he occupied a room in the university. There is the usual uncertainty as to his motives and feelings about the change. Writing to Ammonius from Brussels in the autumn of 1516,[119] he says, "I am most eager to hear how our business is getting on." Such passages of mysterious meaning occur in almost every letter to this fellow-scholar and indicate clearly that Ammonius was continually working in Erasmus' interest. They are now made somewhat clearer by the discoveries of W. Vischer at Basel. The reference is probably to the negotiations with the papacy in regard to the dispensations which bear date a few months later. It is probable also that Ammonius was putting in a word as he could in England to secure the regular payment of his friend's allowances. The letter goes on:

> "I am going to winter in Brussels. Whatever you may send to Tunstall [the English ambassador at Brussels] will be handed to me at once; I am in continual relations with him. I am not disposed to go to Louvain. There I should have to be paying my duty to the scholastics at my own cost. The young men would be yelping at me all the time: 'correct this ode; or this epistle,' one will be calling for this author, one for that. There is no one there who can be either a help or an attraction to me. Besides all this I should have to listen sometimes to the snarlings of the pseudo-theologians, the most unpleasant kind of men. Lately there has arisen one of these who has stirred up almost a tumult against me, so that I am now holding the wolf by the ears, able neither to kill him nor to get away. He flatters me to my face and bites behind my back, promises me a friend and offers me an enemy.

> Would that mighty Jove would smash up this whole class of men and make them over again; for they contribute nothing to make us better or wiser, but are always making trouble with everyone."

But having had his grumble, Erasmus made up his mind to go. During the next four years Louvain was more his home than any other place. He left it, as we have seen, often and for months together, but it seems to have suited him as well as he was willing to be suited anywhere. His accounts of his relations with the place and the people are as apparently inconsistent as his utterances on other subjects. Within a short time after his settlement he writes to Tunstall:

> "I find the theologians at Louvain men of high character and culture, especially John Atensis, Chancellor of this University, a man of incomparable learning and endowed with rare refinement. There is here no less theological learning than at Paris, but it is of a less sophistical and arrogant sort."

Again, in the autumn of 1518, he writes:

> "The air thus far remains pure; there have been few cases of illness, and those of disease imported from elsewhere."

As to the individual scholars, he found himself on the best of terms with Martin Dorpius, the critic of his *Moria*, of whom he said in 1520, "on account of his distinguished talents for learning and eloquence I could not hate him even when he was made use of against me by evil managers." Dorpius continued to be his friend and admirer, as appears from the letter to Beatus, in which he is described as one of

Erasmus' chief comforters during his tedious illness after the Rhine journey.

During Erasmus' residence at Louvain occurred the foundation of the College of the Three Languages by Jerome Busleiden, brother of a former archbishop of Besançon, and himself a councillor of the King of Spain. Erasmus writes in 1518 to a third brother, Ægidius, referring to his attempts at making an epitaph for Jerome:

> "How many attractions have we lost in this one man! I can easily imagine your feelings at the loss of your brother, when the whole chorus of good and learned men is breaking into one lament. But why these empty regrets, why these useless tears? We are all born to this fate."

He is not well satisfied with his epitaphs and evidently has some fear that the bequest will not be carried out.

> "As to founding the college, see that you are not led away from that purpose. Believe me, this thing will not only contribute more than I can say to every branch of learning but will also add to the name of Busleiden, already so distinguished in many ways, no little increase of honour and splendour."

These fears were not justified; the college was founded and the advice of Erasmus was sought in the difficult matter of finding suitable teachers to fill the new chairs. We have several of the letters written by him in the discharge of this commission. One of these, to John Lascaris, a native Greek scholar, is interesting in several ways. It is one of the clearest illustrations of Erasmus' power of direct statement

when a matter of business was in hand. He first states the terms of Busleiden's bequest to found a college

> "in which shall be taught publicly and without expense the three languages, Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, with the sufficiently splendid salary of about seventy ducats, which may be increased according to the value of the person. The Hebrew and Latin teachers are on hand. Many are competing for the Greek professorship, but it has always been my opinion that a native Greek should be procured, so that the hearers may get the correct pronunciation at once. All the trustees of this undertaking agree with me and have commissioned me to invite, in their behalf, whomever I should judge suitable for this position. I therefore beg you, both by your wonted kindness to me and your devotion to the cause of learning, if you know anyone who you think would do honour to yourself and to me, to send him hither as soon as you can. He will have money for the journey, his salary, and his lodgings. He will have to do with men of honour and refinement. He may have the same confidence in my letter as if the affair were sealed with a hundred contracts. Between good men a bargain may be as well made without bonds. You select the proper man, and I will see to it that he shall not regret coming."

The Hebrew teacher referred to was a Jew named Adrian, chosen, it would appear, on the same principle of employing native teachers. It must have required a steady nerve to recommend the appointment of a Jew, even a converted one, at a time when the affair of Reuchlin, turning on just this question of respect for Hebrew learning, had barely ceased to agitate the world of scholars. Erasmus commends Adrian to Ægidius Busleiden in a letter[120] of sound practical sense. Fortune has just

thrown him in their way;

> "he is a Hebrew by birth but long since a Christian by religion, a physician by profession, and so skilled in the whole Hebrew literature that in my judgment there is no one at this day to be compared with him. But if my opinion has not sufficient weight with you, all whom I have known in Germany or in Italy who were versed in that language, have borne the same testimony. He not only knows the language perfectly, but is thoroughly acquainted with the mysteries of the authors and has them all at his fingers' ends.... Pray command me if there is anything in which you think I can assist you."

The Latin professor mentioned was Conrad Goclenius, the man of all others whom Erasmus selected some few years later, when he thought he was going to die, as the confidant of his most intimate thoughts and wishes.

CHAPTER VIII
BEGINNINGS OF THE REFORMATION—CORRESPONDENCE OF 1518-1519

On many accounts, the residence at Louvain ought to have been one of the most satisfactory of Erasmus' life. He was in the midst of a congenial activity not limited by any prescribed duties, free from great anxiety about money, secure at any moment of some honourable appointment if he chose to accept it, in fairly good health, and with working powers quite undiminished by advancing years.

In the year 1518 there can be no question that the name of Erasmus was the most widely known and honoured among European scholars. His New Testament with its display of learning and its revelation of a new principle of criticism, had demonstrated his character as a serious thinker upon the most important questions of religious faith and practice. If we seek to define this principle we shall be unable to fix it by any categories of philosophy or of theological precedent. In the last analysis we are brought back every time to the principle of common sense working upon the accepted dogmatic bases of the existing church system.

His freedom of speech had always been kept carefully within the bounds of doctrinal orthodoxy. He could safely defy his critics to point to a single instance of anything that might by any reasonable interpretation be described as heresy. He knew that

in his criticism, so far as it had gone, he was supported by the best opinion of the men of enlightenment everywhere, and relying upon this support he could put on the confident tone of a man who feels himself on the winning side.

The generation in which Erasmus had grown up to his fiftieth year was eminently one of progress in every form of enlightenment and expansion. He was twenty-five when Columbus discovered America and gave the first impulse to that intoxicating sense of limitless possibility which from time to time has seized upon a generation of men and carried it on to great triumphs—but always also to disappointments more keenly felt than its successes. Along with the discovery of the earth had gone with equal, even with more rapid pace, the discovery of man. The ban which throughout the Middle Ages had lain upon the human spirit as individual, with powers of its own and the right to use them, was rapidly being lifted. The cunning plebeian who had learned how to mix the subtle ingredients of gunpowder and put it into the hands of his fellow-plebeians, had taught the world an argument against the rights of princes, more potent than all the philosophers from Marsiglio of Padua down had been able to furnish. That other plebeian group who had lit upon the marvellously simple device of multiplying copies of writings by means of movable types, had opened up possibilities of education and therefore of achievement, whose end the imagination of man could not compass.

At first, doubtless, this vast outlook into the unknown had terrified as well as fascinated the world. All established institutions whose claim to existence rested upon an undisputed tradition, trembled lest their foundation should be shaken.

Princes dreaded the union of the long-oppressed peasants and citizens with gunpowder in their hands. The guardians of the treasure of thought which had come down from the past shuddered at the spreading of "dangerous" ideas broadcast through the land by the busy printing-press.

But gradually these apprehensions had been allayed. The social revolution threatened by gunpowder was delayed as has been so far that which is threatened by dynamite. Economic laws would not be broken and the forces of discontent, active during the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, had been gradually brought into an apparent harmony with the forces of order and tradition. Once more the great leading powers had come out of a long conflict victorious, though modified. The state-governments had overcome the attacks of constitutionalism, and seemed to be more independent of control than ever. The monarchy of Francis I., of Henry VIII., and Charles V. seemed to have beaten down every opposition, but it had also learned its lessons. If it would control the public life of its several states, it must itself meet the evident demands of its subjects, so far as it could do so without abandoning its own supreme prerogative. So the papacy, threatened by the aggressive constitutionalism of the fifteenth-century councils, had overcome that danger and during the lifetime of Erasmus had seemed to recover more than its ancient prestige. But it had purchased this recovery by vast adjustments to conditions it could not change. It, too, in its turn had become "enlightened" and gone so far into the prevailing liberalism of thought that it had deprived it of its sting. It might well seem an idle task to turn the weapons of the "higher criticism" against a papacy which was itself supporting the

cause of critical learning with every resource at its command.

No greater proof of this apparent readjustment of opposing forces could be offered than the dedication of Erasmus' New Testament, the ripest product of the critical scholarship of the time, to Pope Leo himself. It was a bold stroke, but it paid. The unstinted approval of the pope gave Erasmus a backing worth more to him at the moment than any praise of scholars like himself. But it bound him also the more firmly to an allegiance he dared not break, lest the form of success most precious to him in life should be endangered.

We have spoken of the constitutional opposition to the papacy by the fifteenth-century councils. Parallel with this and often combined with it had gone an opposition growing out of national interests. This, too, the papacy seemed to have overcome by the same policy of adjustment. It had allowed the largest scope to national control of the Church consistent with its supreme leadership, and had even given emphasis to the national idea by pushing to the utmost its claim to be one among the powers of Europe. The whole political activity of the papacy during this most active generation was based upon a recognition of the national states and a steady aim to gain their recognition in turn for its own well developed sovereignty. A pope's "niece" or "nephew" was as good a *parti* for a royal house as the offspring of any princely family in Europe.

So complete, apparently, was this adjustment of all the forces of European society that the great outbreak of the Lutheran reform movement was a complete surprise and an incredible shock to all

established institutions. The historian can, indeed, trace with perfect continuity the lines of development which centre in that wonderful movement, when a monk, in an obscure town in the remote north of Germany, drew the eyes of all Europe to himself by gathering up into one passionate expression the long-suppressed protest against the tyranny of the dominant church system. But, on the surface of things, in the year 1517, there was little to point to this historic continuity. To all appearance the great impulse of Wiclif in England had died out with the suppression of open Lollardry just a hundred years before. John Hus, the spiritual heir of Wiclif, had been sacrificed at Constance in 1415 to a combination of forces, some of which were to prove themselves in reality the stoutest allies of the ideas he represented. True, the fires at Constance had kindled a flame in Bohemia, which defied all efforts of pope and emperor to put it out until dissensions within the party of revolt scattered and quenched the material on which it fed. But after the Council at Basel (1431-1443) the great readjustment carried Bohemia, too, along into the general scheme of conciliation. At that moment a party, henceforth to be known as the party of enlightenment, seized upon the papacy, and with Thomas Parentucelli (Nicholas V., 1447-1455) began that series of humanistic popes, Æneas Sylvius Piccolomini (Pius II., 1458-1464), Giuliano delle Rovere (Julius II., 1503-1513), and Giovanni de' Medici (Leo X., 1513-1521), who were ready to sacrifice all other interests to the aggrandisement of their personal power and the advancement of a higher cultivation and refinement of life.

It must be said that in the things men cared most about in the two generations before the year 1517,

the government of the Church was such as suited the peoples of Europe. It was an easy-going system. It did not call for any application of the new spirit of inquiry to the prevailing institutions in Church and State. It was not insisting upon any too rigid morality either in the clergy or in the laity. Nor, on the other hand, was it overzealous in pressing its own claims too far. There is a grim sense of humour in the attitude of the Church towards its own institutions, so long as their existence was not threatened and no diminution of revenue was in sight. All the system asked was to be let alone. The Church knew that many of its claims had come to be absurd. Nowhere was this so well understood as in Italy and above all at Rome. So frank a "heathen" as Leo X. was not likely to insist too eagerly upon ideas or practices which he knew to be mere superstitions of the vulgar —not likely, that is, to press these matters until they were attacked.

If, on the other hand, they should be attacked, would this papacy be thorough-going enough in its enlightenment and its indifference to let them go, or would it rally to their defence all the forces of reaction? That was the problem of the Reformation period. If one approaches it from the side of enlightenment, one is at once impressed with the vast opportunity opened to the papacy. It had already adjusted itself to so many changes, it had so often found ways of taking the sting out of ideas and movements which seemed to threaten its very life, that sanguine men, like Erasmus, might well feel encouraged to hope that it would once more rise to the occasion. The world of Europe was filled with friendly criticism of its forms and methods; but as yet there had been few voices raised against its existence.

Dante, in his treatise on a single government for the world (*de Monarchia*), still clings to the mediæval conception of a twin administration of Christendom, only with the religious side distinctly subordinated to the temporal. Even Wiclif and Hus had been led to defy the papacy only by the logic of events; hostility to a papal organisation of church life was not an essential part of their original programme. Even Marsiglio of Padua had reserved to the papacy a wide sphere of activity, limited only by constitutional rights of governments and peoples. The literature of the conciliar period, covering the first half of the fifteenth century, does not succeed in casting off the spell of the papal idea, but aims to check and control its dangers to the public welfare. A constitutional papacy was the ideal of that time, not a Church without a papacy. All these attacks the mediæval system had met with amazing success. It had dealt its blows sparingly, but with great effect. Where its enemies had been backed up by powerful interests, as was Wiclif in England, it had seemed to fail and had bided its time. Where it could itself combine with other interests against them, as against Hus at Constance, it had hit hard and with precision.

It may be said with some certainty that if the papacy of the second half of the fifteenth century had been inclined to meet criticism half-way, criticism would not have turned into hostility. As one looks over the field of European society and politics in the two generations before 1517 one fails to find anything that can be called an anti-Roman "party." By "party" we mean here a nucleus of organisation with a programme or "platform" of its own towards the accomplishment of which it bends its chief efforts. In that sense, there was no party in Christendom which aimed at the overthrow of the

papal system.

On the other hand it might be said that there was no great public interest in Europe which was not more or less directly threatened by the papacy and likely, therefore, at any inopportune moment, by some slip in the papal policy or even by the mere insistence of the papacy upon some point it could not give up, to be turned from apparent friendliness to open opposition. First among these public interests was the principle of nationality. The papacy had, as we have seen, apparently adjusted itself to this opposition, but this adjustment was obviously unstable. How great a strain would it bear? To what lengths of concession could the papacy afford to go in recognising the right of kings to manage the affairs of their kingdoms without interference? Were there questions of religion, or of public morals so obviously beyond the sphere of temporal control, that any conceivable papacy must cling to the right of final judgment in them or go to the wall? When in the year 1341 the Emperor Ludwig the Bavarian, had claimed for himself the divine right to declare a certain princess divorced from an inconvenient husband, that he might marry her to his son and bring her dowry to increase the Bavarian estates, there was an almost universal cry of horror at this assault upon a sacred prerogative of the Church. How would it be now, two hundred years later, if a king, let us say of England, should find it convenient to divorce a wife and marry another for no reason but that he willed it so? Could the papacy afford to pay the price of acquiescence, or could it better afford to lose for ever the allegiance of England? That was the kind of question presented to the papacy from the side of the national states.

So again from the point of view of the advancing thought of the day;—how far could the papacy safely go in meeting this advance? Men were moving on step by step from one audacious thought to another, until it was beginning to seem as if there were no limit to the speculation of this awakened human spirit. The Church had grown great upon a system of thought in which the institution, the established order, the class, the tradition, had been everything, and the individual had been nothing. It had been a man's first duty, not to have ideas of his own, but to take those which were offered to him by the highest prevailing authority. So far all opposition to this method of thought had been effectually silenced. John Hus had declared that the essence of the Church lay in its being the assembly of believers acknowledging Christ alone as its head. Hus had been disposed of, and again the papacy had risen triumphant. The same men who had pressed most eagerly the condemnation of Hus were at that moment aiding his cause by putting forward a theory of church life which thrust the papacy into the background and would have brought into its place a legislature of national churches as the true expression of the will of Western Christendom. That opposition too had been overcome.

But now a more subtle development of individualism was beginning to make itself felt. The Church had thus far succeeded in keeping itself before the world as the one sole and sufficient medium of salvation for sinful man. It had developed a vast and imposing system of mediation between man and God by its priesthood, its ceremonies, its philosophy of morals, and its elaborately conducted methods of bookkeeping with the consciences of the faithful. Indeed, so elaborate had this soul-saving

machinery become that the wear and tear of it threatened the durability of its parts. An immense proportion of its energy had to be devoted to keeping the system going. What now would happen if somehow it should be made clear to the Christian conscience that there was a shorter way to salvation, a more direct, a less expensive, and, more than all, a better-established way? How far would the Church dare to carry its policy of going half way toward such an idea as that?

The test upon this point came in the revival of all that group of notions which, for lack of a better term, we express by the word "Augustinianism." Setting aside all refinements of theology for the moment, the word Augustinian represents to us the conception of the individual human soul as a sinful thing, thrown out in all its nakedness and isolation upon an angry sea of retribution, from which nothing can save it but the arbitrary action of the grace of God. Here was individualism indeed! We have seen how the Church had got on with the æsthetic individualism of the Renaissance—with its sham heathenism, its theatrical exploiting of antiquity to justify a license which affronted all true Christian self-respect, and yet, after all, its readiness to conform itself to all existing forms of social and religious organisation. From such individualism as this the Church had little direct injury to fear. It laughed with it and at it and used it for its purposes. Poggio Bracciolini, the most foul-mouthed blackguard of the second generation of Italian Humanists, spent his life as papal secretary without fear and without reproach.

Strange collocation of ideas, that the same impulse which drove these unchecked scoffers into

an æsthetic defiance of literary tradition should have forced Luther and Calvin into a death-struggle with the whole existing church order! The Church had tolerated the individualism of taste; how far could it tolerate the individualism of the soul? The one had declared that the salvation of the human mind was to be found by going back to the unfailing sources of culture in the Greek and Latin classics. The other was to declare that the only salvation of the soul was to be found by overleaping all the vast accumulation of forms and traditions of the past thousand years and going straight back to the early proclamations of the divine grace through faith in Christ alone.

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While Erasmus was studying, writing, planning, and travelling, with Louvain as the centre of his manifold activities, the great assault was gathering its force in a quarter of the world from which it might least have been expected. The north of Germany lay almost entirely beyond the circle of vision of Erasmus and such as he. The Universities of Leipzig and Erfurt, the most important of the Saxon schools, had thus far contributed little to the advance of general culture. They were still mainly under the influence of the scholastic traditions, guided by such men as those who had been made the butts of the *Epistolæ obscurorum virorum*. The University of Wittenberg, founded in 1502 by the Elector Frederic of Saxony, was just in time to gain for its chairs some of the first-fruits of the revived classical spirit, which men like Reuchlin and Rudolf Agricola had imported into Germany from the Italian fountainhead. The call of Martin Luther in 1508 from the Augustinian cloister at Erfurt to a professorship of theology at

Wittenberg, while it cannot be described as a demonstration in favour of the New Learning, brought a young man into active professional work who was already familiar with the new spirit of study and who was likely to apply it to his theological teaching, without being seduced by its æsthetic charm. The invitation of Philip Melanchthon four years later to teach Greek was a more pronounced declaration that Wittenberg was to look forward and not back in setting the tone of its instruction. Melanchthon was a promising youth of twenty-one, a relative and pupil of Reuchlin and recommended by him for this place. He was already well known as an accomplished Grecian, an amiable, but decided personality, destined to be through a lifetime of contention the balance-wheel of the Lutheran party.



PHILIP MELANCHTH

FROM THE DRAWING BY HOLBEIN, IN

It cannot be our purpose to rehearse here the familiar story of Luther's early career. Friends and enemies alike have done their utmost to set before us the engaging but often mysterious personality of the man. Our only interest can be to review very briefly such aspects of his development as may serve to illustrate the similarities and the differences between his course and that of Erasmus and thus prepare us to understand the connection of the latter with the reform movement of Luther. If our earlier judgments as to the youth of Erasmus are correct we shall have to believe that Luther's years of apprenticeship were far more truly years of hardship and struggle than were his. Poverty, stern discipline, and unsatisfied desire left their lifelong marks upon a physical constitution none too strong, but could not crush the inherent cheerfulness and courage which proved his dominant characteristics.

We seek in vain through the record of Luther's earlier years for indications of that stormy, passionate zeal for improvement in the conditions about him which almost any student of the later reform would suppose to be the moving impulse of his character. Conformity to the demands of his immediate surroundings is as marked a trait with him as were resistance and restlessness with Erasmus. He goes and does as he is bidden. He enters a monastery of his own free will and conforms with painful exactness to the requirements of the rule. Even long after he has begun to lead the fight against the limitations of the existing order, he continues to wear the dress and to live in the cloister of the local Augustinians. The impulse to the Lutheran reform

cannot, therefore, be found in any restless impatience of personal limitation on Luther's part. It must be sought in some great, overpowering conviction which drove him out of the attitude of conformity into the attitude of resistance.

This overmastering impulse came in the form of that Augustinian proposition we were just now examining—the proposition that the salvation, or, better still, the justification, of a man's soul was to come, not through any institution, nor through the due performance of anything whatever, but through the direct act of the grace of God, and, furthermore, that the only condition of receiving such grace was an honest opening of the soul to its action,—or, in theological language, "faith." Luther was not a great "theologian," as that word was used, in reverence by some and in ridicule by others. He had not worked himself out into clearness by a scholastic process, and whenever he tried to defend himself by scholastic methods, he was almost sure to confuse himself in contradictions and exaggerations. His clearness of vision came rather by an indefinable process of revelation and self-realisation, and then it became his life-problem to interpret to others what had brought such abundant illumination and satisfaction to himself. The boldness of Luther was not that of a man defiant by nature, who enjoys the game of give and take, but rather that of a man who puts off the moment of his attack until he can do so no longer, and then lets himself go, driven from behind, as it were, by a will greater than his own and against which he is powerless.

With a nature and a method like this Erasmus could never have had much sympathy. Compare their two views of Italy. We have seen Erasmus

seeking there the rewards of scholarship, cultivating the society of learned men, playing the rôle of the famous scholar himself, making himself acceptable to the powers that were, getting out of Italy what he could—then coming away and letting all the shafts of his biting satire play upon this society where he has been feeling himself at home. He could eat the bread and take the pay of Aldus, and then hold him up to the laughter of the world.

Luther went to Italy at almost the same time on an errand from the Saxon Augustinians to the general chapter at Rome. He travelled as a monk, stopping at the houses of his order along the way. At Rome he visited all the shrines of the saints, like the most pious of pilgrims. He was almost sorry, he says, that his parents were living, so many were the advantages offered to the souls of the departed at these altars of divine grace. He performed his commission, went back to his place, and continued for seven years longer to fulfil his duties as monk, priest, and teacher, without any outward show of hostility to the Roman system. Only in his preaching and writing, one can trace the steady advance of confidence in his guiding principle of "faith" as the one sufficient guarantee of a life "justified" or "adjusted" to the divine requirement. He did not seek the fight; he waited in his place until the battle sought him out and then he dared not refuse the challenge.

Compare again the animating principle of these two men. If it be true that faith alone is the sufficient basis of all justification before God, then it would seem to follow that the individual will has little to do with determining the fate of man either here or hereafter. Superficially viewed, this doctrine seems to place man within the circle of a kind of blind

fatalism. Such reproaches have been heard ever since the days of Augustine, whenever this subject has been prominently before men's minds. "Has Christianity brought us out of the old fatalism of the Greeks only to plunge us into a new fatalism, as hard, but not as picturesque, as the old one?" was asked in Augustine's own time. Nor had the Augustinian party ever failed to draw more or less strictly the evident conclusion from its own premises. It had always insisted that the will of man was not morally free, but was enslaved by a certain principle of evil, which had entered into man with the "fall of Adam" and been transmitted from father to son ever since.

Now the Church had always regarded Augustine as one of its greatest ornaments. He was one of the "four Fathers" upon whom, as upon four pillars, rested its majestic structure. Yet in practice, the Church had never lived up to the doctrine of the enslaved will. When, in the ninth century, the Saxon Gottschalk, spiritual progenitor of the Saxon Luther, had turned his unpractised logic upon this subject and had worked out to a conclusion the doctrine of a double predestination, the Church, through its ablest representative, Hincmar of Rheims, had promptly flogged him and shut him up for life where he would do no harm. So far as the Church had ever formulated its views on the matter, it had been "Semi-Pelagian." It recognised in human justification both the grace of God and the will of man, but did not draw with absolute clearness a conclusion as to the preponderance of one over the other. In fact the Church had done something better than to speculate. It had acted. It had evolved a marvellous system of justifying agencies, administered by itself, and had said to its members, in practice if not in theory, "Do

these things and you shall be saved." While this excellent machinery worked, there was obviously no occasion for any good Christian to worry about the conditions of justification, and in fact, from the ninth to the fifteenth century, the Augustinian doctrines are not once brought prominently before the world for discussion. It was only when men began once more to doubt whether the church method of doing specific things and getting certificates for them was, after all, the only way, or even the best way, to find one's adjustment with God, that this whole group of subjects began, once more, to demand their attention. The doctrine of the enslaved will, narrow and revolting though it may seem to the larger thought of our time, was the opening gate through which a way might be found into that very same largeness of view. The world learns slowly and the dim vision of to-day becomes the flooding glory of a newly risen to-morrow.

Where should we expect to find Erasmus, as we have been making acquaintance with him to the year 1518, on this great new question of human justification? Our answer must follow two main lines. First, as to the general notion of the freedom of the will, we may fairly conclude from all his moral teaching up to that time, that the idea of Luther in itself would be most repugnant to him. The whole tone of the Enchiridion, for example, is to emphasise the function of the individual conscience in determining action. The call to duty is imperative; the assumption is that man can do what he ought to do. The freedom of the will in human action is so completely assumed that there is no need of discussing it. The ultimate appeal is never to any outside power. If, on the one hand, Erasmus avoids all final reference to an ecclesiastical authority, so,

on the other hand, he equally avoids reference to a theological "grace of God" which is to do our moral work for us. The same impression comes from a study of the Christian Prince. The prince is a "good prince," not because he is a special instrument in the hand of God, nor because he is a faithful servant of any church authority, but because he does his duty as a man, in the station to which he is called. He ought to do this thing or that simply because it is the right and the wise thing to do, tending most directly toward the welfare of his subjects and the interest of the prince himself. The Christian state is such because it tends toward a realisation of the teaching of Christ, not because it corresponds to any abstract ideal set for it by the church power or by any direct working of the divine agency.

Our second point of view is thus already suggested. In so far as the Lutheran position dealt with man as an individual being, responsible directly to God, without the need of any intervening human agency, in so far it could not fail to command the sympathy of whatever was most sound and most sincere in the thought of Erasmus. His moral appeal throughout is completely free from any really convincing reference to a highest church tribunal, whose decisions must be final. One can find plenty of passages in which he has, even before 1518, expressed his respect for the papal system; but it would be hard to think of any one of these as representing his really deepest convictions. Either they are purely conventional, having no bearing upon the issue of the Reformation, or they are evident "hedging," put in to guard their author against the suspicion of having gone too far on the way of criticism. It is always difficult to know which of his selves is the real self; but wherever in Erasmus'

moral writing we seem to feel the ring of a sincere emotion, it is always when he is appealing to the essential manliness of man—never when he is making his apologies to the powers that be.

Again, it was plain, once for all, as early as 1518, that Erasmus had not in him the stuff out of which great leaders of men in critical times are made. No one would have acknowledged this more readily than he, and nothing could have been farther from the line of his ambition than such leadership. Even if we make large deductions from his account of the great positions he had declined, enough remains to make us quite sure that, if he had chosen, he might have held any one of many places, which, by their very importance, would have given him an effective leverage upon European affairs. Such influence lay within the field neither of his gifts nor of his desires. Such effect as he might have upon the course of events must come through the natural channel of his work as a scholar and a critic.

The difficulty of our problem is greatly increased by the almost hopeless complication of questions which entered into that one great demonstration we call the Reformation. Even at this distance of time it is impossible, without resorting to some rather large generalisation, to say in a single phrase what the issue of the Reformation was. Still less, of course, was such clear discrimination possible to one who stood, as Erasmus did, in the midst of these rapid and ever-shifting and often conflicting currents and was called upon to say just where his standing-ground was, or with which one of these currents he was willing to drift.

Luther nailed his Theses on Indulgences to the

door of the Palace-Church at Wittenberg on the last day of October in the year 1517. When and where the news of this action reached Erasmus we do not know. It is impossible that it can have been more than a few weeks before he, in common with all intelligent persons, had read this first proclamation of a war that was to be to the death. The Theses attacked indulgences, but these were only the outward form under which the whole theory of a mechanical salvation was expressed. If the indulgence was wrong, not merely in practice, but in theory as well, then the whole church system, in so far as it was a soul-saving apparatus, was wrong too. Doubtless there was room for infinite refinements upon this simple deduction. The same thesis about indulgences had been put forth many times before. Men had come to the same conclusions by many different roads; but never yet had any one person travelled so many of these roads. In Luther there spoke the monk, who had tried faithfully the method of conformity; the priest, who had gone directly to the souls of men with the consolations of religious hope; the scholar, who had caught the gleam of that new light of reason which was changing the whole aspect of human thought; the patriot, who saw his fellow-countrymen victimised by a vast foreign oppression; and finally the man, who had worked through the awful problem of human sinfulness until he saw it clearly solved by reference to the common inheritance of humanity.

That is why Luther's appeal was heard. Everyone to whom it came found in it some echo of his own experience. From every part of Europe and from every human interest came almost immediately a response which showed that a voice had been heard for which men had long been waiting. The Theses

were a temperate document. The tone of impatience, even of violence, that was to mark so much of Luther's later writing, was here as yet only suggested by a rare decision and certainty of utterance. Already Luther spoke as one who could not help it. At last the conflict had forced itself upon him, and for him, being the man he was, there was no alternative. The form of the Theses was that of a challenge to discussion. Luther put himself forward as a learner, who was prepared to change his view whenever a better one should appear. The replies, in so far as they were hostile, simply continued the discussion.

Probably there was no other man in Europe from whom a decisive word in his favour would have been so welcome to Luther as a word at this moment from Erasmus. Nor, on the other hand, was there a champion whom the existing system would more gladly have seen on its side. The word was not spoken, but neither did Erasmus array himself as yet frankly in opposition to Luther. Indeed we have no reason to believe that the issue in all its magnitude was clearly present to his thought.

Some things he saw only too clearly. His clever, analytical mind perceived that usages and forms might in themselves be innocent or even helpful, while the wrong use of them was harmful in the extreme. So his instinct was in every case to say: Let us amend the wrong use of these things, but let us not disturb the innocent and helpful practice itself. Whatever subject he touched called out at once this overfine discriminating power. He drew a picture of the thing he wanted to express and believed himself to be heightening the effect of this picture when he refined upon it until its outlines became obscured

and the very effect he had aimed at was defeated. The art of fine distinctions was an admirable one. The question of the hour, however, was not to be solved in that way. The time had come when men were going down deep below these refinements and were about to ask the fatal question: whether forms and systems which could not bear the strain of daily use by plain human nature without gross abuses, were not better reformed out of existence once for all. Erasmus said, "Be good and all these evils will vanish." Quite true, but if all men were good there would be no need of institutions at all. The question was, whether the experiment had not been tried long enough, and that was the issue which Erasmus seems not to have grasped.

For the moment the discussion turned on the question of indulgences. On this subject Erasmus had made no utterance which could be understood as committing him on the theory as a whole. In the Praise of Folly he had ridiculed the grosser absurdities of the practice, especially the counting up of the days and years of redemption from Purgatory, as if salvation were a thing of the multiplication-table. The teaching of the Enchiridion was hopelessly against any such conception of moral regeneration. Anyone who had read Erasmus could not have a moment's doubt that the system of indulgences, as it was practised throughout Europe, must have been repulsive to him in the extreme. The idea that Erasmus could ever have invested a penny in such traffic for the advantage of his own soul or that of anyone dear to him, was grotesquely absurd. Moreover the circumstances of that special sale of indulgences in Germany which called out the wrath of Luther were such as must have seemed equally outrageous to Erasmus. The barefaced openness with

which the Prince Elector of Mainz had lent himself to the papal exaction, on condition that half the plunder should go into his own pocket to pay for the *pallium* which the papacy itself had just granted him, brought out into clearest relief the purely mercantile nature of the whole transaction. It required all the hair-splitting of all the schools to carry a man through the stages of that bargain and leave him at last with any tenderness whatever for the system that made it possible. Yet this was precisely the feat which Erasmus was apparently to perform.

We gain a glimpse at the working of his mind on this subject in the letter to Volzius, called forth by criticism of the Enchiridion, and dated in August, 1518[121]:

> "If anyone finds fault with the preposterous opinion of the vulgar, which gives to the highest virtues the lowest place and *vice versa* and is specially shocked by unimportant evils and the reverse, then one is straightway called to account as if one favoured those evils which seem to him less than some other evil; or as if he were condemning certain good actions because he thinks others are even better. So if one teaches that it is safer to trust in good deeds than in the papal pardons, he is not condemning those pardons, but is giving the preference to what is more certainly in accord with the teaching of Christ. So also, if one thinks that they act more wisely who stay at home and look after their wives and children, than they who go running about to Rome or Jerusalem or Compostella, and that the money wasted in long and dangerous journeys were much more piously spent upon the worthy and honest poor, one is not condemning the pious impulse of those persons, but is only preferring what comes nearer to true piety. In truth it is not a fault of our times alone to attack certain evils as if they were the only ones, while we smooth over, as if they were not evils at all, others far

worse than those we are abusing."

One feels here an allusion to that overemphasis on outward organisation which was to be Erasmus' great objection to the German reform. Instead of this he would have the true value of the institution so clearly brought out that it would counteract all tendency to abuse. This letter was one of the last pieces of Erasmus' writing at Basel before the long illness of which he speaks in the letter about his journey to Louvain. He had spent the year 1518 chiefly at Basel in tireless industry. He arrived at Louvain only, as we have seen, to break down again. It was 1519 before we find him drawn directly into the Lutheran controversy.

The letter to Volzius just quoted was printed as a preface to a new edition of the Enchiridion in 1518. The first step in the correspondence with Luther was taken by Luther himself in March, 1519, and seems to have been suggested by the very passage we have here made use of to show Erasmus' feeling about indulgences. Luther's tone in this first letter is eminently characteristic of his attitude during these early years of his public activity. It is modest and self-depreciating to a degree. Words fail him to express his admiration for the great scholar. It is really monstrous that they should not know each other, when he has so long been worshipping in silence.[122]

"Who is there whose inmost being is not filled by Erasmus? Who is not being taught by Erasmus? In whom does not Erasmus reign?—I mean, of course, among those who have a true love of letters. For I am glad enough and I reckon it among the gifts of Christ, that there are many who do not approve of you. By

> this test I discern the gifts of a loving from those of an angry God, and I congratulate you that while you are most acceptable to all good men, you are equally disliked by those who would like to be thought the only great ones and the only ones to be accepted. But here am I, clumsy fellow, approaching you thus familiarly with unwashed hands and without formal phrases of reverence and honour, as one unknown person might address another. I beg you by your kind nature, lay this to the account of my affection or my inexperience. In truth, I whose life has been passed among the schoolmen, have not so much as learned how to address a truly learned man by letter. Otherwise, how I would have wearied you already with epistles! I would not have suffered you alone to speak to me all this time in my study. Now, since I have learned from Fabricius Capito that my name is known to you through my trifles about indulgences and learned also from your most recent preface to the Enchiridion, that my notions have not only been seen, but have also been accepted by you, I am compelled to acknowledge, even though in barbarous style, your noble spirit, which enriches me and all men.... And so, my dear and amiable Erasmus, if you shall see fit, recognise this your younger brother in Christ, indeed a most devoted admirer of yours, but worthy, in his ignorance, only to be buried in his corner and to be unknown to the same sky and sun with you."

The letter closes with an affectionate eulogy of Philip Melanchthon as the indispensable companion of his studies.

There is no reason to doubt the sincerity of Luther's attitude at this critical moment. It was quite true that Erasmus was far beyond him in scholarly attainment and reputation. It was true also that the plain meaning of Erasmus' reference to indulgences in the preface to the Enchiridion was directly in accord with Luther's own position in the Theses. If he

could be made now, in some more decided manner, to commit himself to Luther's cause, it would be a great point gained for reform.

Erasmus gave himself two months before answering these first advances of Luther. His reply is what we might, from our previous knowledge, have predicted. The letter appeals to him strongly[123]:

> "Beloved brother in Christ, your letter was most acceptable, at once showing the subtilty of your genius and breathing the very spirit of Christ."

Then his own personality comes in and he is completely absorbed in the effect of Luther's action upon himself.

> "I have no words to tell you what an excitement your books have raised here. Up to the present moment the false suspicion cannot be torn from the minds of these creatures that your works have been written by my assistance and that I am the standard-bearer of this 'faction' as they call it. Some think that a handle is given them for attacking sound learning, toward which they have a deadly hatred as an offence against Her Theological Majesty, for whom they care vastly more than they do for Christ,—and also for quashing me, whom they fancy to be of some avail in encouraging learning.
>
> "The whole affair is carried on with shoutings, with insolent cunning, with slander and trickery, so that if I had not seen it—nay, even felt it myself, I would never have believed, on any authority, that theologians could be so insane. You might suppose it was a regular plague; and yet the poison of this evil began with a few and crept into the many, so that now a great part of this much frequented university is infected with this poisonous disease. I have sworn that you were totally unknown to me, that I had not yet

read your books, and therefore that I neither approved nor disapproved anything in them. I only advised them not to keep bawling out so hatefully to the people about your books, which they had not yet read, but to await the judgment of those whose opinion ought to have most weight. I begged them to consider whether it was well to abuse before a promiscuous crowd things which ought more properly to be refuted in books or discussed by learned men, especially as there was but one opinion as to the excellence of the author's life. But nothing did any good;—so furious are they in their underhanded and scandalous discussions."



FRONTISPIECE (ERASMUS SEATED) TO "ERASMI OPE

PUBLISHED AT LEYDEN, 1703.

He, Erasmus, becomes at once the central point in his own field of vision. Luther has friends in England, even some in Louvain.

> "But I keep myself, so far as I can, *integrum* [shall we say 'uncompromised'?] in order that I may the better serve the reviving cause of letters; and I think a well-mannered reserve will accomplish more than violence, etc. We ought to keep an even temper, lest it be spoiled by anger, hatred, or vainglory; for in the very midst of a zeal for religion these things are apt to be lying in wait for us. I am not urging you to do all this, but just to keep on as you are doing. I have glanced over (*degustavi*) your commentaries on the Psalms; they appeal to me greatly and I hope they will be of great value."

We have omitted a string of commonplaces about moderation and gentleness, which must have helped to make this letter rather cold comfort to Luther. If it meant anything to him, it meant that Erasmus really agreed with his views on indulgences and the state of the Church in general, but was already dreading the effect of putting these views boldly and clearly before the world. What Luther wanted in the spring of 1519 was not pious exhortation to keep his temper, but a grip of the hand and a frank word of approval. Whether Erasmus was going to have a bad time with the men of darkness at Louvain could not interest him. The question was: would Erasmus stand by him,—yes or no? and so far the answer was not encouraging. To one who knew the kind of language Erasmus was wont to apply to his opponents, it must have seemed grotesquely out of place for him to exhort Luther to gentleness of speech.

The dread of being charged with the authorship of Luther's works and of others similar in their purpose, seems to have been the one thing uppermost in the mind of Erasmus during these years 1518 and 1519. His correspondence is full of it. He took pains, in a fashion which he had never before shown, to set himself right with all the great persons with whom he had any connection.

The earliest in the group of apologetic letters brought out by the charge that Luther was only expressing Erasmus' ideas in somewhat bolder form is one written to Cardinal Wolsey in May, 1518.[124] Here begin the phrases afterwards to become so familiar:

> "Luther is as unknown to me as he is to anyone, nor have I had leisure to turn over his books except here and there a page;—not that I shrank from the work, but that other occupations left me no time for it. And yet certain persons, as I hear, are saying that I have been helping him. If he has written well I deserve no praise; if otherwise I merit no blame—since in all his writings not so much as one jot is mine, and anyone can prove this who wishes to investigate it. The man's way of life is approved by all, and this is no slight argument in his favour, that his character is so sound that not even enemies can find anything to criticise. But even if I had ever so much time for reading him I cannot take upon myself to pronounce upon the writings of so great a man, even though nowadays boys are everywhere, with the greatest boldness, declaring this to be false and that to be heretical. At one time indeed I was a little hard upon Luther, fearing that some cause for enmity against sound learning might be given, and desiring not to see that cause burdened any further. For I could not help seeing how much enmity would be aroused if things were to be broken up from which a rich harvest was being reaped by priests and monks.

"There appeared first quite a number of propositions about papal indulgences; then one and another pamphlet about confession and penance. When I heard that certain persons were eager to publish these I seriously advised against it, lest they should be adding to the enmity against learning. There will be witnesses of this, even men who wish well to Luther. Finally there came a swarm of pamphlets; no one saw me reading them; no one heard me praising them or not praising them. For I am not so rash as to approve what I have not read, nor such a trickster as to condemn what I know nothing about,—though this is nowadays a regular practice of those who ought to know better. Germany has some young men who give great promise of learning and eloquence, through whose work I predict that she may some day have cause to boast as England is now boasting with the best of reasons. Of these no one is personally known to me except Eobanus, Hutten, and Beatus. These men are fighting with every form of weapon against the enemies of the languages and of sound learning, which all good men are favouring. I should admit myself that their freedom of speech was intolerable, did I not know in what shameful fashion they are annoyed both in public and in private. Their opponents allow themselves in public preaching, in schools, in banquets, to declaim anything they please in the most hateful, nay, in the most treasonable manner, before the ignorant multitude, yet think it an unbearable thing if one of these scholars dares to comment. Why! the very bees have stings to strike with when they are hurt and flies have teeth to defend themselves if they are attacked. Whence comes this new race of gods? They make 'heretics' of whom they will, but move heaven and earth if anyone calls them slanderers....

"I am in favour of these scholars in this sense: that I look rather to their virtues than to their vices. And when one considers how soaked in vice were those men who in Italy and France gave the first impulse to the revival of ancient learning, one cannot help

favouring these men of ours whose characters are such that their theological censors would do well to imitate them rather than abuse them.

"Now whatever they write is suspected to be my work, even with you in England, if only men of affairs who come hither from there are telling the truth. Indeed, I confess frankly: I cannot help admiring their talent, but a too free pen I approve in no man. First Hutten sent out as a joke his *Nemo*; everyone knows the argument of it was mere folly, but the Louvain theologians kept saying it was my work, and they fancy themselves more sharp-sighted than Lynceus himself. Then came the *Febris* [also by Hutten]; that was mine too! though the whole spirit and style of it differed from mine. Then appeared the *Oratio* of Mosellanus in which he takes the part of the three languages against these tongue-lashers. They thought to make me smart for it, even when I had not yet heard that the *Oratio* was in existence; as if whatever comes into the head of this man or that man to write, I must be accountable for it or as if I had not enough to do to defend what I have written myself. They are Germans; they are young men; they have pens; they are not wanting in ability; nor are there lacking those who irritate them by their hatred, nor those who spur them on, and then pour cold water on them.

"All these I have warned in my letters to keep their freedom within bounds; at all events not to attack the leading men of the Church, lest they provoke against learning the hostility of those very men through whose patronage it is standing up against its enemies and thus burden the defenders of polite letters with this enmity. But what can I do? I can warn, but I cannot compel. To moderate my own style is within my power, but not to answer for another's pen. The most ridiculous thing is that the recent work of the bishop of Rochester against Faber is ascribed to me, whereas the difference of style is as great as I am far removed from the learning of that divine prelate. Why! there were some who charged More's *Utopia*

upon me! whatever appears is mine, willing or no....

"I have never sent forth a work, and I never will, without putting my name to it. Some time ago I wrote for amusement my *Moria*, without malice though perhaps with more than enough freedom of speech. But I have always taken pains that nothing should go forth from me which could corrupt youth by its obscenity, or could in any way offend religion, or give rise to sedition or party violence, or make a single black line upon the good name of another. The sweat I have spent up to this time has been spent in aiding solid learning and in advancing the religion of Christ. All are thanking me for it on every hand, excepting a very few theologians and monks, who refuse to be made either better or more learned....

"If anyone cares to make the trial he will find Erasmus serving the See of Rome with his whole heart and especially Leo the tenth, to whose piety he is well aware how much he is indebted."

Precisely the same tone of nervous anxiety about himself appears in a letter to Cardinal Campeggio, the papal legate in England.[125] He assures him that, so far as in him lay, he has tried to maintain the cause of Christ and the Church. Of course he cannot please everyone, but he has been satisfied with the praise of the best men from Pope Leo down.

"But see," he cries, "the perverse and ungrateful ill-will of some men. They do not trust to writings and arguments, but attack me with slanderous tricks. Whatever books come out in these days, in which anybody is too free with his pranks, they put it upon me. There appeared the *Nemo*—for that is the name of a certain silly book; they charged me with it and would have made out their case if the angry author had not appeared and claimed his work for himself. There came out certain foolish letters and there were plenty of people to say I had helped to write them.

> Finally there came—I know not with what parentage —a work of Martin Luther, an author as unknown to me as the most unknown person in the world; I have not yet read the book through and yet at the very beginning they kept saying it was my work, the truth being that not one stroke in it is mine."

He begs Campeggio to contradict these scandalous lies, and to rest assured that he never has written and never will write books of this sort. The cardinal's reply was as friendly and reassuring as could be wished, but may interest us especially because it makes no direct reference to the Lutheran movement.

To Pope Leo Erasmus wrote in regard to the second edition of his New Testament.[126] The first edition had been, he says, well received by all but very few. His description of these few critics is highly characteristic:

> "Some are too stupid to be convinced by reasonable argument; some too conceited to be willing to learn better; some too obstinate to give up their position, bad though it be; some too old to hope ever to do anything worth doing; some so ambitious that they cannot bear to seem to have been ignorant of anything; but all are men of such a kind, that it is not worth while to try for their approval. Indeed that was a clever saying of Seneca: 'There are people by whom it is better to be abused than praised.'
>
> "Among these people there is scarce one who has read my books. They were afraid for their power, some even for their gain, if the world should begin to grow wiser. What they themselves really think I know not, but they try to make the uneducated crowd believe that a knowledge of the languages and what they call good letters are opposed to the study of theology, whereas there is no science to which they

are a greater help and adornment. These men, born under the wrath of the Muses and the Graces, are fighting ceaselessly against learning, which in these our days is just rising to greater fruitfulness. Their chief hope of victory is in slanderous trickery. If they come out in books they simply betray their folly and ignorance. If they are met by reasoning, the evident truth overcomes them at once. So they confine themselves to making an uproar with the ignorant mob and among foolish women, who are easy to impose upon, especially under the pretext of religion, which these people are wonderfully clever in assuming. They put forth terrible words—'heresy!' 'Antichrist!' They keep declaring that the Christian religion is in danger and already toppling over, and pretend that they are holding it up on their shoulders; and in all these hateful charges they mingle the names of the languages and of polite literature. These horrible things, they say, have sprung from 'poetry'—for so they call whatever belongs to elegant learning—that is, whatever they themselves do not understand. Such nonsense as this they do not hesitate to blather out in public sermons, and then ask to be called heralds of apostolic doctrine! They abuse the name of the Roman pontiff and of the Roman see, a thing sacred to everyone, as it ought to be.

"By these trickeries they are preparing to assault the cause of letters, now just beginning to flourish, and also that purified theology which is learning to know once more its own true sources. Nothing is left untried; every sort of calumny is thought out against those by whose work these studies seem to be growing; and among these they reckon me. Now, how much of importance I have contributed I know not, but surely I have striven with all my might to kindle men from those chilling argumentations in which they had so long been frozen up, to zeal for a theology which should be at once more pure and more serious. And that this labour has so far not been in vain I perceive from this, that certain persons are furious against me, who cannot value anything which they

> are not able to teach and are ashamed to learn. But, trusting to Christ as my witness, whom my writings above all would guard, to the judgment of your Holiness, to my own sense of right, and the approval of so many distinguished men, I have always disregarded the yelpings of these people. Whatever little talent I have, it has been, once for all, dedicated to Christ; it shall serve his glory alone; it shall serve the Roman Church, the prince of that Church, but especially your Holiness, to whom I owe more than my whole duty.
>
> "I might, if I had listened to other arguments, have been advanced to wealth and dignities; I can prove by the most solemn testimony that what I am saying is true. But this seemed to me a greater reward; I preferred to serve the glory of Christ, rather than my own. From a boy I have made it my care never to write anything irreligious or scurrilous or against authority. Or if I formerly chattered away a little too freely, after the habit of youth, certainly nothing becomes my present age but serious and holy things. No one was ever made one hair the blacker or the less religious by my writings; no disturbance has ever arisen or ever shall arise on my account. No malice of my accusers shall ever overcome this fixed determination of my mind. Let others see to it what they write; I am not judging the slave of another; let every man stand or fall to his own master. My only grief is that through the bitter controversies of some persons the peace of learning and of the Christian commonwealth is being endangered."

Here he seems to shift his ground from the attacks of the men of darkness to the Lutheran "tragedy."

> "The affair seems no longer to be conducted with the weapons of argument, but the battle rages with violent abuse on both sides; biting pamphlets are the weapons and the uproar is swelling into madness,

with mutual maledictions. There is no one, unless he were more than man, who does not sometimes slip, but these human lapses, if they are of such sort that we cannot wink at them, ought to be corrected with Christian charity. Now they are turning to evil even that which is rightly spoken, often that which they do not understand. With bitter words they make raw sores which might have been healed by Christian gentleness; they alienate by harshness men whom they might have kept by kindness. The word 'heresy' is straightway in their mouths, if at any point they differ or wish to seem to differ. If anything does not exactly suit them, they raise seditious cries among the rude and untaught people. These things, springing from slight beginnings, have often kindled a widespread conflagration, and it comes to pass that an evil, overlooked at first as of small account, increasing little by little, finally bursts forth into a serious disturbance of the peace of Christendom. Great praise is due to those excellent kings who have quieted the very beginnings of these dissensions, as Henry VIII. in England, and Francis I. in France. In Germany, because that country is divided up among so many little kings, the same cannot be done. Among us, since we have but just acquired our prince [Charles V. was elected emperor, June 28, 1519], great and excellent as he is, yet he is so far removed that, up to the present time, certain men are exciting tumults without reproof. I think, therefore, that your Holiness would be acting most acceptably to Christ if you should impose silence upon such contentions as these and should do for the whole Christian world what Henry and Francis have done, each for his own kingdom. Your piety is bringing the most powerful kings into harmony; it remains for you, by the same means, to restore to learning the peace which is its due. This will come to pass, if by your order they who cannot speak shall cease their babbling against polite learning, and they who have no tongues for blessing shall cease cursing those who are devoted to the tongues."

This letter rewards somewhat careful reading. Two ideas are obviously before the writer's mind: First, the cause of sound learning and its application to theology, the cause with which he identifies himself so completely that every attack upon it seems a personal assault upon him, and *vice versa*. Second, the Lutheran uprising, now beginning to show its possibilities of danger. Erasmus names no names, but the solemn warning to the pope as to the little flame that may grow to a consuming fire seems to point plainly enough to Luther, and the distinction so carefully drawn between Germany and the compact monarchies of France and England confirms this idea. It is a warning prophetic in its clearness of insight, but naïve to the point of childishness in its suggestions of a remedy. The new little emperor was not only *ingenti semotus intervallo* from the field of Luther's activity, but the very constitution of Germany made it utterly out of the question that he could take any action whatever against Luther except by the consent of the prince who was his immediate sovereign. The "*reguli*," the "little kings" in Germany, had not bought their independence by centuries of conflict to suffer any such burnings at the stake and cutting-off of heads by any emperor as those capable youths, Henry and Francis, could command at will in London or Paris.

Nor was there any more promise in Erasmus' suggestion that the pope should order the parties in conflict to keep silence. The Leipzig disputation of Luther with John Eck in July of this same year (1519) was to bring out clearly that, after all, the real issue touched the papal authority, and when that was questioned it was idle to imagine that any papal action whatever could really affect the course of events.

There is a certain variation upon this suggestion in the dedication to Cardinal Campeggio of the paraphrases of certain epistles of Paul in 1519.[127] After a most flattering eulogy of Leo X. for his great interest in sound learning, Erasmus says:

> "If a means of pacification is sought for, I think it might most easily be accomplished if the pope should command that each person prepare a statement of his own belief and set it forth, without abuse of opposing views, so that the madness of tongue and pen may be restrained, especially by those to whom such control belongs. But if there is a difference, as it often happens that our judgments differ like our tastes, let the whole contention be held within the limits of courtesy and not run over into mad excess. And if there be any point specially touching upon doctrine—for everything ought not to be dragged in, neck and heels, under the head of doctrine—let it be discussed by men who are thoroughly versed in the mysteries of the faith, who will not seek their own interests under the pretence of the faith and who will carry on the affair with prudent judgment, not with seditious disturbances."

Erasmus thinks he can easily persuade Campeggio and that the cardinal will easily persuade the excellent Leo. Where the superhuman beings are to be found who will carry out his innocent suggestions he does not say. We are bound to give him credit for any constructive ideas he may have had, and in all his writings there is nothing that comes much nearer to positive constructive planning than this.

If one may judge from the letter to Leo, Erasmus' early conception of the Lutheran movement was much like that which prevailed at Rome. It was a squabble of monks; Luther was an Augustinian, Tetzel a Dominican. Most monks were enemies of

learning—Luther was a man of learning, but inclined to violence and not willing to keep the matter to a purely intellectual issue. He was, of course, right on many points, but was going too fast and was drawing after him many foolish people, who ought to be held in check by the established powers.

Quite the same tone appears in a long letter[128] to Albert of Brandenburg, archbishop of Mainz, the papal agent in the German indulgence of 1517 and the principal clergyman in Germany. Erasmus takes the opportunity of acknowledging the gift of a loving-cup from the archbishop to go at length into the Lutheran question. He reaches it again through the medium of his own personal difficulties. For a time, he says, he had made peace with the "theologians" at Louvain. They were to hold their scandalous tongues; he was to do his best to keep his pen still. If only they had had the archbishop's cup to drink their mutual faith in, the agreement might have lasted longer. As it is, an unhappy letter, badly understood and worse interpreted, has brought on an attack more furious than ever. He begs to explain[129]:

> "In the first place, I have never had anything to do, either with the Reuchlin business or with the affair of Luther. Whatever Cabala and Talmud may be, they have never attracted me. Those contentions between Reuchlin and the followers of Hoogstraaten were most displeasing to me. Luther is to me unknown as the most unknown of men. His writings I have not had time to read, excepting that I have just barely skimmed over some of them."

It is very difficult to believe that these statements are true. Erasmus had interested himself in Reuchlin's affairs enough to write to two Roman

cardinals in his behalf. He knew enough about Luther's writings to have convinced himself that their tone was too decided to suit him; if he had not read every word of them, he was thoroughly informed as to their contents. The motive of his denial appears in the next words:

> "If he has written well, no praise belongs to me, if not there is nothing which can be laid to my charge.... I was sorry that the books of Luther were published and when first some writings or other of his began to be shown about, I did my best to prevent their publication, especially because I feared that some tumult would be caused thereby. Luther had written me a letter in what I thought a very Christian spirit and I answered, warning the man not to write anything seditious or insolent against the Roman pontiff, but to preach the apostolic doctrine with pure heart and in all gentleness. I did this politely that it might have the more effect. I added that there were some here who favoured him, that he might the more accommodate himself to their judgment. Now some have most stupidly interpreted these words as if I favoured Luther, whereas no one of those persons gave him any advice; I was the only one who warned him. I am neither the accuser of Luther, nor his patron, nor his judge. As to the man's spirit, I dare not judge him, for that is a most difficult matter, especially if I must judge him unfavourably.
>
> "And yet, even if I did favour him as a good man, which his enemies admit him to be; or as an accused man, and that the laws permit even to sworn judges; or as a man oppressed and crushed down by those who, under some made-up pretext, are working all they can against pure learning, what ground of fault-finding against me were that, so long as I do not mix myself in the matter? In fine, it seems to me the part of a Christian to favour Luther, in this sense, that if he is innocent I do not wish him to be crushed by the factions of the wicked; if he is wrong I wish him to be

set right, not ruined....

"But now certain theologians whom I know are neither warning nor teaching Luther, but are only with mad howlings reviling him before the people and tearing him in pieces with the most violent abuse and continually having in their mouths the words 'heresy!', 'heretic', 'heresiarch!', 'schism!', 'antichrist!' It cannot be denied that these clamours were raised among the people chiefly by men who had never seen the books of Luther. It is well proved that things are condemned by these people as heretical in Luther which in Bernard or Augustine are read as orthodox, nay, as pious words. I warned them at the beginning to abstain from clamour of this sort and to carry on the affair rather with writings and arguments. I said they ought not publicly to condemn what they had not read and carefully thought out, I will not say, understood. Then I told them it was unbecoming for theologians to carry anything through by violence, for their judgment ought to be of the most serious kind, and that it was not an easy thing to gain their point by raging against a man whose life was approved by everyone. Finally, that perhaps it was not a safe thing to touch upon such matters before a mixed crowd, in which there are many who greatly dislike the confession of secret sins and if these should hear that there are theologians who say one need not confess all faults, they will readily snatch at it and get a perverted notion. Now though all this must strike every man of spirit as it does me, yet from this friendly admonition they have conceived the suspicion that Luther's books are in great part mine, and produced at Louvain, whereas not one stroke in them is mine or published with my knowledge or my will. Still, acting upon this false suspicion and in spite of all denial, they have raised here disturbances more furious than I have ever seen in my life.

"Further, though the special function of theologians is to teach, I see many nowadays who are doing nothing but compelling men, bringing them to

> ruin or to silence, whereas Augustine, even in the case of the Donatists, who were not merely heretics but furious brigands, does not approve those who would merely compel, without also teaching them. Men to whom gentleness is a duty, seem to be simply thirsting for human blood, so eager are they to ensnare and ruin Luther. Now this is playing the butcher, not the theologian. If they want to show themselves great theologians let them convert the Jews, let them turn to Christ those who are strangers to him, let them mend the public morals of Christians, even more corrupt than those of Turks. What justice is there in leading him to punishment, who has now first proposed for discussion things which have always been discussed in all the schools of theologians? Why ought he to be persecuted, who begs to be instructed, who submits himself to the judgment of the Roman See and of the schools, which they call 'universities?' And if he refuses to trust himself in the hands of certain persons who would rather see him crushed than instructed, surely that is not strange."

For a man who was a total stranger to Luther and his books, Erasmus shows himself surprisingly well informed.

> "Let us examine into the origin of the present troubles. The world is burdened with human devices, with the opinions and the dogmas of the schools, with the tyranny of the Mendicant Friars, who, though they are the servants of the Roman See, are making themselves a danger to the pope himself and even to kings, by their power and their numbers. When the pope is working for them he is more than a God; if he does anything contrary to their convenience, he is of no more account than a dream. I am not condemning them all; but very many are the kind of persons, who for the sake of power and gain are seeking to ensnare the consciences of men. With shameless effrontery they were beginning to leave out Christ entirely and to preach nothing but their own novel and impudent

doctrines. About indulgences they were talking in a way that not even idiots could stand. Through this and many other things the vigour of apostolic teaching was gradually disappearing and it was likely to happen that things would go from bad to worse until that spark of Christian piety should be extinguished, from which the dying flame of Christian love might have been rekindled. The whole of religion was turning towards more than Jewish ceremonialism. Good men grieved over all these things. Even theologians who are not monks, and some monks, confessed to them in private conversation. These are the things, as I think, which first moved the heart of Luther to set himself boldly against the intolerable insolence of certain persons. For what else can I suspect of a man who is aiming at neither honours nor wealth? As to the propositions which they object to in Luther, I am not at present discussing them, but only the manner and the occasion of them.

"Luther dared to have doubts about indulgences, but others before him had made bold enough statements about these. He dared to speak rather unrestrainedly about the authority of the Roman pontiff; but others had shown little enough restraint in this matter, and among them especially Alvarus, Sylvester, and the cardinal of San Sisto. He dared despise the judgment of St. Thomas, but the Dominicans had almost set Thomas above the Gospels. He dared in the matter of the confessional to discuss certain scruples, but in this thing the monks have entangled the consciences of men without limit. He dared in part to despise the conclusions of the schools; but they had laid far too great weight upon these, and yet cannot agree upon them among themselves, but are always changing them, cutting out the old and putting in new. This was a pain to pious souls: to hear in the schools scarcely a word about the apostolic teaching, but to learn that the ancient sacred writers, long approved by the Church, were now quite antiquated, and to hear in public preaching seldom a word of Christ, but always of the power of the pope

and the opinions of the moderns; to know that the whole discourse was filled with lust of gain, with flatteries, ambition, and deceit.



ERASMUS WITH "TERMINUS."

FROM A WOODCUT BY HOLBEIN, IN THE BASEL MUSEUM.

"I think the blame ought to be put upon these things, if Luther wrote a little too violently. Whoever defends the apostolic doctrine defends the pope, who is its chief herald, as the rest of the bishops are his heralds. All bishops stand in the place of Christ, but among them the Roman pontiff stands first. We must believe of him that he cares for nothing more than the glory of Christ, whose minister he boasts himself to be. They deserve very badly of him who ascribe to him things which he would not himself recognise and which are far from helpful to the flock of Christ. And yet some who are stirring up these disorders are not doing it out of love for the pope, but are abusing his authority for their own profit and power. We have, as I believe, a pious pope; but in the vast flood of affairs there are many things of which he is ignorant, which even if he would he cannot get at, but as Virgil says, the driver is 'swept along by the steeds and the car heeds not the rein.' He therefore is aiding the good-will of the pope, who exhorts him to those things that are especially worthy of Christ.

"It is no secret that there are persons who are stirring up his Holiness against Luther and against all who dare to murmur against their dogmas. But the great princes ought rather to consider what is demanded by the permanent will of the pope, than by a loyalty extorted by base means. What kind of people the authors of these dissensions are I could make perfectly clear, if I did not fear that while I am telling the truth I may seem to be uttering abuse. Many of them I know intimately; many have declared their quality by their writings, so that no mirror could more clearly reflect the image of their heart and life. Would that they who take up the Censor's rod to drive out of the Senate of Christians whomever they will, had drunk more deeply of the teaching and the spirit of Christ....

"I say these things the more freely because I stand

in every way utterly apart from the case of Reuchlin and Luther. I should never care to write things of that sort, nor can I claim so much learning for myself as to defend what others have written, but I cannot help making this mystery plain: that those men [the opponents of Luther] are aiming at something quite different from what they pretend. They have long been unable to bear the idea of sound learning and the languages flourishing, the ancient authors coming to life, who were until just now lying covered with dust and eaten up by moths, the world called back to the original sources themselves. They tremble for their own emptiness, they are unwilling to appear ignorant of anything; they fear to lose something of their own authority. They have long been pressing upon this sore, and at last it has broken, for the pain could no longer be concealed. Before the books of Luther appeared they were most urgent in this thing, especially Dominicans and Carmelites, of whom I would that many were not more wicked than ignorant.

"When Luther's books came out they seized upon them as a handle and began to bring the cause of the languages, of sound learning, of Reuchlin and Luther, nay, even my cause also, together into one bundle,—making not only a bad exposition, but also a bad distinction. For, in the first place, what has sound learning to do with the question of faith, and, in the next place, what have I to do with the case of Reuchlin and Luther? But these people have cunningly mingled these matters together so as to involve in one common hatred all who cultivate sound learning. That they are not acting honestly is evident from this fact: they confess that there is no one among ancient or modern writers who has not made mistakes and they will make a heretic of anyone who obstinately defends himself; but why do they pass over the rest and so persistently examine into one or two? They are not disturbed because Alvarus and the cardinal of San Sisto and Sylvester Prierias have often erred; they say not a word of these because they are Dominicans.

They cry out against Reuchlin alone because he is an enthusiastic lover of the languages; against Luther because they imagine him to be endowed with our learning, whereas he has but just barely touched it. Luther has written many things rather rashly than wickedly, and among these things they are especially enraged because he has little respect for Thomas Aquinas, because he is diminishing the revenue from indulgences, because he cares little for the begging Friars, because he pays less respect to the dogmas of the schools than to the Gospels, because he takes no account of human argumentations about disputed points. Intolerable heresies these are!

"But these things they pass over and make hateful charges to the pope, these men who are united and eager only in doing harm. Formerly the heretic was heard respectfully and absolved if he gave satisfaction, but if he persisted and was convicted, the extreme penalty was that he was not admitted to the communion of the Catholic Church. Now the charge of heresy is a different thing and yet, for some slight reason, no matter what, straightway their mouths are full of the cry: 'This is heresy!' Formerly he was a heretic who differed from the Gospels or the articles of faith or from something which had an authority equal to these. Now, if anyone differ from Thomas, he is called a heretic; nay, if he differ from some new-fangled logic, patched up but yesterday by any sophist of the schools. Whatever they do not like, whatever they do not understand, is heresy! to know Greek is heresy! to speak correctly is heresy! whatever they do not do is heresy! I confess that the charge of violation of the faith is a serious one, but not any and every question ought to be turned into a question of faith. They who deal with matters of faith ought to be far removed from every form of ambition, of money-making, of personal hatred, or of revenge. But what these people are chiefly concerned with, who can be in doubt? If once the reins of their greed are let loose, they will begin everywhere to rage against every good man. Finally they will threaten the bishops themselves

> and even the Roman pontiffs; and in fact you may call me a liar, if we are not seeing this done by some already. How far the order of the Dominicans will dare to go we may learn from Jerome Savonarola and the crime of Bern.[130] I am not bringing up again the bad name of that order, but I am only giving warning as to what we must look out for if they are to succeed in whatever they are bold enough to undertake. What I have said thus far has nothing to do with Luther's cause; I am speaking only of the manner and the danger of it. The case of Reuchlin the pope has taken upon himself. Luther's business is referred to the universities and whatever they may decide is no risk of mine."

The letter concludes with the now familiar protestations that he, Erasmus, has nothing whatever to do with the present troubles, but is merely giving a timely warning.

This letter to Archbishop Albert is the most important in the group we are now considering. It shows us practically every aspect of Erasmus' position in the year 1519, and suggests the numerous lines of comment thereon. The least convincing parts of it are those which refer to himself personally. These may be sufficiently explained by that joy in fancying himself persecuted which we have noted in him from the first. It needed but very slight foundations for him to build up a whole fabric of imaginary assaults, aimed at him because he was the one great source from which all intellectual energy might seem to flow. It was like his vanity to be vastly flattered if someone suggested that Luther could never have done what he had done without Erasmus' help, and he magnified that suggestion by saying it over and over to his numerous correspondents in every possible variation. The repeated declaration

that he knew nothing about Luther or his books is too silly to deserve attention. He shows the most complete comprehension of what Luther was doing, and practically contradicts himself within the space of a few lines by stating that he has "taken a taste" of certain Lutheran books and been greatly attracted by them.

Another curious point is his insistence upon grouping Luther and Reuchlin together and setting himself over against them. In fact the points of view of these two men were at least as different as was that of Erasmus from either of them. Reuchlin was above all things a Humanist, a man of "the languages," and the "tragedy" in which he was concerned, his quarrel with the Dominicans of Cologne, had reference to the use which might properly be made of Hebrew by a sound Christian scholarship. All this was certainly very closely allied with the work of Erasmus and had no direct connection with that of Luther; yet Erasmus, furiously anxious not to seem to have anything in common with either, has no scruple in joining them together in one common reproach.

All this gives an effect of pettiness to Erasmus' attitude towards the Reformation and tends to obscure his actual service. So far as one can get at his real meaning, it is something like this: the real authors of the present troubles are the mysterious people whom he here continually refers to as "certain persons" or "those men," and whom he occasionally defines more specifically as the monks or the enemies of sound learning. Luther is right in calling attention to the evils of church life; he is not the first to do it, and Erasmus heartily agrees with him. "Those people" are attacking Luther because they

feel, as well they may, that their rights and privileges are in danger, if men are going to listen to his criticism. They are catching, therefore, at every excuse to charge him with heresy. Erasmus affects to believe that pope, cardinals, and all good and reasonable men will see through these attempts and will hasten to save the Church by accepting what is valuable in this Lutheran criticism and acting upon it at once.

But,—and here is the line of distinction,—there was also in Luther's appeal an element of doctrine, an implication at least that the Church was false to its own teaching as to the direct relation between God and the soul of man. The consequences of this doctrinal implication were, as Erasmus must have felt at once, of the most far-reaching sort, and he was not prepared to follow them up. An unconditional declaration in Luther's favour would have seemed to commit him to the doctrinal as well as to the practical conclusions from Luther's premises.

This gives at least a shadow of reasonableness to his refinement of distinction between merely reading over the works of Luther and making such careful study of them as would enable him to attempt a reply. On the 23rd of September, 1521, he writes to Bombasius in Bologna[131]:

> "I am wholly occupied with revising my New Testament and some other works, trying like the bears gradually to lick into shape the crude product of my talents. But soon I hope to have more leisure. I have been trying hard to persuade Aleander to give me permission to read Luther's writings; for nowadays the world is full of sycophants and prize-fighters. He said emphatically he could not do this without a special permit from the pope; so I wish you would get this for

> me in the form of some kind of a brief. For I do not want to give a handle to these knaves, who would like nothing better."

His *bête noire* at Louvain seems to have been a person called Egmund, a Carmelite monk, who may serve us as the type of "those persons" who were trying to identify Erasmus with the Lutheran cause. Writing[132] to the *Rector Magnificus* of the University of Louvain, still in 1519, Erasmus says that this Egmund had been expressing the pious hope that as St. Paul had been converted from a persecutor to a doctor of the Church, so Erasmus and Luther might some day be converted.

> "What will become of these men? The one thing they want is to do harm in some way, and it offends them that I am not a Lutheran, as indeed I am not, except in so far as Luther serves the glory of Christ. I know that I am rather free of tongue, but yet no one has heard me approve the doctrine of Luther. I have never taken pains to read his books, excepting a few pages, and these rather skimmed than read. Your contentions against Luther I have always consistently favoured, but far more your writings, especially those of John Turenholtius, who, as I hear, has carried on the discussion in a scholarly way and without personalities."

He has not read Luther, yet he has steadily approved the Louvain contentions against him and especially the writings of a man of whom he knows only by hearsay that he writes in good temper!

> "If his [Luther's] books were to be burnt, no one would find me any the sadder. I have written privately and said many things to prevent him from writing so seditiously, and yet I am called a Lutheran! If these jokes amuse your university, I am man enough to bear

> them; for I would rather do this than take revenge for them; but in my judgment the cause would be better served by other methods. Vincentius is charging me with the tumult in Holland, in which after a most foolish discourse, he came near being stoned to death; whereas the truth is I have never written to any Dutchman either for Luther or against him."

He writes to Mountjoy in the same year[133]:

> "While you are happy for so many reasons I am compelled to fight with certain monsters rather than men. By Hercules! I would like to try what eloquence might do, were it not that as I lay my hand upon the hilt a certain Christian modesty, like Pallas in Homer, seizes me by the hair and restrains me."

So far Erasmus had stood in an attitude of studied neutrality. We have to gather from his emphasis and from the undercurrent of his eloquence our impression as to the side on which his sympathies really lay. If the world could only have stood still long enough for his wise and cautious suggestions to affect the parties, all might yet have been well. Unhappily for the Erasmians of all times, the world moves, and it does not move strictly according to rule. Even while Erasmus was exhorting to mildness, events were forcing men into partisan attitudes which made his counsel of no avail. There were enough men who felt passionately the wrongs which he felt only academically, to force the discussion into the fighting stage. The more this becomes evident, the more clearly we see Erasmus moving over from the position of sympathetic neutrality towards the reforming party into that of suspicion and declared hostility.

In the correspondence we have just quoted, the

weight of emphasis is on the provocation which the reformers had received. They were pretty violent, but their enemies were worse, and if the highest authority were to act at all, it would do better to compel the men of darkness to silence rather than the excellent Luther and his worthy followers. How far Erasmus, whether in 1519-20 or at any later time, really changed his opinion on any of the points at issue, will probably always remain a subject for controversy. We are concerned with the change of emphasis by which his final attitude was determined.

Two letters of 1519, one to Philip Melanchthon, in the centre of the Lutheran camp, and one to the Dominican Jacob Hoogstraaten, the head of the Inquisition at Cologne, will serve to show how evenly at this time Erasmus distributed the discipline he felt himself called upon to administer to the new and more tumultuous generation.

One can hardly help smiling at this passage from the letter to the gentle and peace-loving Melanchthon, by all means the sweetest-natured of all the Reformation champions. Erasmus makes him some very pretty compliments on his books and then goes on[134]:

> "But, if you will take advice from Erasmus, I wish you would take more pains in setting forth good learning than in attacking its enemies. They are indeed worthy of being assailed by good men with every sort of abuse, but, if I am not mistaken, we shall accomplish more in the way I advise. Besides, we ought to fight in such fashion that we may seem to be their superiors, not only in eloquence but also in modesty and in good breeding. Everyone here approves of Martin Luther's character, but there are divers opinions as to his beliefs. I myself have not yet

> read his books. Certain things he is right in calling attention to, but I wish he had done it as happily as he has boldly. I have written about him to Duke Frederic."

This letter to Frederic of Saxony,[135] wanting in our collection, emphasises as strongly as possible the excellence of Luther as a man, and, while disclaiming all interest in his doctrine, urges the Elector to defend him against his persecution.

Doubtless he was no less favourable to Luther than he was in the following year, when the Elector Frederic, finding himself at Cologne on imperial business, had an interview with Erasmus, of which his intimate counsellor and biographer Spalatin gives an account[136]:

> "There at Cologne the most learned Erasmus of Rotterdam was with the Elector, who talked with him on all kinds of subjects and asked him if he believed that Doctor Martin Luther had erred in his writing and preaching. Thereto he answered in Latin: 'Yes, on two points, namely, that he has attacked the crown of the pope and the bellies of the monks.'"

Thereat the Elector laughed and he recalled the saying a year or so before his death (1525).

Luther contributes to our impression of this interview in his Table-talk:

> "Doctor Martin said that the Elector Frederic of Saxony had an interview with Erasmus at Cologne in 1519 and had given him a cloak and said afterward to Spalatin: 'What kind of a man is Erasmus? one cannot tell where one stands with him.' And Duke George said, after his fashion: 'Plague take him! One never knows what he is at. I like better the way of the

Wittenbergers; they say yes and no."'[137]

The letter to Hoogstraaten, who had been the chief enemy of Reuchlin, was the boldest venture of Erasmus in this early stage of the Lutheran contest. It is a monument to the writer's skill in defending two sides of a question at once. It is dated in August, 1519, and begins[138]:

> "When I was reading, some time ago, the books in which your quarrel with Reuchlin is contained, I was often impelled to write to you, first by Christian love, then by the profession of our common studies and further by the special affection with which from a boy I have ever regarded your Order [!], and lastly by an uncommon attraction towards you, whom I understand to be a man of agreeable and courteous manners. That you are most eagerly devoted to our new studies, your writings clearly proclaim, which affect throughout refinement and elegance of diction and leave no doubt what your opinion is as to sound learning."

All this tempted Erasmus to give him some good advice; but then, on the other hand, he reflected that good advice is seldom acceptable and generally harms the adviser. The bishop of Cologne, however, had removed this scruple, and, if he tells the truth about Hoogstraaten, Erasmus thinks he may venture on some gentle admonition. At first he was dreadfully afflicted at Reuchlin's violence; but then friends told him that Reuchlin must have had terrible provocation, for that he was naturally the mildest of men. Then certain persons said hard things of Hoogstraaten, and finally, when Erasmus came to read him, he was compelled to say that he had liked him better before he began to defend himself. Then, a little while after, he had picked up "in another

person's library" certain furious letters against Hoogstraaten and, little as these pleased him, he was able partly to excuse them, having read the pamphlets which had called them forth. He is not fighting Reuchlin's battle; rather Hoogstraaten's, for he is trying to tell him what will be for his advantage. If he answers that this is simply his office as inquisitor, very well; let him perform his office, but in such a manner that he may seem to everyone to be doing solely the service of Christ.

> "Had you not done your duty when after so many years and such a storm of pamphlets you had persecuted a quite obscure man, who perhaps would never have been known at all, if you had not made him famous? and this after the Roman pontiff, learning that the affair was of such a kind that it was better to drop it than keep it in agitation any longer, had ordered silence. If any error dangerous to Christian piety appears, it is first to be carefully worked out by the discussions of learned men and then is to be reported to the bishop. When you have done that your part as inquisitor is done. You have made the inquiry and have brought it before the proper authorities. You are not called upon to stir up heaven and earth and to raise such tumults as these. Would that you had spent as much pains, as much money and time, in preaching the Gospel of Christ. If you had, I am greatly mistaken or Jacob Hoogstraaten would be a greater man than he is now, and his name would be far more honoured among all good men, or at least would be less hated. As it is, a great part of this hatred falls upon your Order, which, heavily burdened already by serious hostilities on many accounts, ought not to be weighed down by new ones."

Then follows a long defence of some words of Erasmus quoted by Hoogstraaten, without naming

their author, but which seemed to draw him into the Reuchlin quarrel. "May Christ be as favourable to me as I am little favourable to the Cabbala!" He cares nothing for the Jews:

> "Who is there among us who does not sufficiently hate this race of men? If it is a Christian thing to hate Jews, we are all good Christians enough! The one thing that makes all the trouble is the neglect of learning. You will be serving much better the cause, not only of the Dominican order, but also of Theology as a whole, if you will check by your authority the vacant abuse of certain persons who everywhere, in public and private discourses, in disputations, at banquets, and what is most serious, in public preaching are brawling against skill in the languages and against polite letters, mingling with their hatred of these, cries of 'Antichrist!' 'heresy!' and other violent words of this sort, whereas it is perfectly clear how greatly the Church is indebted to men skilled in languages and in eloquence. These studies do not hide the dignity of theology, but make it more plain; do not oppose it, but serve it. You would not straightway brand the art of music as heretical, if perchance some musician were to be apprehended as a backslider. The error of the man is to be condemned, but honour is still to be paid to his studies.... If Theology will join in doing honour to these studies she will in turn be adorned by them; but if she abuses and reviles them, I fear it will come to pass, as Paul says, that while they are assailing each other with mutual bites, they will simply be the death of each other."

In view of this correspondence of 1518-19 we may well consider here the much-discussed question of Erasmus' personal courage. Of all the charges brought against him on both sides that of timidity is the most frequent. Of all the explanations of his attitude toward the Reformation this is the most obvious and the most popular. If one can accept it, it

settles promptly and once for all a multitude of perplexing questions. "Why did Erasmus not do or say this thing or that thing? He was afraid." In pursuance of our principle not to pretend to know the motive of every act of Erasmus' life, we shall not attempt to give one answer that will fit all cases, but shall venture to be a little Erasmian ourselves and try to view this matter from more than one side.

We shall have done our work but badly so far if we have not made it clear that Erasmus believed in his right to bring all human institutions to judgment at the bar of his own mind and conscience. Nothing which offended his own sense of right could be wholly acceptable to him. In so far he was an individual, and claimed his right as such. As an individual, with a mind and conscience of his own, he had a right, not only to have opinions upon every subject of human interest, but to express them. There was no call upon him, any more than upon a hundred others, to address himself thus to kings, princes, prelates, popes, inquisitors, and instruct them as to their duty in a great public crisis. He did this out of some impelling sense of duty and of right. If we may put any confidence in anything he ever said or did, we may rely upon this: that he felt himself the spokesman of a cause greater than himself,—the cause of a free and sane scholarship.

He was an individual, but of the fifteenth, not of the eighteenth century. The great word of deliverance to the modern mind, the "*cogito ergo sum*," had not yet been spoken. Man was still content to think of himself as hemmed in by standards of thought and action not created for him by his own mind, but given to him as a part of his human inheritance from the traditions of the past. No

estimate of individual force can be complete without this limitation. If Erasmus had lived in the eighteenth century, he might have been a Voltaire; but he was not living in the eighteenth century. He saw where his time was out of joint, but he did not believe himself called upon to set it right. His function was only to point out the evils and, so far as he could, to appeal to those in authority to remedy them.

A man merely timid and nothing more could have found a far easier way to keep himself safe from any danger of persecution. He might simply have kept silent, and no one could have said it was his duty to speak out. It required a very considerable exercise of courage to say even as much as Erasmus was willing to say, in a day when Savonarola had so lately been done to death for merely attempting to set up in Florence a kingdom of Christ without the help of the pope. The arm of the Inquisition was long, its watch was vigilant, and its weapons were subtle. A man who valued merely his own peace of mind would hardly be likely to incur its displeasure. So far we may go in granting to Erasmus the quality of courage. He knew he was making enemies among powerful vested interests. If his principles of sound learning and reasonable criticism were to prevail, then, as he frequently said, the profits of a vast body of place-holders and traders in all sacred things were going to be diminished, and they would not suffer this without making a great demonstration of their power.

On the other hand, nothing was farther from his nature than any kind of open rupture with established forms of organisation. His hatred of war extended to the world of institutions. Revolution was abhorrent to him, because he thought its evils were

greater than any advantage it might bring. The moment he fancied he saw this spectre of revolution, even in the far distance, he was impelled to modify and explain and warn until he had, for the moment, satisfied his sense of what was wise and prudent.

The genius of Erasmus was eminently critical, not constructive. His misfortune was to live at a crisis when the merely critical attitude would no longer serve. The struggle for new construction was beginning, and there was where Erasmus began to fail. Men were looking to him for leadership. Probably he grossly exaggerates the degree to which all the criticism of the day was charged upon him. That exaggeration was nothing more than we might expect from his nervous vanity and his uncontrollable impulse to make literature whenever he took pen in hand. Still it contains just this germ of truth: that the world of scholars felt his power and would have been glad to follow his lead if he had chosen to take a leader's place.

How natural the expectation was that Erasmus would do this we may see from an entry in the diary of Albert Dürer.[139] It was the year 1521. Luther on his return from Worms had been spirited away, no one knew whither. Rumours of his death were spread abroad and carried terror to his numerous followers. The simple-hearted painter who the year before had visited Erasmus in the Low Countries was overwhelmed with dismay. In the midst of his prosaic little jottings down of travels, paintings, presents, and petty bargainings he suddenly breaks out into a wail of despair:

> "Ah God! is Luther dead; who will henceforth so clearly set forth the Gospel to us? Ah God! what might

> he not have written in the next ten or twenty years! Oh! all ye pious Christian men, help me earnestly to pray and mourn for this God-inspired man, and pray to God that he send us another enlightened man.
>
> "Oh! Erasmus of Rotterdam, where art thou? Behold what the unjust tyranny of earthly power, the might of darkness, can do. Hear, thou champion of Christ! ride forth by the side of the Lord Christ; defend the truth; gain the martyr's crown! As it is, thou art but a frail old man. I have heard thee say thou hadst given thyself but a couple more years of active service; spend them, I pray, to the profit of the Gospel and the true Christian faith and believe me the gates of Hell, the See of Rome, as Christ has said, will not prevail against thee. And though thou becomest like thy master Christ and bearest shame from the liars of this world and so diest a little earlier, yet wilt thou so much the sooner pass from death unto life and be glorified in Christ. For if thou shalt drink of the cup he drank of, so wilt thou reign with him and judge with equity them that have done foolishness. O Erasmus! stand by us, that God may praise thee, as is written of David; for thou art mighty and thou canst slay Goliath; for God stands by the holy Christian churches, as he stands also among the Romans, according to his divine will."

Doubtless this heartfelt petition of the excellent Dürer represents the first impulse of many an honest soul who thought of Erasmus as a man straightforward as himself, and without any special knowledge of him jumped to the conclusion that here was the natural leader of a redeemed generation. No such illusion could long affect anyone who had come to know him in his true character.


IMAGO · ERASMI · ROTERODA
MI · AB · ALBERTO · DVRERO · AD
VIVAM · EFFIGIEM · DELINIATA ·
ΤΗΝ · ΚΡΕΙΤΤΩ · ΤΑ · ΣΥΓΓΡΑΜ
ΜΑΤΑ · ΜΙΞΕΙ
· M D X X V I ·

ERASMUS.

FROM A COPPER ENGRAVING BY ALBERT

It is somewhat difficult to imagine what Erasmus would have done if his personal safety had been seriously brought into question. It is not impossible that, if the issue of retraction or punishment had ever been squarely presented to him by any authority capable of enforcing its judgment, he might have risen to a higher plane of action than he was ever in fact called upon to reach. Such attacks as he had to meet were wholly from individuals, representing no recognised authority either of Church or State, and his defence was always that the highest persons in both these worlds had approved him. This judgment is at all events more favourable than Erasmus was sometimes inclined to demand for himself. Writing to Richard Pace in the critical year 1521 he says[140]:

> "What help could I give Luther, by making myself the companion of his danger, except that two men should perish instead of one? I cannot wonder enough at the temper in which he has written, and surely he has brought great enmity upon the friends of sound learning. He has given us many splendid sayings and warnings; but would that he had not spoiled his good things by his intolerable faults. But even if everything he wrote had been right, I had no intention of putting my head in danger for the sake of the truth. It isn't every one that has the strength for martyrdom, and I sadly fear that if any tumult should arise, I should follow the example of Peter. I obey the decrees of emperor and pope when they are right, because that is my duty; when they are wrong I bear it, because that is the safe plan. This I believe to be permitted even to good men if there is no hope of improvement."

There was precisely the point. Erasmus was ready to bear the ills of the world because he saw no power

at hand disposed to remedy them. When others began to take the remedy into their own hands, then he could see in their efforts only riot, confusion, sedition, and all their attendant brood of horrors.

CHAPTER IX
DEFINITE BREACH WITH THE REFORMING PARTIES—HUTTEN'S "EXPOSTULATIO" AND ERASMUS' "SPONGIA"
1520-1523

WE have followed the course of Erasmus' thought during these first critical years, 1518 and 1519, when the purpose of the Lutheran movement was shaping itself into a definite policy. It could not be said that Luther had at the outset any "programme" whatever. His leadership was to be defined by the resistless logic of the events which were now following in swift succession, each leading to the next with compelling force. In 1518 Luther had gone as far as Augsburg to meet the papal legate Cajetanus, who had simply ordered him to retract. Luther had replied that he was ready to be instructed, but until better informed, he was *bound* by the word of God and could not think otherwise than as he did. He had got safely out of Augsburg, but never again risked himself within the papal grasp. In 1519 he had accepted the challenge of John Eck of Ingolstadt, one of the most skilful disputants of the day according to the scholastic method, to meet him at Leipzig under the protection of Duke George of Saxony and there discuss the issues presented by the Theses. So long as the discussion had kept to the traditional lines of mediæval argumentation Luther had felt himself at a

disadvantage. He had chafed under this feeling and finally had allowed himself to be entrapped into that magnificent burst of passion in which he had declared that in the writings of the condemned heretic, John Hus, there was much that was "right Christian and evangelical." For the first time and partly without his own will he had said that the papacy was not an essential element of the church organisation.

Henceforth there was no room for compromise. The papacy, now fairly aroused to the magnitude of the situation, replied in 1520, at Eck's prompting, with its last weapon, the bull of excommunication. This weapon fell absolutely harmless. The academic youth of Wittenberg, with Luther at their head, marched in festive procession to the Elstergate, kindled a bonfire, and threw into it the offending document. But this was not all. Papal bulls had often met this fate before, without serious loss of prestige for the authority which lay behind them. This time, however, not merely the bull in question, but also a copy of the Canon Law, the whole body of legal authority on which the power to issue bulls rested, was committed to the flames. That meant, not merely that Luther and all who supported him refused to obey this particular decree, but that they proposed to emancipate themselves, once for all, from the control of the whole system which it represented. With this step the Lutheran movement passed from the stage of Reformation to the stage of Revolution.

At this point the eminently constructive nature of Luther's genius began to display itself. He had not rejected one authority in order to escape all authority. He had not thrown aside one ecclesiastical order, to leave the Church without any order at all.

In those splendid proclamations of the year 1520, "The Babylonian Captivity of the Church," the "Address to the Christian Nobility of Germany," and the "Freedom of the Christian Man," he unfolded his programme for a new and purified church order on the basis of the Christian state. Luther's apologists in Germany have sought to save him from the charge, dreadful to German ears, of being a revolutionist. Let us, citizens of a nation to which revolution has meant only the entrance into a larger and a better-ordered public life, admit frankly that the action of North Germany in the years following 1520 was, so far as church matters were concerned, revolutionary, and that only as such can it be justified or understood. True, it was defended then and has been defended ever since as being merely a return to an order of things once realised in the early Church. But when a body of institutions have held their own for a thousand years their overthrow cannot be disguised by any gentle figures of speech about mere reformation and restoration.

That the world of Europe in 1520 felt itself involved in a work of revolution is abundantly proved by the action of every party concerned. That the papacy should so regard it was self-evident. All reformation which should go beyond the stage of merely commending virtue and condemning vice must seem to it revolutionary. Its fundamental proposition was that all which was had, in its essence, always been, and that every innovation must therefore tend to destroy something essential to the very nature of the Church. From the moment when the papal government began at all to comprehend the meaning of the German revolt, it began to treat it as revolution.

More striking still, however, is the rapidity with which all the restless elements of society recognised that here was an idea closely akin to their own instinct of revolution. Hardly had Luther's first propositions, temperate and modest as they were, been put forth, when, in his immediate circle of influence, men were found who were ready to draw the last logical consequences from them. If it was true that men were justified in the sight of God solely by faith, then obviously there was no need of any mediating agency whatever. Away with all forms, priesthoods, ceremonies, and sacraments as so much useless rubbish piled up by centuries of wrong! If it was true that God's dealing with man was direct and not indirect, then why might not men look for immediate inspiration of the divine spirit as of old before all this machinery of priests and forms had been invented? If the word of God was not to be bound by a papacy, why let it be bound by an ancient book, in which, as was well known, there was a plenty of errors and falsities? Had God, then, ceased to communicate with man? All these questions were asked by men of thought and education; and the answers were not slow in coming. They came, as in times of great social unrest they always come, in the form of wild theories and passionate claims, none of which was quite without a basis of reason, but which, taken together, called up a ghastly spectre that could bear no other name than Revolution. The message of deliverance from the bondage of personal sin without the aid of a corrupt and greedy church establishment swelled rapidly into a summons to deliverance from every form of restraint and oppression. The men of theory, the Carlstadts and the Münzers, carried the word to the men of action and of suffering. From 1522 to 1524

the gospel of freedom through faith was being worked over to suit the needs of the vast peasant population of Middle and Western Germany. In 1524 and 1525 it burst out in the furious cry of these oppressed classes for equality of rights as the social expression of the equality of salvation. Subtle economic causes were, as always, at work and were leading in the same direction.

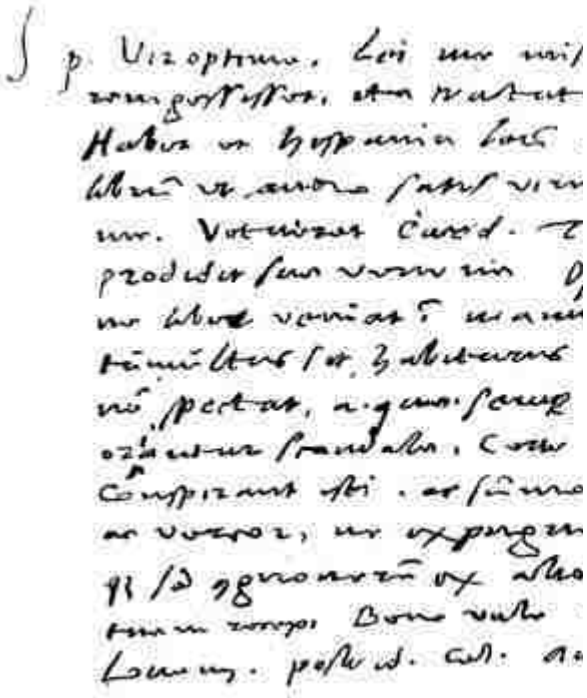
Just as the papacy was quick to recognise the revolutionary meaning of the Lutheran propositions, so Luther recognised how essentially revolutionary were all these wider movements which, quite against his will, had made use of his initiative to gain headway for themselves. In his retreat on the Wartburg after the Diet at Worms he heard of the radical doings of Carlstadt and the prophets from Zwickau at Wittenberg. At once he saw the danger and hurried to meet it. He succeeded in purifying Wittenberg from the taint of fanaticism only to scatter its seeds far and wide over the land. Henceforth it became perhaps the most important and distinctly the most difficult problem of the Lutheran party to show to the world its conservative and constructive side, without withdrawing for a moment from its original position of hostility to the papal system.

And, finally, from the political side, the revolutionary tendencies of the Lutheran position were no less clearly visible. Luther's perfectly sound instinct had shown him from the first that the German people were not to be carried away by any abstractions of democracy. Nor, on the other hand, was there any hope of reviving the ancient authority of the emperor. Luther's appeal to the German nobility was based on the fact that whatever political

virtue there was in Germany was to be found in its princes, and the response of the princes proved them equal to the emergency. The call to defend the new religion involved also the prospect of complete deliverance from all imperial control.

The full meaning of the Lutheran movement is, of course, far clearer to us than it could have been to anyone in the year 1520, and yet as early as 1525 every one of the points of view just indicated had been clearly recognised by every thoughtful observer. The tendencies were plain; the question was, how soon and how far would tendencies develop into facts.

In such a mortal strife as this where was there room for poor Erasmus? The answer to this question is the history of the seventeen remaining years of his life—years as full of activity as any that had gone before them. Protest as he might that this struggle was none of his, it is evident that it formed the real undertone of his thought and drew from him the utterances by which his character as a public man has ever since been estimated. We may, without unduly stretching the meaning of his changing attitude towards the reform, divide it into three stages. Until 1520 we feel the note of sympathy and the desire merely to restrain excesses. After that year, and increasingly as the economic and social results began to appear, we find the attitude of direct hostility becoming more pronounced. Finally, under the increasing pressure to justify himself in this hostility, we find Erasmus laying down in more formal shape his philosophical and theological position as against that of the Lutheran party.



FACSIMILE OF LETTER OF ER

EXIMIO TH
LA

S. p. Vir optime. Lei me miseresceret, ni tam virulen
et Hispania Leum alterum. Zuniga quidam edidit libr
Vetuerat Cardinalis Toletanus defunctus. Eo mortuo pr
veniat in manus meas. Nescio quem finem hic tumultu
qua semper abhorrui. Si necesse est ut oriantur scanda
isti, ac summorum regum aulas oppugnant, ac vereo
cognoveram ex aliorum litteris. Utramque epistolam tua

LOVANII, postrid. Cal. Aug.

TO THE DISTINGU
JOHANN

GREETING.

MOST EXCELLENT SIR:

I should be sorry for Lee, if he had not been so viol Englishmen. In Spain there is a second Lee. A certair against Faber and me. The late Cardinal of Toledo had given forth his poison. I have not seen the work, and let not what will be the end of this disturbance. Everyt abhorred. If it must be that offences come, at any r conspiring with all their might; they are besieging th overcome them. All that I know about Philip and Œcola your letters I have received.

Farewell, beloved in the Lord.

LOUVAIN, Aug. 2, [1521?].

The group of letters cited above reflect an agitated, nervous uncertainty of mind on Erasmus' part. They are filled largely with negations, so arranged as to balance each other with considerable success. They leave on our minds the impression of a dual personality: on the one hand a man childishly sensitive to abuse and fancying that every misdirected shaft of the popular wit or feeling was aimed at him; on the other hand, a man of wide and clear vision, with an outlook over the whole field of human interests and with a perfectly sound comprehension of the ultimate principles by which these interests must be regulated. His chief source of difficulty was his failure to admit the distinctions between the destructive and the constructive forces of the reform. While Luther was using all his energies to make clear to the world that what he aimed at

was reconstruction, Erasmus persisted in confounding in one sweeping condemnation all the elements of disturbance he saw abroad in the world. As he had connected Luther and Reuchlin in his declarations of ignorance and hostility, so, as time went on, he mingled Lutherans, Anabaptists, Zwinglians, and all the swarm of popular agitators in his indictments. Yet he constantly lets it appear that he knew as well as anyone the deep-seated distinctions in the reforming groups. He chose to confuse them in his public utterances, in order to keep himself right with that great Establishment which was the mortal enemy of them all.

Meanwhile the practical problem of the Lutheran reform was shaping itself rapidly in accordance with the whole previous development of the German people. The death of the Emperor Maximilian was an event of slight importance, excepting as it opened the way for one of those great electoral contests, which from time to time came to remind the German nation of its own peculiar political character. We must dismiss once for all the fancy that the elected emperor resembled, except in the vaguest fashion, the great hereditary monarchs of England, France, or Spain. So far as his imperial quality was concerned, he had long since become the merest anachronism. He was emperor of nothing but a title; and he owed his title to a group of princes whose liberties he was bound to respect, even to the point of self-destruction. Territorially, he might be strong or weak, according to the personal sovereignty which he held before he became emperor. Politically he had as much weight as he could personally command, and no more. He might be a German or he might not.

The electoral canvass of 1519-20 was the most

elaborate the empire had ever seen. The kings of Spain, France, and England were all, at one time or another, among the candidates. A German national party, which saw the hope of the nation in a policy of separation from all "imperial" interests, was eager for a purely German emperor and put forward as its candidate the venerable Frederic, Prince-Elector of Saxony, the immediate sovereign of Luther. If Frederic had acted promptly and put himself decidedly at the head of this German national party it seems as if he might have been elected. He hesitated, declined on grounds of personal distrust, and finally gave his electoral vote for that one among the foreign candidates who seemed least likely to abuse the constitutional privileges of the German princes.

Charles V., grandson of Maximilian through that Archduke Philip to whom Erasmus had written his panegyric in 1504, grandson also of Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain through their daughter Joanna, grandson again of that Mary of Burgundy who had carried the Low Countries as her most precious dower to her husband Maximilian, was a youth of twenty, a German only by virtue of a strain of badly diluted Habsburg blood, educated under Spanish influence in the Low Countries, ignorant of the German tongue, and totally unsympathetic with the character and traditions of the German people. The very conception of the German state as a loose federation of practically independent principalities was utterly foreign to his training and his inheritance.

The election of Charles V. gave courage to all defenders of the existing church order. As to his personal orthodoxy there could be no question

whatever. Nor was there any more reason to doubt his loyalty to the traditions of his family as to the duty of a Christian ruler toward the institutions of what passed for Christianity. If there had been any room for question on these points, it would have been removed by Charles's action in the Low Countries in the very first years of the Lutheran revolt. He had taken hold of the matter with a strong hand and demonstrated his loyalty by prompt action against heretical books and persons. His first great public declaration of policy, however, was at his first appearance on German soil at the famous Diet at Worms in 1521. It was, properly, regarded as a piece of liberality that Luther was invited to come personally to Worms and defend himself before the emperor and the legate of Pope Leo X., that same Aleander who had been a fellow-worker with Erasmus in the Aldine workshop at Venice. Luther was already a condemned heretic. The only question was whether the Empire as such would ratify the action of the pope and lend its arm to enforce the papal decrees.

Luther's journey from Wittenberg and his appearance in Worms were a demonstration of his popularity throughout Northern Germany. Charles V., youth as he was, was too clever a politician to offend too deeply at this outset of his reign a whole people whose services he might at any moment sorely need. He heard Luther with patience, he respected his safe-conduct, and let him return to Saxony in safety; but he published as the formal decision of the Diet the Edict of Worms, wherein Luther was declared in the ban of the Empire as he was already in the ban of the Church, and his books were condemned to be burned wherever found.

The Edict of Worms defined the official attitude of the Empire towards the reform from this time forth. It lacked nothing in clearness and finality. Henceforth, whoever within the limits of the Empire harboured either the man or his ideas was subject to immediate punishment. The question, however, still remained, how the Edict of Worms was to be enforced, and the answer to that question is the history of Germany and even of Europe for the next generation. Enough for our present purpose to say that the immediate pressure of political and military demands outside of Germany compelled the young emperor to postpone definite aggressive action against the Lutheran party until the course of events had separated the whole north of Germany from all but a nominal connection with the Empire. We are concerned with the action of Erasmus upon these events and their reaction upon his course of life.

Erasmus left Louvain in 1521. As to his motives in this change we are as much in the dark as about any of his former migrations. We know what his critics said about it and what he replied to their criticisms. They said he was afraid to stay in a country where heretics were being arrested every day and where, as he had all along been declaring, he was regarded as the head and front of this whole offending. He replied that this was pure nonsense, as could be clearly proved by the fact that after leaving Louvain he still lingered for several months in the Low Countries before taking up his journey to Basel. He went to Basel, he said, for the same reasons which had carried him thither before; namely, to superintend the publication of some of his works.

The most detailed account of this interval between Louvain and Basel is given in a long letter,

[141] dated in 1523, to Marcus Laurinus, dean of St. Donatian at Bruges. The tone of this letter is that which had now become habitual with Erasmus, namely, of elaborate defence against all charges, no matter from what source, which could in any way affect his loyalty to the Roman Church on the one hand or to his own principle of free criticism on the other. His especial grievance is the charge of cowardice in leaving Louvain.

> "As long as I was at Louvain," he writes, "whenever I went to Brussels or Mechlin, though I had promised to return within ten days, those people, who are ashamed of nothing, would spread a rumour that I had run away through fear. Then when I was taking a holiday for my health at Anderlech, a place close by Brussels, where the king's palace is, and often running back to Louvain,—why then, I was in hiding! Frequently, I was at the same moment down with a hopeless fever at Louvain and had fallen from my horse and died of apoplexy at Brussels; and this at a time when I was—thanks be to Christ!—never better in my life. It was not enough to have killed the hapless Erasmus once for all, but they must needs butcher him with so many diseases, slay him with such a variety of tortures!
>
> "I did not go to the assembly at Worms,—or as learned men are now beginning to call it at 'Mutton-headtown,'—although I was invited, partly because I did not wish to be involved in the affair of Luther, which was then violently discussed; partly because I easily foresaw that in such a great sewage of princes and men of various races, the plague could not fail to appear as it did at Cologne when the emperor was first there.
>
> "When the emperor came back to Brussels, there was scarcely a day that I did not ride through the market-place and past the court and often I was about the court; in fact, I was almost more a resident at

Brussels than at Anderlech. I daily paid my compliments to the bishops, though ordinarily I was not overzealous in such matters. I dined with the cardinal. I conversed with both nuncios; I visited ambassadors and they called upon me at Anderlech. Never in my life was I less in concealment, never more openly before the eyes of all men. And meanwhile there were some among those babblers who wrote to Germany that Erasmus was somewhere in hiding,—which I never found out until I got here in Basel. And again when the emperor was at Brussels with the king of Denmark, and Thomas, cardinal of York, was there as ambassador of the king of England, you know yourself, even if I had kept myself to your house, how much in hiding I should have been; since you had all, or at least the chief dignitaries of the court at your table and I was sitting among them a welcome guest, as I believe, to them all. How often I lunched or dined with the foremost men, even with the king of Denmark, who wanted me as his daily table-companion! Where did I not go riding, often in company with you! At what festivity of the great people was I not present—now at the imperial court, now in the family of the cardinal of York, now at one house, now at another! Yet I often refused invitations; for I am by nature a home-lover and my studies require a home-keeping life.

"In the same way that I was then hiding, I afterward ran away! For six whole months I was getting ready for my journey to Basel and that openly before all men. Why, the emperor's treasurer paid over my pension before it was due, because I told him I was going to Basel! Nor was the reason for my journey unknown, it being the same for which I had already so often gone to Basel before I became afraid of those heroes!... I was all ready to start, waiting only to decide upon the road and to have a safe escort. Meanwhile I had to collect money in divers places and for this purpose spent six days at Louvain,—hiding there too, of course, as my custom was,—at an inn where no guests ever came, so that it is a most retired

> place! It is at the sign of The Savage. By the purest accident there was there at the time Jerome Aleander, with whom I lived on the most friendly terms, sometimes sitting with him over literary talk until far into the night. We agreed that if a safe escort should offer, we would journey together. Returning after a few days I found Aleander getting ready to start, just as I was.... It was my birthday and that of the apostles Simon and Jude."

Having thus proved that up to the very moment of his departure he was on the best of terms with everyone in the Low Countries from whom he could have anything to fear, even with Aleander, the archfiend of the Lutherans, Erasmus goes on to describe his journey. There is nothing especially noteworthy in this description. It is the same old story of dangers and wearinesses by the way, of German inns and German stoves and the troubles they brought him. Yet in the little notes of persons whom he met and how they received him we get some of the most significant and attractive glimpses of the widespread relations of Erasmus with every grade of scholarly activity. In these accounts of journeys occur frequently the words *sodalitium* and *fraternitas*. At Strassburg Jacob Spiegel, an imperial secretary, presented him to "the fraternity." From Schlettstadt "certain of the fraternity" escorted him to Colmar. These words seem to refer to the group of scholars in any city and give us a pleasant suggestion of the growing comradeship of learning all through the northern centres of culture.

He tells us how warmly he was received at Basel by the bishop, the magistrates, and other chief men of the church and the university. Everybody knew that he was there, and yet

> "those fools were spreading the story that I had gone over to Wittenberg. Is there anything they would be ashamed of? My health was fairly good at Basel until the rooms began to be cold. When I found that this cold was unbearable to others, I suffered a moderate fire to be built now and then, but this good-nature cost me dear. Soon a vile rheum broke out and thereupon followed the gravel."

Then his digestion went to pieces—until, what with one thing and another, he was wretched enough "to suit even Nicholas Egmund," his Carmelite terror at Louvain.

In spite of his pains, however, he went to work and kept at it so steadily that within a short time he finished his annotations to the third edition of the New Testament, and did the whole of his Paraphrase of Matthew. This latter work he sent to the emperor, and was informed that it had been received with great favour. The best proof of this was, that at a moment when many pensions were being taken away or cut down, he was promised that his should be maintained and perhaps even increased. He takes this occasion to defend himself against the charge of staying so long away from the emperor through fear, as was alleged. The only thing he feared was that he might be called upon to write against Luther "by one whose request could not be denied. Not that I favoured that seditious affair, being as I am a man who shrinks from all controversy by a certain instinct of nature; so that if I might gain a landed estate by a lawsuit I would rather lose my estate than push my claim." He goes on in this strain at such length that one can hardly avoid the conclusion that we are here touching upon the real reason of his leaving Louvain. It is a tolerably safe principle that when Erasmus is especially insistent he is trying to make the worse

appear the better reason. He insists that he was totally unfit for such work of controversy and ends up by saying that in spite of all this he would have gone back to meet the emperor if his disease had permitted. Indeed he tried the journey, got as far as Schlettstadt, broke down completely, and barely got back alive to Basel. By this time it was too late to see the emperor, who was to sail for Spain about May 1st. So Erasmus stayed a while longer at Basel, restless and fidgeting as usual. Now it was a new dream of Italy that haunted him. He was, or believed himself to be, or wished others to believe that he was, invited by a host of distinguished well-wishers there to come and take up his residence among them. In fact he made a journey to Constance with his young friends Eppendorf and Beatus. They were charmingly entertained by John Botzheim, a canon of the place, and we owe to this visit one of the very few descriptions of natural scenery which Erasmus has left us. He seems for once really to have been captivated by the delightful situation of Constance, the beautiful lake, the course of the Rhine, "holding islands in its smiling embrace," the falls at Schaffhausen, and the towering Alps looking down upon the whole scene. We may well believe that, at least when he wrote these words, the sentiment of Italy was strong upon him. An escort, he says, was just ready to start for Trent. "The Alps smiling down upon me close at hand beckoned me on. My friends dissuaded me, but they would have done so in vain, if the gravel, that potent orator, had not persuaded me to go back to Basel and fly up into my nest again."

He remained three weeks at Constance in great suffering, took ship as far as Schaffhausen, and so back as fast as he could ride to Basel. I confess to a

strong impression that these two trips, to Schlettstadt and to Constance, were merely excursions, such as Erasmus was constantly making from any point where he happened to be living, and that he had no more intention of going to Italy in the one case than of returning to Louvain in the other. Yet one would equally hesitate to say that he had a fixed purpose of remaining permanently at Basel.

On his return Erasmus enjoyed a genuine sensation, which seems almost to have marked an epoch in his life. This seemed the favourable moment to open a package of choice Burgundy, sent to him some time before by the episcopal coadjutor of Basel. "At the first taste it did not wholly please the palate, but the night brought out the native quality of the wine." He felt himself a new man. He had always believed that his disease was brought on by vile sour and adulterated wines, "worthy to be drunk by heretics, punishment fit for the worst malefactor." He had tried Burgundian wines before, but they were harsh and heating. This was just right, neither sweet nor sour, but pleasant, and so on. He bursts out into a eulogy of Burgundy, that happy land, "worthy to be called the mother of men, since thou hast milk like this in thy breasts!" "I tell you, my dear Laurinus, it would take little to persuade me to move over for good into Burgundy. 'For the wine's sake?' you ask. Why, I would rather migrate to Ireland than try another attack of the gravel." This sends him off again into declarations that he is everywhere a welcome guest.

The point of all this seems to be that he wishes to have it quite clear that while it is on the one hand perfectly safe for him to go or stay where he will, he is, on the other hand, equally free from any

permanent ties anywhere. Someone had reported that he had bought a house and acquired the right of citizenship at Basel. This he denies. To be sure, the house in which he is now living had been offered him by some friends, but he has not accepted it. As for citizenship, he has never so much as dreamed of it. "A certain person of importance at Zürich has more than once written to offer me the right of citizenship there. I wondered why he should do this, and replied that I preferred to be a citizen of the world, rather than of any one city."

Once set going on this subject it seems as if Erasmus could not stop. He now pays his respects to those who reported, with some reason, he says, that he was thinking of going to France. Having found the secret of his disease in the badness of his wines, he begins to wonder what will happen to him if, by reason of wars, he should be unable to get his Burgundy direct. Perhaps, after all, it would be wiser to go over into France, where he would at least be sure of his wine. He even went so far as to get from the French king through his ambassador at Basel a safe-conduct for the journey, and kept reminding himself how fond he had always been of France—a fondness which, by the way, he had shown by keeping out of France for now about fifteen years. If he had only accepted that "magnificent offer" of six years before, he would have been spared all these "tragedies" with those stupid babblers at Louvain. Perhaps his health and his fortunes might have been better too. It would be pleasant to be near the borders of Brabant, so that he might run over and see his friends there. But there was just one obstacle: the war between the three kings. To Charles he was bound by an oath; to Henry and the whole English people by ties of affection; to Francis also by

irresistible attachment on account of the king's interest in him. Of course it would never do for so important a personage as Erasmus to offend two of his royal friends by going to live with the third.

Why did he not come back to Brabant? He hears that there is there just now a great scarcity of everything, but especially of French wines, and besides "a sword has been given to certain violent men, to whom one can be neither a colleague nor an opponent." There are enemies in every direction.

> "Rome has her Stunica; Germany has some who can't say a good word of me. I hear that certain 'Lutherans,' as they call them, are complaining because I am too gentle with the princes and too fond of peace. I confess I would rather err on this side, not only because it is safer, but because it is a more holy cause. Everyone to his taste. There are those on the other side who try to cast on me the suspicion of being in league with the Lutherans."

Now each party seemed to Erasmus to be trying to catch him by stirring him up against the other. They told him his books had been burnt in Brabant by Hoogstraaten, hoping to make him write something against the inquisitor which would drive him over definitely into the Lutheran camp. Poor Botzheim at Constance wrote, *pene exanimatus* ("scared almost to death,"), that Erasmus' books had been publicly condemned at Rome by papal order. These traps had been sprung in vain. He had seen through the trick and kept his peace and the truth had come out. Far from condemning him, the papal party at Rome had done its best to win him to its service, even offering him a considerable benefice if he would come. Then this again had produced countercharges of bribery, which he very properly

dismisses by saying: "If I could have been drawn into this fight by bribes I should have been drawn in long ago." Now he hears a third rumour, worse than the other two: the pope has written some kind of a pamphlet against him! but again he sees the trick; they want to make him say something against the pope. Others say that Lutherans are flocking to Basel to consult with him, some even that Luther is in hiding there.

> "Would that it were true that all Lutherans and anti-Lutherans too, would come for my advice and agree to follow it; the world would be far better off in my opinion. Many persons have come hither to see and to salute me, sometimes in companies and generally unknown to me; but never has one called himself a Lutheran in my presence; it is not my business to make inquiries and I am no prophet. Before this trouble broke out I was in literary correspondence with almost all the scholars of Germany, to me a most agreeable relation. Of these some have given me the cold shoulder, some are quite estranged from me, and some are my open enemies and seeking my ruin. Some were good friends of mine, who are now more severe towards Luther than I could wish and more than is good for their cause. I dismiss no one from my friendship either because he is too friendly or too hostile to Luther; each acts in good faith.
>
> "Men have come to Basel who were said to be under suspicion of being partisans of Luther, and I am ready to have this all charged upon me, if a single one of them has ever come by my invitation or if I have not protested to my friends that it was exceedingly disagreeable to me. If persons of this or that faction come hither, with what reason can this be laid upon me? I am not the gatekeeper of Basel and hold no magistracy here! Hutten was here as a visitor for a few days and neither came to see me nor did I visit him. And yet if it had depended upon me, I would not have

> denied him an interview, an old friend and a man whose wonderfully happy and genial talents I cannot even now help admiring.... He could not do without a stove, on account of his health, and I cannot bear one, and so the fact is, we did not see each other."

He would not hesitate, he says, to receive Luther himself, and would give him some wholesome warnings. There is good on both sides. "I am not sure that either side can be put down without grave disaster to many good things." If only it might be permitted him to be a mere spectator of events! But here he is, pulled hither and yon by the parties, each trying to make him declare himself squarely against the other. While one party was accusing him of being the author of most of the Lutheran writings, the other suspected him of having written King Henry's famous answer to Luther. Upon this welcome text Erasmus builds up a long story of his first acquaintance with this royal treatise, a story as unimportant as the book itself. The outcome of it all is that he is firmly convinced that the king wrote the book with his own wits. "Even if he desired the help of scholars, his court is filled with learned and eloquent men." Again they tell him that four years ago he ought to have retired from the stage, content with his great services to theology, his restoration of the true sources of Christianity, etc. All this is very flattering, but he is held to his work by a *choragos* whose orders he dare not disobey.

Once more, he is charged with speaking too highly of the pope. What he says of Leo is very well, but, they say, how can we be sure of Leo's successor. Well, there have been good popes before Leo, and why not after him? They say "Erasmus ought to declare: 'Thou, pope, art Antichrist! you, bishops, are

false leaders! that Roman see of yours is an abomination to God!' and many other such things and worse." This is the old Erasmian method, which he had consistently followed from the beginning—to confine his criticism to evil men and refrain from criticising institutions. If men were good, institutions would be good.

Finally we come to the charge that Erasmus, in his paraphrase of the ninth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, had allowed "a little something" to the freedom of the human will. This is our first encounter with a strictly dogmatic question, the one by which the whole Lutheran position was to stand or fall. We have, however, prepared ourselves for Erasmus' inevitable attitude on this point by noting his insistence, throughout all his moral teaching, upon the individual will as the dominant motive. For the moment he defends himself only by declaring that in his Paraphrase he is merely following all the best authorities in the Church from Origen to Aquinas. He wrote the passage in question in 1517, before Luther had appeared, so that it can in no way be thought of as an attack upon him. Moreover, it is the mildest possible statement of a free-will doctrine.

> "*Some* weight is to be given to our will and our endeavour, but so little that in comparison with the grace of God it seems to be as nothing. No man is condemned, except by his own fault; but no one is saved, except by God's grace.... I saw on the one hand Scylla luring us on to confidence in works, which I believe to be the worst plague of religion. On the other hand I saw Charybdis, a worse monster yet, by whom many are now being attracted, who say: Let us follow our own lusts; whether we torment ourselves or indulge our wills, what God has decreed will happen all the same."

So his language has been moderate, and he has hoped simply to aid men to virtue. The close of this letter is a really eloquent bit of self-analysis.

> "If any there be, who cannot love Erasmus because he is a feeble Christian, let him think of me as he will. I cannot be other than I am. If any man has from Christ greater gifts of the Spirit and is sure of himself, let him use them for the glory of Christ. Meanwhile it is more to my mind to follow a more humble and a safer way. I cannot help hating dissension and loving peace and harmony. I see how obscure all human affairs are. I see how much easier it is to stir up confusion than to allay it. I have learned how many are the devices of Satan. I should not dare to trust my own spirit in all things and I am far from being able to pronounce with certainty on the spirit of another. I would that all might strive together for the triumph of Christ and the peace of the Gospel, and that without violence, but in truth and reason, we might take counsel both for the dignity of the priesthood and for the liberty of the people, whom our Lord Jesus desired to be free. To those who go about to this end to the best of their ability Erasmus shall not be wanting. But if anyone desires to throw everything into confusion, he shall not have me either for a leader or a companion. These people claim for themselves the working of the Spirit. Well, let people on whom the divine spirit has breathed jump with good hopes into the ranks of the prophets. That Spirit has not yet seized upon me; when it does, then perhaps I too shall be counted as Saul among the prophets."

In this long letter, written obviously with a view to publication, we have epitomised, as Erasmus himself wished it to appear, the story of his leaving Louvain and his attitude toward the chief questions of the great reform. Nothing that we can add would be more significant than the concluding paragraph. If only all men could see both sides of every question

as he did, and would join with him in pious exhortation to everyone else to be good, he would be delighted to be their leader and companion. This is only one of those numerous "ifs"—though an unusually large one—by which Erasmus so often saved himself in difficult places. It meant simply that he did not propose to commit himself at all. The Laurinus letter was the reply to numerous criticisms against the course of Erasmus in the years between 1520 and 1523, years in which the various aspects of the great reform movement were becoming more and more clearly defined. We discern in it with great distinctness the view of Erasmus taken by the leading spirits of the Lutheran party.

Nowhere is this Lutheran judgment of his position so vigorously demonstrated as in his famous conflict with Ulrich von Hutten. Hutten's personality was totally antipodal to that of Erasmus. Born of a noble family in Würtemberg in 1488, Hutten received the training of a soldier and took his part in the violent feuds which, in the absence of a strong central government in Germany, were continually wasting the energies and the resources of the great class of the lower nobility. But Hutten was more than a soldier. He had early come under the influence of Reuchlin, his countryman, and had given himself with great zeal to the cause of learning. He had mastered the technique of the scholar's profession, had made himself an accomplished Latinist in both prose and verse, and had learned as much Greek as was needed to decorate his Latin style. In his way he was as marked an individual as Erasmus. He, too, was a homeless man, an outcast from his family and his narrower Swabian fatherland, a wanderer, seeking a living by methods even more precarious and more questionable than Erasmus had employed,

everywhere at home if only the sun of princely or private favour would shine upon him for the moment. But here the resemblance ends. Hutten let his individuality carry him into wild and reckless living and finally to ruin, but he did not let it alienate him from the great movements of humanity going on about him. In the Reformation he was quick to discern all those elements of social and economic change which were sure to follow upon the religious appeal. What repelled and estranged Erasmus, the man of peace, attracted and held Hutten, the man of strife. In Luther's proclamation of a salvation by faith he saw the hope of a social and religious reconstruction, in which, inevitably, the religious system of the Middle Ages must go to the wall. He was too little of a speculative genius to be drawn into the logical extravagances of the radical party of Münzer and his like, but the prospect of a glorious fight, with the weapons alike of the intellect and of the flesh, filled him with a holy joy as it filled Erasmus with a holy horror. Without waiting to consider or to make certain whither it would lead him, he threw himself with passionate energy into the Lutheran cause. Already he had made himself known, admired, and feared by his part in the *Epistolæ obscurorum virorum*, that merciless satire on the schoolmen which had done more than any other one thing to draw the forces of light together into one camp over against the forces of darkness. This contribution to what others regarded as his own work did not, however, if we may take his word for it, please Erasmus. He wanted to keep all the satirising to himself, that it might be held within prudent limits. Thus his earliest impressions of Hutten were not favourable. He seems to have felt in him by "a certain instinct of nature," as he might

have said, an "unsafe" person. His early approach toward him is cautious. Hutten sends him his works and begs for his friendship. Erasmus replies with reserve, counsels him to keep out of fights, to devote himself to the Muses, and to preserve his own dignity. Then we have the famous and charming letter[142] in which Erasmus describes to Hutten the work and character of Thomas More. But soon it is evident that Hutten is getting out of all patience with Erasmus. The letters of 1518 and 1519, with their anxious balancing of views, were in circulation, and had made upon this upright and downright fighting man the impression of a trimming, fretful, petty spirit. In August, 1520, he writes to Erasmus in a totally altered style.[143] He has now no time or temper for compliments. In short, rapid sentences he puts the case to the great man as one in which all shilly-shallying was out of place.



ULRICH VON HUTTEN.

FROM A CONTEMPORARY WOODCUT.

> "While Reuchlin's affair was all in a glow, you seemed to be in a more weakly terror of those people [*istos*] than you ought to have been. And now in Luther's case, you have been trying as hard as you can to persuade his enemies that you were as far as possible from defending the common good of the Christian world, while they knew you really believed just the opposite. That does not seem to be an altogether becoming thing to do.... You know with what glee they are carrying about certain letters of yours in which while you are trying to escape from blame, you are putting blame on others in a hateful fashion enough. In the same way you have been abusing the *Epistolæ obscurorum*, though you admired them powerfully once; and you are damning Luther because he has set in motion some things that ought not to have been moved, when you yourself have been handling the same subjects everywhere throughout your writings. And yet you will never make them believe that you are not desirous of the same things. You will just hurt us and at the same time will not pacify them. You are irritating the more and rousing hatred by trying to hide a thing so open as this."

We are quite prepared to understand how unwelcome to Erasmus such direct and unequivocal language as this must have been. He had no use for any argument that had not two sides to it. Events were moving rapidly. While the affair of Luther was being tried at Worms in the summer of 1521 Hutten was watching and planning for the social overturn which he confidently expected, and out of which, he hoped, a new Germany, regenerated in body and soul, was to arise. In the winter of 1521-22 he drifted to Basel and spent some time there. As yet there was no open breach between him and Erasmus. He seems to have wished to meet him personally and to have

met a flat refusal. In the letter to Laurinus Erasmus declares that he was perfectly willing to see Hutten, but as he could not endure a room with a stove in it, and Hutten could not be in a room without a stove, an interview was impossible! This silly story reappears in various other connections. It is quite unworthy of serious examination, but was undoubtedly a mere cover for some deeper cause. What this was may readily be supplied. Writing to Melanchthon *after Hutten's death*,[144] Erasmus says:

> "As to my refusing Hutten an interview, the reason was not so much the fear of exciting hostility; there was another thing which, however, I did not touch upon in my *Spongia*. He was in utter poverty and was seeking some nest to die in. Now I was expected to take this '*miles gloriosus*,' pox and all, into my house and with him that whole chorus of 'evangelicals' by name—and nothing but the name."

We may be quite sure that here was Erasmus' real grievance. He might pretend that he had never seen anyone at Basel who called himself a Lutheran, but he knew that if he took Hutten into his house and appeared on friendly terms with him, he could keep up this pretence no longer. He knew also by a former experience that any expressions favourable to Luther would be made the most of by Hutten. He could not afford such a friend and he shut his door in his face.

Hutten's patience, never, we may believe, overmuch enduring, was at an end. He made up his mind to make such a public attack upon Erasmus as would compel him to speak out and thus commit himself once for all on one side or the other. Erasmus heard of this intention and wrote him a short letter[145] of expostulation, warning and threatening

him at once. In this letter he gives away his case as to the Basel incident in the most complete fashion. He says:

> "I did not refuse you an interview when you were here, but begged you through Eppendorf, in the gentlest manner, that, if it was only a complimentary visit, you would stay away, on account of the enmity with which I have long been burdened even to the risk of my life. What use is there in gaining enmity when one cannot thereby be any help to one's friend?"

Then comes in the stove again.

Hutten was, as well he might be, rather more angered than appeased by this missive, and soon printed his *Expostulatio cum Erasmo*.[146]

Erasmus had had to hear a good many bitter words in the years just past, but never such stinging reproaches as these. Doubtless the personal element played its part in adding a final goad to Hutten's indignation; but the *Expostulatio* is far from being a mere personal reply to real or fancied wrongs. It is a scathing review of the whole attitude of Erasmus towards the reform. The chief note of the charge is cowardice, deceit, and time-serving. The underlying assumption throughout is that Erasmus was really in sympathy with the whole attack upon the church order from Reuchlin onwards. This assumption is proved out of his own mouth. At every new stage of the reform he was shown to have expressed approval, only to change approval into condemnation as soon as there was a prospect that anything would be done. So, on the other hand, Hutten shows Erasmus attacking all the enemies of reform, the pope, Aleander, Hoogstraaten, and the rest, and then changing his tone to a weak, snivelling

flattery as soon as he saw any danger in prospect. A few specimens will illustrate the vigour and openness of Hutten's method. After the twistings and turnings of Erasmus' style, his reads like a model of strength and directness.

> "Because of my health, or for some other reason, I could not be away from my stove long enough to speak with you once or twice in the whole fifty days I spent at Basel, though I would often stand talking with friends in the midst of the market-place for three hours at a time! Well, that is quite like your sincerity, to take a perfectly simple thing and give it a false colouring and to cover up the truth with an empty show.
>
> "As I thought the matter over attentively several reasons occurred to me why, perhaps, you might thus have fallen away from yourself. First, your insatiable ambition for fame, your greed for glory, which makes it impossible for you to bear the growing powers of anyone else; and then the lack of steadiness in your mind, which has always displeased me in you as unworthy of your greatness and led me to believe that you were terror-stricken by the threats of these men.... Finally I explain it to myself by the pettiness of your mind, which makes you afraid of everything and easily thrown into despair; for you had so little faith in the progress of our cause, especially when you saw that some of the chief princes of Germany were conspiring against us, that straightway you thought you must not only desert us, but must also seek their good-will by every possible means."

Referring to Erasmus' charge that the Lutherans had set on foot a rumour that Hoogstraaten had burned his books, in order to make him write against the Church, Hutten says:

> "Now, supposing it was our purpose to draw you

> into our party, how could we hope to do it easily in this way, since it was perfectly certain that you would never dare to do anything against him or anybody else until you saw exactly how the land lay—unless, indeed, Switzerland be so far from Brabant that we could hope you would hear nothing from there for a whole year! Away with this simple-heartedness of yours to some other world! Our Germany knows no such morals as these.
>
> "When the *Epistolæ obscurorum* came out, you approved and applauded more than anyone else; you gave the author a regular triumph; you said there had never been discovered a more complete way of attacking those people; that barbarians ought to be ridiculed in barbarous language; and you congratulated us on our cleverness. Before our fooleries were printed, you copied some of them with your own hand, saying: 'I must send these to my friends in England and France.' But soon after, when you saw that the whole muck of the theologers were much disturbed and that the hornets were stirred up in all directions and were threatening ruin, you began to tremble, and lest suspicion might fall upon you that you were the author or that you approved the plan, you wrote a letter with that same candour of yours to Cologne, trying to get ahead of the rumours and making a great pretence of sympathy with them and regret at the affair and saying many things against the whole business and abusing the authors."

If Erasmus is such a man of peace, why, asks Hutten, does he now so bitterly attack the reformers? Some people had long since accused him of treachery, but at that time no one would believe them and Erasmus was satisfied to put it all upon the Fates:

> "a fine notion and, as we now see, truly Erasmian! You say that, being the man you are, you must deal with Germans after their own fashion. Well, this is not the

> way of Germans, but of men whose fickleness and inconstancy are altogether foreign to Germans, men who can be tossed about hither and thither by every change of wind, with whom nothing is fixed, but everything slippery and shifting with the changes of fortune. Get you to Italy with such doings, to those cardinals whom you are now taking under your wing, where everyone may live according to his own morals and his own character! Or else get back to your own French-Dutchmen, if, perhaps, this is a national vice and one common to you and them!"

Referring to the use of the term "Lutherans," about which Erasmus was so much distressed, Hutten says:

> "Therefore, although I have never had Luther for my master or my companion and am carrying on this business on my own account, and although I am most terribly opposed to being counted in any party whatever, nevertheless, since it is a fact that those who are opposed to the Roman tyranny—among whom I desire above all things to be reckoned—and those who dare to speak the truth and who are turning back from human ordinances to the teaching of the Gospel, are commonly called Lutherans, therefore I am ready to bear the burden of this nickname, lest I seem to deny my faith in the cause.... Now you know why I accept the name of Lutheran, and anyone can see that for the same reasons you too are a Lutheran, and that so much the more than I or anyone else as you are a better writer and a more accomplished orator."

One may search the writings of Erasmus from beginning to end without finding an utterance to compare with this in decision and clear-cut discrimination of the truth. At great length and with the appearance of entire sincerity Hutten warns Erasmus of the danger he is now in of appearing to

be only the hired man of the papacy. He may still, in his heart, be true to his former convictions; but who will believe it? All this bragging about his great friends at Rome with their flattering offers can only confirm the Lutherans in their distrust of him. If he will not be warned now, then let him go on

> "to fulfil the hopes of those who have long been looking about for a leader for the enemies of the truth. Gird yourself; the thing is ripe for action; it is a task worthy of your old age; put forth your strength; bend to the work! You shall find your enemies ready! the party of the Lutherans, which you would like to crush to earth, is waiting for the battle and cannot refuse it. Our hearts are full of courage; we are sustained by a certain hope and, relying upon our conscious rectitude and honour, we will decline no challenge, no matter whither you may call us. Nay, that you may see how great is the faith that is in us, the more furiously you assault us, the keener you shall find us in defending the cause of truth.... One half of you will stand with us and be in our camp; your fight will be, not so much with us as with your own genius and your own writings. You will turn your learning against yourself and will be eloquent against your own eloquence. Your writings will be fighting back and forth with each other."

The Lutherans will trust in God and joyfully take up the encounter.

There can be no doubt that Hutten was uttering the voice of the great Lutheran party, as it must now be called. Although called out by a personal attack, the *Expostulatio* keeps itself throughout on higher than personal grounds. It is not an apology for Hutten; it is a fierce outburst of honest indignation against a man who seemed to be throwing away a noble mind and conspicuous gifts through lack of

courage and simple honesty. Hutten's expressions of admiration for his opponent have the ring of absolute sincerity. He had admired him above all other men, and his wrath is tempered by pain and honest sorrow at his failure to lead where none could lead so well. If Hutten made the mistake which so many have made since his time, of asking from Erasmus a kind of service for which he was by nature unfitted, it was a mistake which honours him who made it. The time for balancing good and evil had gone. If anything was to be done, it must be by the united action of all who were in substantial agreement upon the great essential questions of the hour. There had been enough of apologising and trimming, and this great word of Hutten was the proclamation of what was inevitably to come.

When it came into Erasmus' hands he determined at once to reply, and the result was the famous pamphlet which he called *Spongia adversus aspergines Hutteni*, "a sponge to wipe out the bespatterings of Hutten." It is a work twice as long as the *Expostulatio*, written, so its author says, in six days during the month of July, 1523, but not published until the autumn and after the death of Hutten, which occurred August 29th. The *Spongia* is as distinctly a work of personal apology as the *Expostulatio* was the opposite. It takes up, one by one, the points made by Hutten and deals with them after the fashion with which we are now so familiar that any extended examination would in no way enlarge our understanding of Erasmus' true position. The greater part of Hutten's charges he accepts in one or another sense and then tries to take away their force. The most common way of doing this is by showing that he has never really been inconsistent with himself, but has only adapted himself for the moment to

given conditions lest the one great cause of pure learning should suffer by too great zeal. Nowhere does Erasmus show himself a more complete master of the word "if." He will admit everything with an "if." Hutten has accused him of keeping on too good terms with the pope after all the abuse which he has heaped upon things papistical—very well, he has praised popes, but he has done this because he believed them to be men who meant well to the cause of Christ. If otherwise he would be the last to praise them.

Erasmus' analysis of the papal power here is a monument of his skill in turning about words to suit his purpose.

> "I have never," he says, "spoken inconsistently of the Roman See. Tyranny, greed, and other vices, ancient grounds of complaint common to all good men, I have never approved. Nor have I ever totally condemned indulgences, though I have always hated this shameless trade in them. What I think about ceremonies, my books declare in many places. But when have I abused the Canon Law or the papal decretals? Whatever he means by 'calling the pope to order' I am not quite clear. I suppose he will admit that there is a church at Rome; for the multitude of its sins cannot cause it to be any the less a church—if this is not so then we have no churches at all. And I assume that it is an orthodox church; for if certain bad men are mingled with the rest, yet the church abides in the good ones. And I suppose he will allow that this church has a bishop, and that this bishop is a metropolitan ... now then among metropolitans what is there absurd in giving the first place to the Roman pontiff? for this great power which they have been usurping to themselves during several centuries, no one has ever heard me defend.
>
> "But Hutten will not endure a wicked pope;—why,

> that is what we are all praying for, that the pope may be a man worthy of his apostolic office. But, if he be not that, let him be deposed; and by the same token, let all bishops be deposed who do not duly perform their functions. But an especial plague of the world has been flowing now for many years from Rome. Would that it could be denied! Now, however, has come a pope who is striving, as I believe, with all his might, to give back to us that See and that Curia purified."

Yet Erasmus had been overwhelming the dead Leo, the source of this pestilent flood, with every conceivable kind of flattery. Now he abuses him, in order to make his point that things are all going to be set right by the excellent Adrian. But this way of setting things right is just what Hutten does not hope for, he says.

> "Yet there are many reasons for this hope, and charity, according to Paul, 'hopeth all things.' If Hutten were declaring war upon evils, not upon men, he would hasten to Rome and help this pope who is now trying to do the very same things he is himself striving for. But Hutten has declared war upon the Roman pontiff and all his followers.... The Romanists would like always to have such enemies as Hutten."

If there was an honest Erasmus anywhere under this mass of words, it seems pretty clear that he was for Hutten rather than against him. That Erasmus had any such honest side one is tempted to doubt when one reads his defence against the charge of trifling with the truth. Hutten had accused him[147] of saying that the truth ought not always to be spoken, and that a great deal depended upon how it was put forth.

> "That blasphemous speech of yours," he had said, "ought to have been thrust down your throat (my cause compels me to speak more angrily than I would) if those had done their duty who are now compelling heretics to recant or throwing them to the flames."

Erasmus could not deny the words, but replies[148]:

> "When Christ first sent out the Apostles to preach the Gospel he forbade them to declare that he was the Christ. If, then, the Truth himself ordered that truth to be kept in silence, without the knowledge of which there is no salvation to any man, what is there strange in my saying that the truth ought sometimes to be suppressed?"

Then he gives several similar illustrations of repression of truth by silence on the part of Jesus, and goes on:

> "If I had to defend the cause of an innocent man before a powerful tyrant should I blurt out the whole truth and ruin the case of the innocent man, or should I keep many things silent? Hutten, a brave man and most zealous for the truth, would, no doubt, speak thus: 'O most accursed tyrant, you who have murdered so many of your fellow-citizens, is your cruelty not yet sated, that you must tear this innocent man from their midst?' Well, that is about as clever as the way in which some are defending the cause of Luther, by raging against the pope with seditious writings. Or if he [Hutten] were asking from a wicked pope a benefice for some good man, he would write to him after this style: 'O impious Antichrist, destroyer of the Gospel, oppressor of civil liberty, flatterer of princes, thou givest basely so many a benefice to wicked men and still more basely sellest them, grant this one to this good man that all may not fall into evil hands.' You smile, reader; but these people are pleading the

> cause of the Gospel with no more caution than that.... But what is more foolish than to call me back from a place where I never was and to summon me to the very place I am now in? He calls me back from the party of the wicked who support the tyranny of the Romanists, who overturn the truth of the Gospel, who darken the glory of Christ; but I have always been fighting those very men. He summons me to his own side; but as yet I am not clear where Hutten himself stands."

The whole aim of the *Spongia* and its effect upon the world were simply to make it perfectly plain that Erasmus would not take sides. If the purpose of the *Expostulatio* was to force him to do so, it was a conspicuous failure. Nothing could be plainer than Erasmus' own declaration[149]:

> "in so many letters, so many books, and by so many proofs, I am continually declaring that I am unwilling to be involved with either party. I give many reasons for this determination, but have not put forth all of them. And in this matter my conscience makes no charge against me before Christ my judge. In the midst of such confusion and danger to my reputation and my life I have so moderated my judgments as neither to be the author of any disturbance nor to help any cause which I do not approve. If Hutten is enraged because I do not support Luther as he does, I protested three years ago in an appendix added to my Familiar Colloquies at Louvain, that I was totally a stranger to that faction and always would be. I am not only keeping outside of it myself, but I am urging as many friends as I can to do the same, and I will never cease to do so. I mean by 'faction' the zeal of a mind sworn as it were to everything that Luther has written or is writing or ever will write. This kind of a sentiment often imposes upon good men; but I have openly announced to all my friends that if they cannot love me except as a Lutheran they may have whatever

> feeling they like about me. I am a lover of liberty. I will not and I cannot serve a party."

Here once more Erasmus saves himself by a definition. If to be a Lutheran were to swear to every word of Luther's, then, of course, no man in his senses would confess to the party name. Erasmus knew as well as anyone that parties for action were never formed by any such test. Men joined a party because they were in general sympathy with others and believed that the time for common action had come. This common action was the thing he could not bear to think of. To him it meant *confusiones*, *tumultus*, *tragœdias*, and all the other horrors of open conflict. We leave the Hutten episode, closed as it was by the untimely death of the brilliant, reckless genius who had brought it on, with the feeling that Hutten's charge was substantially true. Erasmus, with all the best part of him, was fighting the Lutheran battle and knew he was doing it. He recoiled before the fear of violence and then had to justify himself.

It would be interesting to know how far the definition of the papacy as a metropolitan see among others represented a real opinion of Erasmus. Probably it was a rhetorical conclusion; but it can hardly have made the *Spongia* a welcome visitor at Rome, and it is not surprising that this passage was expurgated by the Roman censorship.

An incident of the year 1524 well illustrates the temper of Erasmus at the time and also the decline in regard for him on the Lutheran side. A certain Scotch printer at Strassburg had published some writing of Hutten against Erasmus, probably the *Expostulatio*, with offensive illustrations, and in a second edition had added an invective by another author, in which

"whatever one blackguard could say of another" was said of Erasmus. What touched him especially was that he was called a traitor to the Gospel, and charged with having been hired for money to fight against it, and moreover was accused of being ready to be pulled in any direction by the chance of a crumb of bread. Erasmus wrote two very angry letters[150] to the magistrates of Strassburg asking them to punish the printer, and defending himself in his usual fashion from these charges.

Evidently nothing was done about it, for some time later Erasmus wrote to Caspar Hedio, one of the Lutheran preachers at Strassburg,[151] complaining of this neglect. His suggestions about the way to treat an offending printer are amusing.

> "You say this Scotchman has a wife and little children. Would that be thought an excuse if he should break open my money-chest and steal my gold? I should say not; and yet he has done a thing far worse than that. Or perhaps you think I care less for my reputation than for my money. If he can't feed his children, let him go a-begging. 'That would be a shame,' you say. Well, aren't such actions as this a shame? Let him prostitute his wife and snore away with watchful nose over his cups. 'Horrible,' you say. And yet what he has done is more horrible still. There is no law to punish with death a man who prostitutes his wife; but everyone approves capital punishment for those who publish slanderous writings."

CHAPTER X
DOCTRINAL OPPOSITION TO THE REFORMATION—FREEDOM OF THE WILL—THE EUCHARIST—THE "SPIRIT" 1523-1527

THERE can be no doubt that Erasmus was urged from many sides to write something decisive against the Lutheran party. He held back as long as he could, partly, we may be sure, from real sympathy with the chief purpose of the reform and partly from a dread of committing himself to, he knew not precisely what. To estimate his position aright we must bear in mind that the real meaning of the reform party was developing year by year, taking on ever new aspects as one interest after another came to be connected with the original kernel of opposition. So far as outward things were concerned Erasmus was barred from many lines of attack by his own damning record. In these matters he could only indulge in vague exhortations to moderation and in voluminous, but not very convincing, apologies.

He was therefore compelled, if he wished to meet the pressure of the Roman party by some open service, to turn to the more speculative side of the reform. He there found a topic naturally adapted to draw out his hostility, the topic of the freedom of the human will. It was a subject especially suited to the Erasmian method. Its problem involved the riddle of the ages: To what degree is the action of man

determined by his own will and to what degree by some power—Fate, God, Devil, call it what we may —outside himself? That man had a will of his very own had never been totally denied. The question was, how far was this will free to act?

Within the history of Christianity this problem had early found its expression in the great Augustinian-Pelagian controversy of the fifth century. Both of these parties had admitted that man's will was somehow affected by the divine will. The difference, the hopeless and perpetual difference, had been on the question of the possibility of *good* action through the human impulse alone. This possibility the Pelagian party had maintained, adding, however, that such original good impulse of the human will was immediately aided by the divine grace. The party of Augustine had denied the possibility of any *good* action without a *previous* impulse of the divine grace. The Church, sane and clever always in the long run, had steered its course carefully between the two extremes. It had condemned Pelagius as a heretic and reverenced Augustine as a saint; but it had never gone to those lengths of opinion which might be discovered in Augustine's writings by one who wished to find them there.

In other words, the Church had instinctively recognised that the problem is insoluble. As the practical administrator of a system of morals, it had concerned itself only with providing a machinery whereby the consequences of evil action could be averted from its faithful members. It had never said to them, "You are compelled to these sins by a power you cannot resist," but it had said, "You will infallibly sin and you will suffer for your sins, unless you

remove them by the means we offer." So far that had worked. The world had accepted the situation and gone merrily on, knowing when it sinned, but knowing also that a kind and indulgent Church would see to it that its sins were taken care of at a very reasonable charge. Only from time to time men like Savonarola and groups of men like the Waldensians had raised their cry of protest and called men back again to the sense of direct responsibility to, and direct dependence on, God alone.

That was the essence also of Luther's protest. Every individual Christian was once again called upon to deal directly with his God. So far the Lutheran teaching was in complete harmony with the whole drift of Erasmus' thought. But here we find another illustration of similar conclusions reached by different ways. Erasmus was quite satisfied to let the whole speculative side of the question take care of itself. Luther could not rest until he had harmonised his practical aims with some theological principle, which should give them consistency and support. That principle he found in the Augustinian doctrine of predestination and the unfree will. Erasmus was content, as the Church was, to accept both sides of the controversy at once, and trim them to suit each other. Luther cared little for nice distinctions, but convinced himself that the salvation of his cause lay in emphasising, so far as a mind so eminently sound and human as his could do, the idea of a divine fate, responsible—yes, he would even say this if he must —responsible even for the seeming evil of this world.

Now it is obvious that, viewed abstractly, the whole group of ideas we call "Augustinian" are open to the gravest question. They seem to sap the

foundations of Christian morality and to throw men back upon the dreary fatalisms from which it was the mission of Christianity to release them. In fact, however, it cannot be denied that from time to time they have worked, where other means have failed, to recall men sharply and uncompromisingly to the sense of sin and thereby to a more vivid and convincing moral purpose. Such a time was come once more in the day of Luther and Erasmus and Calvin. This theology may have been illogical, but it worked. It ought, perhaps, in all reason, to have sent men flying off into a mad indifference to morality, since nothing they could do would influence their ultimate fate; but for every weak and shuffling conscience which broke under this burden there were a hundred others that were steeled and nerved by it to a complete moral regeneration. The doctrine of the impotent will has produced some of the most masterful wills before which the world has ever had to bend.

Here, then, was a point upon which Erasmus might safely attack Luther without compromising himself. His essay on the Freedom of the Will[152] was announced some time before its appearance. In the course of the year 1523 he sent a rough draft to King Henry VIII., promising, if this seemed worth while to the king "and other learned men," to finish it as soon as his health and certain engagements would permit. A letter of Luther to Erasmus in 1524 suggests that he had heard of his intention to attack in some way the doctrines of the Reformation, though he nowhere alludes to the subject of free will. This letter is interesting as showing the lofty tone of a man who believes himself to be the spokesman of a cause higher than any human considerations. He, like Hutten, sees in Erasmus an ally who, after the

measure of the gift of God, is fighting the same battle. Only he feels the limitations of that gift.

> "I see that God has not yet granted you the courage and the insight to join freely and confidently with me in fighting those monsters. Nor am I the man to demand of you what goes beyond my own strength and my own limitations. But weakness like my own and a measure of the gift of God I have borne with in you and have respected it. For this plainly the whole world cannot deny: that learning flourishes and prevails, whereby men have come to the true understanding of Scripture and this is a great and splendid gift of God in you. In truth I have never wished that you should go beyond your own limitations and mingle in our camp, for though you might help us greatly with your genius and eloquence, yet since your heart is not in it it would be safer to serve within your own gift. The only thing to be feared was that you would sometime be persuaded by our enemies to publish some attack upon our *doctrine*, and then necessity would compel me to answer you to your face. I have restrained others who were trying to draw you into the arena with things they had already written, and that was the reason why I wished Hutten's *Expostulatio* had never been published,—and still more your *Spongia*, through which, if I am not mistaken, you now see how easy it is to write about moderation and to accuse Luther of lacking it, but how difficult, nay, impossible it is to practice it except through a singular gift of the Spirit.
>
> "Believe me, then, or not, yet Christ is my witness that I pity you from my heart, because the hatred and the active efforts of so many and so great men are stirred up against you. I cannot believe that you are not disturbed by these things, since your human virtue is unequal to such a burden. And yet perchance they too are moved by a justifiable warmth, because they feel themselves attacked by you with unworthy methods....

"I, however, have up to this time restrained my pen, no matter how bitterly you have stung me, and have told my friends, in letters which you have read, that I was going to restrain it until you should come out openly.... Now then, what can I do? Either way is most trying to me. I could wish—if I could be the mediator—that my allies would cease to attack you with such zeal and would permit your old age to fall asleep in the peace of God and this they would do, in my opinion, if they would consider your infirmity and the greatness of our cause, which has long since passed beyond your limitations; especially now that the matter has gone so far that there is little to fear for our cause, even if Erasmus fight against it with all his might, nay, though sometimes he scatter stings and bites. Yet, on the other hand, my dear Erasmus, if only you would consider their weakness and would restrain from those biting and cutting figures of rhetoric, so that if you cannot or dare not go with us altogether, you may at least leave us alone and deal with your own subjects. For that they [Erasmus' 'Lutheran' assailants] are but ill bearing your attacks, there is good reason, namely, because their human weakness greatly dreads the name and authority of Erasmus and because to be once bitten by Erasmus is quite a different thing from being crushed by all the papists together.

"I desire to have said these things, most excellent Erasmus, in witness of my friendly feeling towards you. I pray that God may give you a spirit worthy of your fame; but if God delays with his gift to you, I beg you meanwhile, if you can do no more, to remain a spectator of our conflict and not to join forces with our opponents, especially not to publish books against me, as I will publish nothing against you. Finally, consider that those who complain that they are attacked under the Lutheran name are men like you and me, in whom much ought to be overlooked and forgiven. As Paul says: 'Bear ye one another's burdens.' There has been biting enough; now let us see to it that we be not consumed by mutual strife, a spectacle the

> more wretched inasmuch as it is perfectly certain that neither side is at heart opposed to true piety and that if it were not for obstinacy, each would be quite satisfied with its own. Pardon my feeble speech and farewell in the Lord."

The impression of this letter is one of sad but confident sincerity. Luther is not afraid of Erasmus because he is unshakably convinced of the justice of his own cause, but he would gladly be spared the necessity of going into an encounter which would make even more evident to the world than it was already the difference between his own and Erasmus' views of reform. His tone is lofty, arrogant if we will, because he is speaking for what he believes to be divine truth and to a man who seemed to him as yet untouched by the real divine spark. He acknowledges his indebtedness to the great scholar, but cannot see why Erasmus may not continue to find full scope for his talents on the lines he has been following. He did not succeed in staying the publication of the essay on free will, but at all events the moderation of its tone shows a notable effort on the part of Erasmus to avoid irritating language.

The treatise, published in 1524, is a short one, covering sixteen folio pages. It consists chiefly of a careful historical examination of passages of Scripture, both of the Old and New Testaments, in which the subject seems to be alluded to. So far as the argument itself is concerned, the work is of little interest. Erasmus for the most part carefully avoids original discussion and holds himself closely to authority. Since the beginning, he says, there has never been anyone to deny free will entirely except "Manichæus" and Wiclif. Yet Luther gives no weight to all this and falls back upon Scripture. Very good,

but this is only what all do. "Both sides accept and revere the same Scripture. The battle is only about the meaning of Scripture," and in getting at the meaning we ought to pay respect to talent and learning. Of course the only sound interpretation comes through the gift of the Spirit; but where is the Spirit? The chances are much greater that it is to be found among those to whom God has given ordination, just as we believe more easily that grace is given to a baptised man than to an unbaptised one.

> "If Paul commands his time, in which the gift of the Spirit was flourishing, to prove the spirits, whether they be of God, what must we do in this fleshly age? How then shall we judge the spirits? by learning? On both sides there are men of learning. By the life? there are sinners on both sides. In the other life is the whole choir of the saints who approve the freedom of the will. 'But,' they say, 'those were mortals'; true, and I am comparing men with men, not men with gods. I am asked: 'What have majorities to do with the meaning of Scripture?' I answer: 'What have minorities to do with it?' I am asked: 'How does the mitre help in understanding Scripture?' I answer: 'How does the cloak help or the cowl?' I am asked: 'What has the understanding of philosophy to do with the understanding of Scripture?' I answer: 'What has ignorance to do with it?' I am asked: 'What can be done for a knowledge of Scripture by a Council, in which it may happen that no one has the Spirit?' I answer: 'What can be done by private gatherings of a few men, among whom it is far more probable that no one has the Spirit?' ...
>
> "If you ask them by what proof they know the true sense of Scripture, they reply, 'By the witness of the Spirit.' If you ask how *they* come to have the Spirit, rather than those whose miracles have been known to all the world, they reply as if there had been no Gospel in the world for thirteen hundred years. If you

> ask of them a life worthy of the Spirit, they reply that they are justified by faith, not by works. If you ask for miracles they tell you that these have long since ceased and that there is no need of them in the present clear light of Scripture. If you deny that Scripture is clear on this point, upon which so many of the greatest men have been involved in darkness, the circle comes round again to its beginning."

Now all this is very clever—too clever, in fact; for it amounts to nothing but an elaborate defence of the principle of human authority in belief. By means of this introduction, Erasmus sets himself squarely against the principle of free interpretation of the original sources of Christianity by the light of reason and knowledge, for which the Reformation was really working and towards which he himself by his own New Testament work had been contributing.

Another principle of Erasmus, especially irritating to Luther, was that the truth should not always be spoken, a maxim as obviously true as the application of it was liable to gross abuse.

> "Let us then suppose," he says, "that it be true in some sense, as Wiclif and Luther have said, that 'whatever is done by us, is done, not by free will but by pure necessity,' what more inexpedient than to publish this paradox to the world? Or, let us suppose that in a certain sense it is true, as Augustine somewhere says: 'God works both good and evil in us, and rewards his own good works in us and punishes his own evil works in us,' what a door to impiety this saying would open to countless mortals, if it were spread abroad in the world!... What weak man would keep up the perpetual and weary conflict against the flesh? What evil man would strive to correct his life? Who could persuade his soul to love with his whole heart a God who has prepared a hell glowing with eternal tortures that he may there avenge upon

> miserable men his own misdeeds as if he delighted in human tortures?"

Here was an objection to Augustinianism as old as Augustine himself, but the fact was that it had never yet been sustained and was not likely to be. Even if it had been, that could not affect the principle Erasmus was now concerned with; namely, that truth which seemed likely to make any confusion in the world ought not to be spoken.[153]

Having fortified himself on these preliminary points, Erasmus lays out the problem with great clearness and then proceeds with the examination of scripture passages on both sides. It would be idle to follow this process, by which, proverbially, anyone can prove anything. Of course Erasmus finds the weight of Scripture on his side, as his opponents found it on theirs. Far more important and interesting is his own personal declaration of faith. Put in a word, it was that one ought to allow to man *some* share in his own good actions; not a great share, only "*non nihil*." In fact, this is really the only thing he finds to criticise in the Lutheran doctrine, the overemphasis on the element of grace in human action.

> "[154] Doubtless to them [the Lutherans] it seems perfectly in harmony with the simple obedience of the Christian soul that man should depend wholly upon the will of God, should place all his hope and trust in His promises, and, knowing how wretched he is of himself, should marvel and adore His boundless mercy which is poured out upon us freely in such large measure and should entrust himself wholly to His will, whether He wishes to save or to condemn; that man should take no credit to himself for His kindnesses, but should ascribe all the glory to His grace, bearing

> in mind that man is only the living organ of the divine spirit, purified and consecrated by His free goodness, ruled and governed by His inscrutable wisdom. There is nothing here which anyone can claim for his own strength and yet one may with confidence hope from Him the reward of eternal life—not because he has deserved it by good deeds, but because it has seemed best to His goodness to promise it to His faithful. It is the part of men earnestly to pray God that he may impart and increase His spirit in us, to give thanks if any good is done through us, to worship His power in all things, to marvel at His wisdom, and to love His goodness.
>
> "All this I too most heartily approve. It agrees with holy Scripture. It answers to the profession of those who, once dead to the world, are at the same time buried with Christ by baptism, so that through mortifying the flesh, they may live and act in the spirit of Jesus, in whose body they are implanted by faith. Truly a pious opinion and worthy of all approval, which takes away from us all pride, which lays all the glory and all our hope upon Christ, which casts out all fear of men or demons and makes us distrustful of our own defences, but bold and full of courage in God. I applaud all this gladly until it becomes extravagant. For when I hear that man is so completely without merit that all the works, even of pious men, are sinful; when I hear that our wills can do no more than clay in the hand of the potter; when I hear that all we do or will is to be referred to absolute necessity,—my mind is disturbed by many scruples."

We see how near he comes to the Lutheran position. Its emphasis on the sinfulness of man and the direct responsibility to God appeals to him. Only, like so many before and since, he revolts against the injustice of a theory which would punish man for sins he has not committed. He cannot escape from the ordinary standards of human reward and punishment. His idea of God is offended by what

seems to him a cruel and unfeeling conception. He cannot ascribe to God any quality which would be a disgrace to manhood.

> "Surely everyone would call him a cruel and unjust master, who should flog a slave to death because he was not beautiful enough or had a crooked nose or was otherwise deformed. Would not the slave be right in complaining to the master who was slaying him: 'Why should I be punished for what I cannot help?' And he would be still more justified in saying this if it were in the power of the master to remedy the defect of the slave, as it is in the power of God to change our wills or if the master had caused in the slave the very defect at which he now takes offence, as, for example, if he had cut off his nose or disfigured his face with scars, as God, according to some people, has wrought all the evil that is in us."[155]

This is the familiar argument of all anti-Augustinianism from the beginning until now. So long as the discussion has to be carried on with the weapons of the ancient theology, it is hard to see how the issue can be stated otherwise. So long as both parties were acting on the theory of a universe with a God outside of it and assumed the existence of good and evil as absolute entities, they must necessarily part company in their definitions of this God and of his relation to good and evil. Each would fall back upon such human analogies as seemed to come nearest to his own divine ideal. The real issue was far beyond the comprehension of either party. Each was seeking a solution where no solution was possible. Erasmus said:

> "In my judgment free will might have been so defined as to avoid that confidence in our own merits and those other difficulties which Luther avoids and

> also the difficulties I have enumerated above, without losing those valuable things which Luther praises. This solution seems to me to be found in the opinion of those who ascribe entirely to grace the first impulse by which our minds are set in motion, and only in the course of this motion allow a something to the will of man which has not withdrawn itself from the grace of God. But since all things have three parts, beginning, progress, and completion, they ascribe the two extremes to grace and only in the progress admit that the free will does something;—but even this it does in such a way that in the same individual act two causes work together, the grace of God and the will of man, grace being the principal cause and the will the secondary cause, which of itself can do nothing, whereas the principal cause is sufficient to itself. Just as the native force of fire burns and yet the principal cause [of the burning] is God, who acts through the fire and would be sufficient alone, whereas the fire if this should withdraw itself could accomplish nothing without it."[156]

This has an almost Pelagian sound. It is in fact nearly the attitude of the moderate anti-Augustinian party of the fifth century, when it was trying to show how orthodox it was. Erasmus goes on to illustrate the same point with abundant and clever illustration, and finally comes to the question of "original sin," the inevitable *crux* of the whole discussion.

> "[157] They exaggerate original sin beyond all measure," he says; "they would have it that the most splendid powers of our human nature are so corrupted by it, that we can do nothing of ourselves except to be ignorant of God and to hate Him. Not even he who is justified by faith can do any act which is not a sin; this very *tendency* to sin left over to us from the sin of our first parents they call sin, and declare it irresistible, so that there is no command of God which even a man justified by faith can fulfil; but so many commands of

God have no other aim than that God's grace may be magnified through his granting of salvation without regard to our merits!... If God has burdened man with so many commands which have no other effect than to make him hate God the more, do they not make him out more unmerciful than Dionysius, tyrant of Sicily, who purposely made many laws which he expected most persons would not obey unless insisted upon, then for a while overlooked offences until he saw that almost everyone had violated them, and then began to call them to account, and so made everyone hate him?

"This kind of extravagance Luther seems to delight in, in order that he might, as the saying is, split the evil knot of others' excesses with an evil wedge. The foolish audacity of certain men had gone to extremes. They were selling the merits, not only of themselves, but of all the saints. And for what kind of works? for incantations, for muttering of psalms, eating of fish, fastings, vestments, titles. Now Luther drove out this nail with another by saying that there are no merits of saints at all, but that all the works of pious men are sins, and will bring damnation, unless faith and God's mercy come to their aid.

"Again, the other party was making a profitable trade out of confessions and penances, wherein they had terribly ensnared the consciences of men; and also out of Purgatory, about which they had handed down certain marvellous notions. This error their opponents would correct by saying that confession is a device of Satan and ought not to be required; that works can give no satisfaction for sin since Christ has completely paid the penalty for the sins of all men, and, finally, that there is no such thing as Purgatory. So one side says that the decrees even of their little priors can bind us by the pains of hell and does not hesitate to promise eternal life to those who obey them. The other side tries to moderate this extravagance by saying that all the decrees of popes, councils, and bishops are heretical and anti-Christian. If one side

> had exalted extravagantly the power of the pope, the other says such things about him as I dare not repeat. Again, one party says that the vows of monks and priests bind men by the pains of hell, and that for ever; the other says that such vows are utterly impious and ought not to be taken;—or, if they have been taken, ought not to be kept. Now it is from the collision of such excesses as this that the thunders and lightnings have arisen which are now shattering the world. If both sides are to go on thus bitterly defending their extreme views I perceive that the battle will be like that between Achilles and Hector, who were so equal in savagery that only death could separate them.... I prefer the opinion of those who attribute something to free will, but a great deal to grace. For we ought not so to avoid the Scylla of pride as to be swept into the Charybdis of despair and indifference."

So the treatise ends as it began, by showing what all reasonable men knew before, that the question has two sides to it, but without giving that kind of decided utterance which the critical moment demanded. Viewed as an abstract treatment, quite independently of the circumstances, it was a moderate, clever, good-tempered discussion of a philosophic problem; but it did not give that clear note of leadership for which, above all else, men were listening. Intellectually, Erasmus' position was as superior to that of Luther as was the temper of his argument better than that of Luther's reply. The *De libero arbitrio* was welcomed by all the moderates of the day and doubtless did its work in holding to the *status quo* many a wavering spirit which otherwise might have been drawn into the reforming ranks. While the weight of the argument is obviously thrown as far as possible on Luther's side, it called attention sharply to the weakest points in the

Reformation theology.

As soon as the "Free Will" was published, Erasmus hastened, as usual, to justify himself by writing in all directions to the persons whose approval was of most value to him,—to Henry VIII., Wolsey, and Fisher in England, to Melanchthon and Duke George in Germany, and to Aleander in Italy. He represents the work as a proof of his courage—"a bold deed in Germany," he says to Wolsey, while to Aleander he complains that enemies of his in Italy are abusing him for unsound scholarship.

> "They call me '*Errasmus*' in Rome, as if your writers had never made a mistake. They say I am unfriendly to Italy, whereas no one speaks more heartily than I of the genius of the Italians.... I have no doubt that you and I would get on beautifully, if we could only live together."

Luther waited a full year before replying to the Diatribe. It was a year of especial trial to him, for within those months it seemed as if the worst prophecies of his worst enemies were being fulfilled. All the social and economic restlessness of the time was beginning to make use of his teaching as a justification for revolt against the existing order of society. Wholly against his will he found himself held responsible for confusions he abhorred and for doctrines which seemed to him worse, if possible, than those he had undertaken to combat. His immediate duty was to clear himself of these imputations; to show how utterly foreign to his spirit and his aims were the theology of Carlstadt, the communistic speculations of Münzer, and the revolutionary radicalism of the peasant leaders. He accomplished this for all who were able to follow his

argumentation in the remarkable series of pamphlets published in 1524 and 1525. Then he returned to the assault of Erasmus. The most striking quality of the long and laboured treatise, *De servo arbitrio*,[158] with which he replied to the Diatribe, is its perfect frankness. Indeed Luther was almost compelled to frankness by his detestation of what seemed to him the perilously shifty method of his opponent. Erasmus had deprecated violence; Luther reminds him that no great good ever came into the world without commotion and overturn of an existing order. Christ came, not to send peace, but a sword. Erasmus had said that true things were not to be uttered at all times and had given certain illustrations; Luther disposes of this point by showing that the things proposed in these illustrations were not true and therefore, of course, ought not to be told at any time. Erasmus had asked: "If there is no freedom of will, who will try to amend his life?" Luther frankly replied, "No man. No man can. The elect will be amended by the divine spirit; the rest will perish unamended." Erasmus had said that a door would be opened to all iniquity by this doctrine. Luther says: "So be it; that is a part of the evil that is to be borne; but at the same time there is opened to the elect a door to salvation, an entrance into heaven, a way to God."

On the crucial point of authority for faith, Erasmus had especially assailed what seemed to him the vague and uncertain evidence of "the Spirit." Luther replies that he is far enough from agreeing with those whose sole reliance is upon the "Spirit," of which they boast. He has had a bitter enough fight with them for a year past. In the same way he has been attacking the papacy because there one is always hearing that the Scriptures are obscure and

ambiguous, and that we ought to seek at Rome for the interpreting Spirit,—the most disastrous thing possible.

> "Now we hold this, that spirits are to be tried and proved by a twofold judgment; the one an internal, whereby a man, enlightened by the Holy Spirit or by a special gift of God may, so far as he and his own salvation are concerned, decide with the utmost certainty and distinguish the doctrines and opinions of all men. As is written [1 Cor. ii. 15.], 'the spiritual man judgeth all things, but is judged by no man.' This is an essential part of faith, and is necessary for everyone, even for a private Christian. This is what we have called above the internal clearness of Holy Scripture and is perhaps what those persons meant who replied to you, that all things were to be decided by the judgment of the Spirit. But this kind of judgment cannot avail for another person, and is not in question here; for no one, I believe, can doubt that it stands as I have said.
>
> "Therefore there is a second kind of judgment, an external, whereby, not only for ourselves but for others and as regards the salvation of others, we may most surely judge the spirits and opinions of all men. This judgment belongs to the public ministry of the Word and to the external office and especially to the leaders and heralds of the Word. This we make use of when we strengthen the weak in the faith and confute our opponents. This we have called above the 'external clearness of Scripture.' And so we say that all spirits are to be tried in the sight of the Church with Scripture as the judge."

After this long introduction, Luther proceeds to take up, one after another, Erasmus' references to Scripture, and to show that he has misunderstood them because he has applied to them a false principle of judgment. We are not concerned with

this theological fencing. Our interest is in the attitude of the two men towards the ultimate question of authority. Erasmus, the "individual," the man of the Renaissance, the apostle of light, the fearless critic of evils in Church and society, approaches this great doctrinal question with the timidity of a scholastic, and refers it finally to the judgment of the great authorities of the Church. Luther, the man of feeling, the thinker who only prayed to be instructed, who gloried in being the slave of a higher will, comes out here in reality as a champion of the boldest liberty of human judgment. He would settle all things by Scripture, but he would read his Scripture with his own eyes and interpret it by the light of that evidence of the Spirit which he and he alone could read for himself. His tone is one of mingled humility and arrogance, but we have no reason to question his sincerity in either character. His arrogance was that of a man who felt with Paul: "Woe is unto me if I preach not the Gospel." He closes, as he began, by praising Erasmus' learning, thanking him for having gone straight at the heart of the question, instead of worrying him, as others were doing, "about the papacy, purgatory, indulgences, and such nonsense," and warning him that henceforth he had better stick to his trade of literature and let theology alone.

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By the year 1525 the Lutheran doctrine may be regarded as substantially complete, in the form which it was to take in the Augsburg Confession of 1530. Erasmus had indeed, as Luther said, gone straight to the point by which that doctrine must stand or fall, and in rejecting it he had made it

impossible for anyone to rank him with the reforming party. At the same time he had shown how completely he was out of sympathy, even theologically, with the system of salvation by *bona opera*, which the Church was trying to maintain. More than ever therefore he found himself out of tune with both parties and, since all the world was now rapidly ranging itself on one side or the other, he experienced a growing sense of isolation that was to colour his remaining years.

Logically this isolation was the natural outcome of lifelong habit. To be free of all obligations was, we have continually noted, Erasmus' chief desire, and that motive, consistently followed, could lead nowhere else than to isolation. Yet here we touch once more upon that other side of his nature which had always been in conflict with the instinct of freedom. In spite of his individuality he needed approval. The breath of adulation was sweet to him. He could be shabby enough to a friend, if he thought himself injured, but that very sensitiveness betrayed his need of friendship. We cannot wonder therefore that henceforth, with increasing age and infirmity, his utterances take on a tone of increasing sadness and sense of loss.

More and more, too, as the doctrines of the reformers spread downward into all classes of society and outward over all countries, it became clearer and clearer to the established authorities that their real quarrel was not with this or that doctrinal quibble, nor with one or the other religious sect or social organisation, but with the underlying spirit of all these. It availed little that Erasmus rejected the doctrine of the Unfree Will, that he refused to be a Lutheran or a Zwinglian, an Anabaptist or a socialist.

The powers threatened by all these felt, and rightly felt, that he stood for something more dangerous still,—a something without which none of the sects could have stood alone for a moment. That something was the spirit of criticism and of science based upon a first-hand knowledge of the sources of Christian truth.

The year 1525 marks a distinct reactionary movement. As, on the one hand, the social and economic disturbances were the severest strain on the new religious awakening, so, on the other hand, they were the final argument to convince the powers of conservatism that it was now or never with them. For a moment the Church had seemed to waver. In electing as pope Adrian VI., a Northerner, an intimate of the young emperor, a school-fellow of Erasmus, and well known as a man of enlightened and moderate views, the Roman Curia had seemed to cut itself loose from an exclusively Roman policy. That policy had more than once brought the papacy to the brink of ruin and was to do so more than once again, but for the moment reformers of all grades believed that a substantial progress had been made. The early action of Adrian had confirmed this belief; but the pressure was too great; the papacy was stronger than the pope. Adrian died in 1523 after a disappointing administration of a single year, and the proverbial swing of the papal pendulum brought to the chair of Peter once more an Italian—not indeed a Roman, but a man as completely identified with the curial policy as Adrian had been unfamiliar with it.

Giulio dei' Medici, nephew of the great Lorenzo, devoted from his earliest years to the ecclesiastical profession, a politician trained in the same school

with Macchiavelli, and accepting the papacy as the natural culmination of his ambition, was precisely the kind of man to rally all the resources of the Church in defence of its imperilled traditions. In that rally, at this perilous crisis, no half-way allegiance could be useful. Whatever hopes might have been placed upon Erasmus by Leo and Adrian were by this time pretty effectually dissipated. The kind of sledge-hammer blows which the papacy of 1525 needed to have struck in its defence were certainly not to come from such an arm as this.

Yet there occurred no official breach with any of the great Catholic powers. On the accession of Clement VII. Erasmus sent him an early letter of congratulation. He almost repeats the language of similar addresses to former popes. Things have been going badly enough, but now the right man for the emergency has come. Especially the cause of learning may well expect the greatest things from a Medicean pope. He has resisted all pressure to take sides against the papacy, and yet Stunica is raging against him in Italy unpunished, to the disgrace of Rome and the injury of the papal name.

> "[159] Believe me, most holy Father, whoever is hiring that play-actor, a man born for this kind of trickery, is doing a very poor service to the papacy or to the cause of the public peace; he is simply serving some private hatred and to that end making use of another's folly.... I have always submitted myself and all my works to the judgment of the Roman Church, not intending to resist, even if it should give a verdict unfavourable to me. For I will suffer everything rather than be a rebel; and therein I place my confidence that your Holiness' sense of justice will not permit me to be given up to the mad hatred of a few men.... The Emperor and the Lady Margaret are calling me back to

> Brabant. The French king is inviting me with mountains of gold to come to him. But nothing shall tear me from Rome but death,—or the gravel more cruel than death,—if only I can be sure that your justice will protect me against false accusations."

The familiar reference to the mountains of French gold, which have been serving their turn with him any time these ten years past, but which have no foundation in fact, serve to indicate the value of these declarations. It is unlikely that Erasmus had the least intention of going to Rome. The phrase about his call to Brabant appears again, somewhat elaborated, in a letter to Cardinal Campeggio, dated 1526, but almost certainly of even date (February, 1524) with the one to Clement just quoted. He speaks here of his very feeble health, which has compelled him to take a house by himself where he can have an open fireplace. He cannot leave in the winter, but is planning a vacation trip for the coming summer, and would gladly betake himself *isthuc*,—presumably to the German Diet at Nuremberg whither Campeggio was coming as papal legate. He goes on to say of how little use he can be under the circumstances, though he will gladly do what he can in the cause of peace. He promises Campeggio to come to the Diet if he can, at the same moment that he is assuring Clement that nothing shall tear him (*avellere*) from his beloved Rome, if he is able to move from Basel at all. If we doubt his intention to go to Rome we may be still more certain that a German Diet in 1524 was the very last place where he would have cared to show himself. This, by the way, was the Diet at which Campeggio was warned not to wear his cardinal's hat, and not to make the sign of benediction or of the cross.[160]

So far as we can ever say that Erasmus had intentions about his future, we may venture to believe that he meant to end his days at Basel. On one subject it was almost impossible for him to exaggerate, and that was the awful agony of his disease in its acute stages and the great weakness and depression in the interval. The wonder is that he could have kept so steadily at work and could so often, in the midst of his reproaches upon fortune and his enemies, display that keen, playful humour which was his greatest charm.

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On one other doctrinal question, of vast importance in the history of the Reformation, we must examine the utterances of Erasmus; namely, on the question of the Eucharist. While the problem of the freedom of the will involved the most profound philosophical speculation, the eucharistic controversy had to deal with a matter which, viewed from one side, was a mere question of usage, but from another led at once into a region where blind faith was plainly set in opposition to human reason. From an early day the organised Church had seen the value of the ideas which had taken form in the service of the Eucharist and had insisted with absolutely unwavering determination upon the doctrinal formula which expressed them. First brought sharply before the mediæval world by the controversy of Paschasius in the ninth century, the issue was revived by Berengar of Tours in the eleventh, and all the ingenuity of the early scholasticism of Anselm's day was displayed in giving to the idea a foundation that could be neither misunderstood nor evaded. Thus crystallised into a

philosophic reality by the great formulators of the thirteenth century, the crass statement of the Church had been questioned anew by Wiclif. Hus had, on this point, it is true, professed allegiance to the Church, but the Hussite party, by its passionate insistence upon the right of the laity to receive the Eucharist under both forms, had protested against the whole conception of the sacrament as a sacrifice. So also the tendency of the great mystical movement had been to accustom men's minds to a spiritual interpretation of outward forms.

That was the stage in which the Reformation found the whole subject of the Eucharist. Luther early became clear on two points: first, that the celebration of the Eucharist as a repetition of the sacrifice of Christ upon the cross, without any reference whatever to the individual communicant,—indeed, as was oftenest the case, without any lay communicant at all,—was an outrageous violation of every truly Christian conception of the institution, a mere piece of heathen idolatry. But, secondly, Luther still clung to the notion that a something mysterious and miraculous took place when the formula of benediction was duly uttered by the priest, and that this something must still be expressed in terms of the church tradition. "*Hoc est corpus meum*" must have some literal and physical meaning. Especially as he saw the "fanatics," who were not afraid to use their reason and take the consequences, going far ahead of him and repudiating all the mystery of the consecrated symbol, he found himself drawn more and more into sympathy with the traditional view. The Eucharist question thus became the test of distinction not only between Catholic and Protestant but between moderate and radical Protestant as well. Plain men like Landgraf Philip of Hessen, who

wanted above all else to see all the forces of Protestantism united in one great assault, were shocked and puzzled to find that men who seemed to them to stand for precisely the same things were held apart by such a mere speculative problem as this.

Luther said, and said truly, of his Protestant doctrinal opponents, "these men are of another spirit," and at the Conference of Marburg, in 1529, when the whole future of Protestantism seemed to hang upon the union of the Swiss with the German branch, his personal insistence upon the out-and-out literalness of the Catholic symbol prevented that union forever. He saved the Lutheran Church from the reproach of fanaticism and left the Swiss Church free to follow its more liberal course. That is where the Eucharist question drew near Erasmus. He began to feel the approach of danger and, characteristically, to prepare for it. We have no special treatise on the subject from his hand, though he is said to have written and suppressed two such. His expressions in regard to it are scattered through his apologetic writings. In the "Apology against Certain Spanish Monks," published in 1528, there is a chapter[161] in which he replies to criticism on this point. Here, as everywhere, he tries to draw a clear line between what is essential and what is non-essential to the Christian faith. Hutten, he says, found fault with him because he was not willing to expose himself to all perils for the sake of Luther's doctrine, but he had replied:

> "I would gladly be a martyr for Christ, if he would give me strength, but I am not willing to be a martyr for Luther.... Now if it were an important article of faith that the Mass is not a sacrifice, as Luther maintains, death ought to be sought and inflicted on

> its account.... What I call articles of faith are those handed down in all the creeds which the Church repeats,—and yet I do not deny the use of this phrase for some doctrines that are not expressed in the creeds. As to the reasons why the Eucharist is called a sacrifice, there is still a difference among theologians as there is also on many points about the primacy of the pope.... When I have stated that we ought to agree with the Church in all points, even if man's reason and the apparent meaning of Scripture were opposed, I make it clear enough that I will conform at once, if anyone will prove to me what the Church teaches on this point."

As regards the communion in both kinds, his critics tried to trip him on the ground of a letter to Bohemia in which he had seemed to show some favour to the new-old doctrine. He protests that he never meant to question the teaching of the Church but only to suggest that more weighty reasons than he had as yet heard ought to be given for changing a practice which undoubtedly prevailed in the early centuries of the Church.

> "Nor do I doubt that there were such reasons, which perhaps on account of some scruple they preferred not to mention;—for it is not an impious thing in itself to partake under both forms.... As for the charge that on this point as on many others I agree with Luther, if I should say that is a straight lie, they would think me lacking in courtesy; but bad luck to that crafty book from which these extracts are taken! I try to persuade men to conform to the requirements of the Roman Church in partaking of the Eucharist; is that agreeing with Luther? Let anyone read what he writes on this business!"

So anxious was Erasmus to set himself right with the world on this all-important topic, that in 1530,

after his removal to Freiburg, he published an edition of a treatise by one Algerus, a Benedictine monk of Liege, who died at Cluny in 1131. This work, entitled A Treatise on the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of our Lord, was written in refutation of Berengar of Tours. In his dedication[162] Erasmus says: "I have never doubted the reality of the body of the Lord, and yet somehow by the reading of this work my faith has been not a little confirmed, and my reverence increased." In the course of this dedication he shows us very plainly the working of his mind. The *doctrine* he admits to be of original validity, but as to its *form*, and as to the precise expressions one ought to use, there has been an historical development and this has come about by human means, through the natural process of controversy.

> "Would that they who have followed Berengar in his errors would follow him also in his repentance, and that their error may turn to the advantage of the Church! There are innumerable questions about this sacrament, as, how the change of substance takes place; how accidents can exist without a substance; how the bread and the wine retain the colour, the smell, the taste, the power of satisfying, of intoxicating, and of nourishing which they had before they were consecrated; at what moment they begin and cease to be the body and blood of Christ; whether, if the form be destroyed another substance succeeds; how the same body may be in innumerable places; how the very body of a man can be under the least crumb of bread and many other things which may properly be discussed by those of trained intelligence. For the multitude it is enough to believe that after the consecration the bread and the wine are the true body and blood of the Lord, which cannot be divided, nor injured, nor is exposed to any harm, whatever may happen to the elements.... In short, in answer to all the doubts of human reasoning, there comes to us the

> unlimited power of God, to whom nothing is impossible and nothing difficult."

In other words, Erasmus in 1530 is perfectly satisfied with the same mental attitude which Paschasius had displayed in the ninth century, at a moment when European culture was but just rising above its lowest point. His only criticism is reserved for the excesses of the Church system. His description of the proper state of mind of the devout worshipper is spiritual enough to be adopted by the most eager Protestant.

> "Once," he says, "when the Church was in its best estate, it knew but one sacrament and the bishop alone performed it. The throng of sacramental persons were attracted first by piety and then by gain. At length the thing has gone so far that many study for the priesthood precisely as one man learns to be a mechanic, another a cobbler, another a mason or a tailor. To these the Mass is only a means of livelihood."

Whenever we find Erasmus protesting with especial vehemence that he does not believe a thing, we may be tolerably sure that he has already given good reason for suspicion that he did believe it. In the case of the Eucharist such suspicion was well grounded. The objections to the doctrine, even on its philosophical side, were such as must have appealed strongly to his common sense. The abuses of it in practice, especially the whole theory of the Mass as a sacrifice, performed by the priest at so much per performance, were precisely of the kind against which he had declaimed all his life long. When the doctrine began to be criticised by the reformers, especially by his Swiss neighbours, he allowed

himself some tolerably free expressions of opinion. The leader of Swiss thought on this, as on most theological subjects, was Œcolampadius, the reformed preacher of Basel. He had published his view, and Erasmus' friend, Bilibald Pirkheimer of Nuremberg, had replied, defending a view resembling that of Luther. In June, 1526, Erasmus wrote to Pirkheimer reviewing very briefly the state of the reforming ideas in the several European countries. He says[163]:

> "I should not be displeased with the view of Œcolampadius, if the consent of the Church were not against it. *For I see no meaning in a body without sensible form*, nor what use it could be if it were perceived by the senses, provided only that a spiritual grace were present in the elements. And yet I cannot depart from the consent of the Church and never have so departed. You differ from Œcolampadius in such a way that you seem to prefer to agree with Luther rather than with the Church. You quote Luther with a little more respect than was necessary, when you might have cited the authority of others.... With your usual prudence *you will not show this letter to anyone*."

In the year following he begins a letter to Pirkheimer thus[164]:

> "From your pen, my dear Bilibald, I have never feared anything, having long tested your cautious considerateness and your persistent loyalty in friendship; but it did offend me to have Œcolampadius mixing up my name in his books without any reason, when he knows from me, that it is unpleasant to me to be named by him, more unpleasant to be abused, and most unpleasant to be praised. He keeps it up without end. I have never ascribed anything of this to my dear Bilibald; for many things grieve us which we can ascribe to no one.

> If I had some little doubt about your unusually long silence, that ought not to surprise you, considering the changeableness of human affections.... And I do not regret my little suspicions since they have brought me these longed-for letters."

Apparently Erasmus suspected that Pirkheimer had, after all, let Œcolampadius know that he was inclined to the spiritual view of the Eucharist. Farther on he writes:

> "I said *among friends* that I could follow his opinion, if the authority of the Church would approve it; but I added that I could by no means differ from the Church. But by 'Church' I mean the consent of all Christian people.... How much the authority of the Church avails with others I know not, but it is so important to me that I could agree with Arians or Pelagians, if the Church should approve what they taught. Not that the words of Christ are not sufficient for me, but it is no wonder that I follow as interpreter the Church, upon the authority of which I believe in the canonical Scriptures. Others perhaps have more talent or more strength than I, but I rest nowhere so safely as in the certain judgment of the Church. Of reasons and argumentations there is no end."



BILIBALD PIRKHEIMER OF NUREMBERG.

FROM AN ENGRAVING BY ALBRECHT DÜRER, IN "ERASMI OPERA," PUBLISHED A

In short, Erasmus had on this subject, as he had usually had on all controverted points, one opinion for his friends and another for the world. His array of "ifs" and "buts" was only a cover for his nervous dread of committing himself to something. His attitude on this question is throughout characteristic. If it meant anything, it would be a complete justification for the suspension of all thought on any speculative question. To say that one would be inclined to a belief if only the Church would approve it, is to emasculate one's own intelligence. It could not help things to say that the Church meant to him the consent of all Christian people. At that moment there was no consent of all Christian people, and the only conceivable way by which such consent could be reached was by a full and free comparison of the honest views of honest men, in order that essentials might be emphasised and non-essentials eliminated. It is a poor defence of the brightest and clearest mind of his day, to say that he refused to take his manly part in the clearing up of precisely those speculative questions about which discussion must necessarily arise. It was idle for him to talk about avoiding dissensions. The dissensions were there, and the real question was not how to suppress them, but how to solve them so that right-minded and intelligent men could know where they stood.

The worst thorn in Erasmus' side on this question was Conrad Pelicanus, one of the reformed preachers of Basel. The chief offence of Pelicanus was that he had sought to support his spiritual view of the Eucharist by declaring that Erasmus really believed just as he did. We have three letters of Erasmus to

him, all of 1526, and each more violent than the other. Let us notice only the most decided of these expressions.

> "It is my way when I am with learned friends, especially when there are present none of the weaker sort, to discourse freely on all kinds of subjects, for the purpose of making inquiries, sometimes to try them or for mental exercise, and perhaps I am more outspoken in this matter than I ought to be. But I will confess to the charge of murder, if any mortal has ever heard me say in jest or in earnest this word: that in the Eucharist there is merely bread and wine or that it is not the real body and blood of our Lord as some are now maintaining in their books. Nay, I call upon Christ himself to be my enemy, if that opinion ever found a lodgment in my mind. For if ever at any time any flighty thoughts have touched my mind I have easily thrown them off by considering the measureless love of God to me, and by weighing the words of Holy Scripture, which have compelled even Luther, whom you set above all schools, all popes, all men of sound doctrine, and councils, to profess what the Catholic Church professes though he is wont freely to differ from her....
>
> "If I should confess to you as to a friend debauchery or theft, how utterly against all laws of friendship it would be if you were to babble it even to one person, to the peril of your friend. Now, when you are scattering abroad among all men the most dreadful of all charges, of things which my tongue, though a free one, has never uttered, nor my mind ever conceived, how can you be forgiven for what you are doing, my Evangelical friend? Did you think to abuse the authority of my name in order to enforce a belief you have yourself but lately begun to hold? I pray you, in the name of Christ, is that an Evangelical thing, to make so dreadful a charge against a friend in order to drag more persons into a new sect, as if we had not sects enough already? If your doctrine is a

> truly pious one, have you no other means of persuading men to it except this empty statement, that Erasmus agrees with you? But if my opinion is worth so much to you, why do you hold it of no account on the many points on which I differ from you?...
>
> "If you are convinced that in the Eucharist there is nothing but bread and wine, I would rather be torn limb from limb than profess what you profess and would rather suffer anything than depart this life with such a crime confessed against my own conscience.... I will suffer you to babble out before all men whatever I have said, in intimate discourse, sober or drunk, in jest or in earnest, but I will not suffer you to make me the author or the supporter of that dogma; for it was never either on my tongue or in my heart."

The best summary of the view he wished others to take of his own opinions on this point is found in a letter to his former pupil, the Polish baron John à Lasco.[165]

> "I seem to read between the lines of Luther's writings, that Pelicanus has given him some hints from our conversations,—the same who has nearly stirred up another disturbance here. He had spread a rumour that he had the same opinions on the Eucharist as I had. I wrote him a letter of remonstrance, but without giving names. This letter of [to?] Pelicanus was shown by Berus and Cantiuncula to a few persons, was even read in the Council, and finally was translated into German and spread far and wide, to my great distress. Pelicanus replied by letter. I wrote him to stop his writing and, if he wanted anything of me, to come to me. He came. I asked the man what he meant by his letters. He tried various evasions, but when I pressed him he finally confessed that he had said he believed the same as I. I asked him what then he did believe that could be in agreement with me? He replied after many attempts at evasion: 'I believe that in the Eucharist are the body and blood of

> the Lord; isn't that what you believe?' 'Assuredly,' I replied. 'Do you believe they are there by way of a symbol?' 'No,' he said, 'but I believe the *efficacy* (*virtutem*) of Christ is present.' I went on: 'Don't you believe that the *substance* of the body is present?' He confessed that he did not believe it. After that I asked him if he had ever professed this opinion in my presence. He confessed what is the truth, that he had never done so. Then I demanded whether he had ever heard this opinion from me. He said he had never heard it and, what was more, he had often heard the opposite. I continued: 'You pretend to others that I agree with you, and when you say this, you understand in your own mind that you agree with me so far as to believe that the body of the Lord is present; while those who hear you understand that I agree with you in accepting the opinion of Œcolampadius.'"

The more Erasmus protested, the less could he convince the advanced reformers that he did not in his heart agree with them. His fate was that of any man who tries to shift and shuffle in a crisis when honest men are forming their opinions and are grouping themselves accordingly. He was left outside all the groups, and could not even persuade the one all-embracing, ever hospitable Church that he belonged heartily within her fold.

CHAPTER XI
FAMILIAR COLLOQUIES—NEW TESTAMENT PARAPHRASES—CONTROVERSIAL AND DIDACTIC WRITINGS—REMOVAL TO FREIBURG—LAST REFORMATORY TREATISES—RETURN TO BASEL—DEATH
1523-1536

WITH all Erasmus' anxiety to demonstrate in words his entire independence of the rapidly organising reform parties and his unswerving loyalty to the papacy, his action during these critical years was as far as possible from timidity or half-heartedness. Of this no better proof can be given than the repeated editions of his Familiar Colloquies. The Colloquies, like the Adages, have a history of their own. They were begun, probably, as early as the residence of Erasmus in Paris,[166] about the year 1500, and consisted at first of brief conversations on familiar subjects, arranged for the use of beginners in Latin.

As years went on, these early experiments were extended, partly by expansion, partly by addition. In 1523-24 appeared an edition, practically complete, with a charming little dedication to the author's namesake, John Erasmius Froben, the eight-year-old son of the publisher. This dedication, we have a right to believe, represents fairly the serious thought of Erasmus as to the real meaning and purpose of his book.[167]

The Colloquies were written to instruct by amusing. They touch upon every class of society and upon every vice and weakness of human nature. Some are sparkling with humour, some are too plainly didactic to be very amusing, and some, especially the later ones, are downright dull. As in the Praise of Folly, the sermon is heard through all the rush of words and no one of these tales is quite without its moral lesson. The subjects most welcome to Erasmus' satire are of course the extravagances of monks and schoolmen and the superstitions of religion. We have already quoted freely from some of the more important for the knowledge of the writer's own life. A brief survey of one or two of the more widely popular will indicate the great range of interest and the keen human desire which commended them to so large a circle of readers.

In The Abbot and the Learned Lady we have one of several proofs that Erasmus regarded the education of women as desirable and profitable to the community. The abbot reproves the lady because he finds Latin books in her chamber. French or German he could bear with, but not Latin.

> "*Abbot.* 'I have sixty-two monks at home, but you will never find a book in my chamber.' *Magdalia.* 'That's a fine lookout for your monks.' *Ab.* 'I can stand books, but not Latin ones.' *Mag.* 'Why so?' *Ab.* 'Because that tongue is not suited to women.' *Mag.* 'I should like to know why.' *Ab.* 'Because it is far from helpful in maintaining their purity.' *Mag.* 'Do those French books, then, full of idle tales, make for purity?' *Ab.* 'Then there is another thing.' *Mag.* 'Well, out with it, whatever it is.' *Ab.* 'They are safer from the priests if they know no Latin.' *Mag.* 'Oh! but there is least danger of all from that quarter according to your practice, for you do all you can to keep from knowing

> Latin.' *Ab.* 'People in general are of my mind because it is such a rare and unusual thing for a woman to know Latin.' *Mag.* 'Don't talk to me of the people, the very worst source of good actions—nor of custom, the mistress of all evils. Let us accustom ourselves to what is good, then what was formerly unusual will become usual, what was rude will become polished, and what was unbecoming will grow to be fitting.' ... *Mag.* 'What think you of the Virgin Mother?' *Ab.* 'Most highly.' *Mag.* 'Was she not versed in books?' *Ab.* 'Quite so, but not in these books.' *Mag.* 'What, then, did she use to read?' *Ab.* 'The Canonical Hours.' *Mag.* 'According to what form?' *Ab.* 'That of the Benedictine order.'"

The Youth and the Harlot brings us to perhaps the best illustration of that freedom of language which was the most common charge against the Colloquies. The argument is one employed previously by the Saxon nun Roswitha in the tenth century in her comedy *Paphnutius*. An edition of Roswitha had been published at Nuremberg in 1501, so that Erasmus may well have taken his model at first-hand. The conversation is of the slipperiest, and yet the impression conveyed is not that of immoral or even of unmoral writing. It is simply the baldest "realism" of treatment, and the issue is distinctly a moral one. As in Roswitha the erring woman is won to virtue by the Christian faith, so here she is reformed by arguments of a more practical sort. The dig at the monks is not lacking. The youth has been on a journey to Rome:

> "*Sophronius.* 'I journeyed with an honest man and by his advice I took with me not a bottle but a book, the New Testament translated by Erasmus.' *Lucretia.* 'Erasmus! why they say he is a heretic and a half!' *Soph.* 'Has his name got into this place too?' *Luc.* 'No one is better known here.' *Soph.* 'Have you ever seen him?' *Luc.* 'Never; but I should like to see him. I have

> heard so many bad things about him.' *Soph.* 'From bad men, I dare say.' *Luc.* 'Oh, no! from most reverend men.' *Soph.* 'Who are they?' *Luc.* 'Oh! it won't do to say.' *Soph.* 'Why not?' *Luc.* 'Because if you should blab and they should hear it, I should lose a great part of my gains.' *Soph.* 'Don't be afraid. I am mum as a stone.' *Luc.* 'Put down your ear.' *Soph.* 'Stupid! Why need we whisper when we are alone? Doesn't God hear us?... Well, by the eternal God! you are a pious harlot to help along *Mendicants* by your charity!'"

The Colloquies became the especial object of attack from all who cared to assail the reputation of Erasmus. Typical was the action of the Paris theological tribunal, the Sorbonne, which in 1526 condemned the book as dangerous to the morals of the young, and worse still as containing the same errors as the works of Arius, Wiclif, the Waldensians, and Luther. In presenting their case to the supreme court, the "Parlement" of Paris, for its action, the theologians of the Sorbonne review the steps already taken by the spiritual authorities toward the suppression of the Colloquies. They had done what they could, but now demand the aid of the temporal powers. King Francis I. appears to have opposed the action of the Parlement, and it was not until 1528 that the University as a body condemned the book and forbade its students to read it.



TITLE-PAGE TO THE "COLLOQUIES OF ERASMUS,

PUBLISHED AT AMSTERDAM, 1693.
PORTRAIT OF ERASMUS AND OTHERS.

Equally unfavourable was Luther's judgment of the Colloquies. In his Table-Talk he refers frequently to them as the most offensive to him of all Erasmus' writings.[168]

> "If I die I will forbid my children to read his Colloquies, for he says and teaches there many a godless thing, under fictitious names, with intent to assault the Church and the Christian faith. He may laugh and make fun of me and of other men, but let him not make fun of our Lord God!
>
> "See now what poison he scatters in his Colloquies among his made-up people, and goes craftily at our youth to poison them."

Another product of the years of greatest party stress were the Latin Paraphrases of the New Testament books. No one of the serious works of Erasmus was so widely influential as this. Erasmus began his work on them immediately after the first publication of the New Testament in 1516, and continued it at intervals during the next seven or eight years. The timeliness of the Paraphrases is shown by their immediate translation into the common tongues. Erasmus himself says that they brought him very little odium, but abundant thanks. In a preface addressed to the "Pious Reader"[169] he makes an ample and admirable defence of bringing the Bible to the people both in the form of paraphrases and of translations. "I greatly differ," he says, "from those who maintain that the laity and the unlearned should be kept from the reading of the sacred volumes, and that none should be admitted to

these mysteries except the few who have spent years over the philosophy of Aristotle and the theology of the schools."

There are two ways to this end: either all men must learn "the three tongues," or else the Scriptures must be translated. Erasmus makes the somewhat startling suggestion that, as the energy of the Roman princes had compelled all the world to speak Greek and Latin, merely to maintain their temporal Empire, it was quite within the bounds of possibility for the princes of Christendom to compel all men to learn Hebrew, Greek, and Latin that the eternal kingdom of Christ might be spread over the whole earth. However, he realises that this is not likely to happen very soon and meanwhile will be content if each may know the Scripture in his own tongue:

> "if the farmer, as he holds the plough, shall sing to himself something from the Psalms; if the weaver, sitting at his web, shall lighten his toil with a passage from the Gospels. Let the sailor, as he holds the rudder, repeat a Scripture verse, and as the mother plies the distaff, let a friend or relative read aloud from the sacred volume."

Our limits forbid us to go in detail into the several long and bitter controversies in which Erasmus found himself engaged with the defenders of the ancient faith. They begin with the publication of his New Testament and continue for twenty years with little interruption. They were without exception undertaken by unofficial persons, representing the governing powers of neither Church nor State. It was Erasmus' constant boast that all the really important elements of European life were on his side and that the attacks upon him were only so many reflections

upon the highest authorities themselves. There is truth enough in this boast to make it evident that these controversies were a private matter between himself and his immediate opponents; but it was plain also that at any critical moment the powers that were might be enlisted against him.

The charges which caused him most anxiety may be reduced to two. First, the accusation of scholarly inaccuracy, and second, the far more difficult and wide-reaching accusation of heresy with all its multitudinous meanings. As to the former charge of inaccurate scholarship, Erasmus had two forms of defence. Sometimes he admitted it and sought to explain it away by alleging hasty work and defending himself by readiness to accept correction and to prepare new editions of the faulty texts. He liked to represent himself as a pioneer, breaking the way for others more learned than himself and, he would venture to hope, stimulated to better things by his example. Or, again, he would deny the truth of the criticism and would then proceed to demonstrate at great length and, with all the amenities common to literary controversy in his day, to demolish the contentions of his opponent. In these discussions of purely literary and scholarly themes, where his antagonists were really men of some consideration, he kept his argument in the main to a reasonably high standard. Where, however, they seemed to him men of small account he descends to unmeasured personal abuse.

In the other kind of controversy called out by his attacks upon ignorant and vulgar superstitions or upon the excesses of clerical abuse, his method was somewhat different. Here he was always ready to repay slander by slander, to exaggerate the personal

element both in attack and defence, and especially to insist that he was absolutely sound in his doctrinal beliefs. To the former class of controversies belong notably that with Edward Lee, later archbishop of York, called out by the early edition of the New Testament, that with Budæus, which was a liberal give-and-take of sharp criticism on purely literary matters, and that with the Spaniard Stunica. To the latter class belong such wranglings as his dealings with Natalis Bedda of Paris, Nicholas Egmund of Louvain, and Gerhardt of Nymwegen, the reformed preacher of Strassburg.

This controversial literature gives us but little insight into the real thought of Erasmus. Its value for us is only in furnishing us with evidence of his astonishing cleverness in winding his way out of difficulties and his immense command of the language of vituperation. Its study leaves one with an unpleasant sense of powers diverted for the time from their most profitable exercise into issues which did not tell with any great effect upon the final result of the scholar's life.

The anxiety of Erasmus as to the reception of his works begins to show itself from about the year 1526 in his dealing with the person and the probable fate of Louis de Berquin. The story of this first martyr to the reformed faith in France reflects better than any other episode the course of events and ideas in the early stages of the reformatory movement there. Berquin was a gentleman of Artois, a man of liberal education, serious in his character, and moved from the start to apply his learning to the remedy of obvious abuses in the clerical life. Through Lefèvre he was led to the study of the Lutheran leaders and became convinced that here he had found the true

way to liberty and recovery from the low condition of the dominant religion. Like Erasmus he attacked principally those errors and abuses which seemed to rest mainly upon ignorance and superstition in those to whom the world had a right to look for learning and enlightenment. The scholars of the Sorbonne, the heads of the French ecclesiastical fabric and the leaders of French monasticism, were at once alarmed. They began, early in the movement of the reform, to bring every possible pressure upon the young, enlightened, and would-be liberal king to act promptly and with decision against these first threatening demonstrations of what they were ready instantly to stamp as "heresy." For six years, from 1523 to 1529, Berquin was subjected to one stage after another of a persecution which he was too brave to avoid. His chief offence in the eyes of his theological persecutors was that he had studied and translated into French, with "blasphemous" commentaries, several of the most dangerous writings of Erasmus and other alleged leaders of sedition. Twice arrested and imprisoned, he was twice released by the special order of the king, who seems to have taken his case very much to heart. Meanwhile were occurring that series of unhappy events,—the Italian campaign of 1525, the capture of Francis I., the treaty of Madrid, and the negotiations following it,—which were driving the king inevitably into the hands of the French clerical party. To save his kingdom and his "honour" he was forced to make sacrifices, and a ready victim was found in this man, who had defied the powers which were now clamouring for a royal edict of persecution. The king withdrew his protection and Berquin died upon the scaffold on the 17th of April, 1529.

The relations of Erasmus with Berquin began by a

letter from the latter written in 1526 and expressing the greatest admiration for the learning and services to true religion of the man to whom he looked up as his chief example. He assures Erasmus that the main object in persecuting him had been to throw suspicion upon Erasmus' own works; but that he had assured his judges that if anything in these works seemed contrary to the faith it was the result of misunderstanding or perversion of the original text. He exhorts Erasmus to write, not casually, as he has already done to Bedda, but at length, with arguments and with the authorities from Scripture, to refute these calumnies.

This letter of Berquin[170] is a noble and touching appeal. Not a word of complaint or of fear for himself, though he had just for the second time barely escaped from the clutches of enemies who were determined to destroy him. He appeals to Erasmus, not in his own behalf, but in behalf of that truth which he found above all in the writings of the man he was glad to call his master.

The reply[171] was as brief and cold as could well be.

> "I have no doubt that you are acting with the best of intentions, most learned Berquin, but meanwhile you are bringing upon me, who am too heavily burdened already, a weight of odium by translating my books into the common tongue and bringing them to the knowledge of theologians."

Two later letters[172] have the same tone of petulant self-interest and cold indifference to the fate which he predicts if Berquin does not moderate his attacks.

After Berquin's death he wrote to Pirkheimer,[173] giving an account of the affair as he had heard it, and added:

> "If he deserved this, I am sorry; if he did not deserve it, I am doubly sorry. The real facts in the case are not quite clear to me. I had no acquaintance with Berquin, except from his writings and from the reports of several persons.... I always feared that things would end with him as they have, and I never wrote to him except to urge upon him to cease from contentions which could only have an evil end."

The same story is repeated, with more detail, in a letter to Utenhoven.[174]

In these letters there is not a word of real sympathy with the fate of a man whose worst fault was the publication of Erasmus' own writings! Not a word of honest admiration for his courage—only a grudging admission that he was an honest fellow, but really too obstinately determined upon ruining himself! Worst of all is the shabby pretence that Erasmus had not really looked into the case of Berquin and after all was not quite sure whether he had deserved his punishment or not. Of all the triumphs of the Erasmian "If," none is more complete or more significant than this.

For several years, from about 1523 on, Erasmus had been engaged in personal controversy with individual theologians at Paris; but it was not until 1525 that the Sorbonne Faculty as a body was brought to act in the premises. A decree of that year condemned certain passages in the translations of several of Erasmus' books. In 1526 another attack was made especially against the Familiar Colloquies and the Paraphrases of the New Testament. The

former were definitely prohibited to students who were candidates for degrees. The decree of the Faculty was arranged under thirty-two headings, each concerning some special point of alleged divergence from the true teaching of the Church. In his reply,[175] published in 1529, Erasmus takes up these points one by one and fills over seventy printed folio pages with specific answers. As to the style of his defence we are prepared to anticipate it. His method is precisely that of Berquin,—to declare that he is true to the real doctrine of the Fathers and that his critics—not, of course, the learned Faculty itself—are those who are in error. How these charges can really come from the Faculty as a whole he cannot comprehend, but he proposes to appeal from the Faculty asleep to the Faculty awake. He has made errors: to err is human. But why condemn as error in him what the greatest lights of the Church have said without reproof? When Augustine is praising virginity he goes a little far in dispraise of marriage; is it strange if Erasmus in defending marriage has seemed to have too little respect for virginity?

We are not for a moment to suppose that the real audience to which this reply was addressed was the Faculty of Paris asleep or awake; it was the reading world. A more splendid advertisement for the Colloquies than this theological prosecution could hardly be imagined. Erasmus says[176] that a certain Parisian publisher, upon the rumour, "perhaps started by the publisher himself," that the Colloquies were about to be condemned, got out an elegant handy edition of twenty-four thousand, and that it was at once in everyone's hands.

In England, where Erasmus might have expected to find his best defenders and his most sympathetic

readers, the Colloquies were condemned in the same year (1526) as at Paris.

A work which brought much later reproach upon its author was the Institution of Christian Marriage, written in 1526 and dedicated to Queen Katherine of England. Our interest in it is in the bearing upon marriage of the changes in public sentiment wrought by the Reformation; and especially in that whole great problem of the relation between marriage as the foundation of human society and the whole monastic and priestly limitation of it. Erasmus reaches this point after a long and systematic review of the canonical regulations as to marriage. He examines first the evil effect upon society of the entrance into the monastic life of persons already under the obligations of marriage, a thing which he says was never favoured even in times most kindly disposed towards monasticism itself unless with full consent of the other party.[177] That Erasmus had not entire confidence even in the supervision of marriage by the most responsible ecclesiastical authorities is shown by a striking passage[178] in which he foreshadows the principle of civil marriage:

> "It would in great measure do away with the controversies that spring from words present and future, from marriage celebrated and marriage consummated, from signs, nods, and writings, if the heads of the Church would deign to decree that no marriage should be considered complete (*ratum*) until each party, before special magistrates and witnesses, in clear words, soberly and freely, shall declare his marriage to the other party, and that these words should be preserved in writing."

The great body of the essay is taken up with admirable injunctions as to the conduct of married

life and the education of children. Erasmus avoids here any consideration of what was becoming one of the burning questions of the day, the right of "reformed" monks or priests to enter into lawful marriage, but returns at the very close to the relation between marriage and the clerical life. The burden of his thought here is the duty of parents and all concerned to make sure that the youth proposing either to take orders or to become a monk shall be quite clear as to his calling and perfectly free to follow it or not.[179] Throughout this very attractive dissertation there is a noticeable calmness of style, joined, however, with entire clearness and decision upon the essential points. It is one of the best illustrations of Erasmus' lifelong insistance upon the higher value of the life of nature as compared with any life of mere formalism.

That Erasmus' silence on the question of clerical marriage was not due to lack of thought on the subject is clear from a letter to C. Hedio, Lutheran preacher at Strassburg in 1524, two years before the treatise on Christian Marriage.[180]

> "And yet before all 'Papists'—as these people call them—I have always freely declared that marriage should not be denied to priests who shall be ordained in future, if they cannot be continent, and I would say nothing else to the pope himself; not because I do not prefer continence, but because I find scarcely a man who preserves his continence. Meanwhile what use is there of such a swarm of priests? I never persuaded anyone to marriage; but neither did I ever stand in the way of anyone who wished to marry."

Erasmus recognises the need of reform in every detail; he professes agreement with every view of the reformers, but he will not advocate any specific

action, because it will open up some new outlet for human frailty. To follow him would be to condemn the world, once for all, to hopeless inactivity, simply because the world's business must be done by finite human beings.

One naturally compares with this elaborate defence of natural and wise living, in the Christian Marriage, another treatise also written two years earlier, dedicated to the sisters of a nunnery near Cologne and called A Comparison of the Virgin and the Martyr.[181] The good ladies, it seems, had frequently sent Erasmus presents of confectionery and had begged him to write something for them,—a very pious desire, he says, but a poor choice of a man. He only wishes that he could find in the fragrant stories of Holy Writ something to refresh their minds as their little gifts have refreshed his body. So he runs on with a page or two of pretty fancies about virginity and then, in equally fanciful strain, about martyrdom. On the whole, virginity has the advantage.

Comparing the spouse of Christ with the spouse of a mortal husband, Erasmus dilates upon the vast superiority of the virgin state. If one is not willing to believe this from the evidence of learned men, let her

> "call as a witness any one of those who are happily enough married and ask her to tell the true history of her marriage. You will hear things that will make you quite satisfied with your own way of life. Then just put before yourself the example of those who have married unhappily, of whom there is a vast multitude, and think that what has happened to them might have happened to you...."

This was written at the very time at which Erasmus was giving to the world the completed text of his Colloquies! How shall we explain these apparent contradictions? Precisely as we have explained the account of the monastic life in the *De Contemptu Mundi*.[182] Like that earlier essay, this too was a piece of literary display, written, not to rouse opposition, but out of a largely conventional impulse. We need not question for a moment the entire sincerity of Erasmus in this kind of composition, as far as it went. It was only the natural instinct of the man to counterbalance every opinion he uttered and every effect he produced by putting forth something on the other side of the same question—for every question has two sides. There were doubtless purely conducted monasteries, and Erasmus was bound to believe that the pleasant ladies who were kind enough to feed him with candy were examples to their kind. To suppose, however, that the phrases of ecstatic spiritual joy here offered came from very deep down in his heart of hearts would place the spirit of Erasmus in closer kinship with Bernard and à Kempis than we should quite like to put it.

During precisely these years, from 1522 to 1529, we have a great number of treatises, generally short, which illustrate this more devotional and spiritual phase of his literary activity. A characteristic specimen is the *Modus Orandi Deum*, "On the True Way of Prayer,"[183] addressed to Gerome à Lasco, a Polish baron and brother of the better-known John à Lasco. This is a systematic inquiry into the nature, the purpose, and the limitations of Christian prayer. It examines the questions: to whom we may pray, what we may properly pray for, and how our prayers should be framed. In regard to the first question,

Erasmus discusses with great skill some of the most delicate problems of his day. He examines authorities on both sides as to the propriety of prayers to Christ and concludes:

> "After diligently searching the sacred volumes, and supported by the authority of our fathers, I do not hesitate to call the Son of God true God and to direct my prayers to him, not with the idea that the Son could give what the Father may deny, but because I am persuaded that the Son wills the same and can do the same as the Father wills and can do;—though the Father is author and source of all things."

More difficult was the question of the invocation of saints. Erasmus works his way up to a conclusion by a series of carefully prepared stages. True, we ought to affirm dogmatically only such things as are plainly declared in the Holy Scriptures; but we ought to respect everything that has been handed down with the approval of pious men. Now we know that the invocation of saints was practised by very early orthodox Christians, therefore, while we cannot say that it is a necessary article of faith, we may well bear with it. We know that the saints when on earth were called upon to pray for other men; why suppose them less capable of praying for us now that they dwell with God in heaven?

As to the proper objects of prayer Erasmus makes a very elaborate analysis,[184] but brings everything round finally to the standard of the Lord's Prayer. The method is almost scholastic in its system and its logical division, but it is eminently sensible and practical in its content.

> "We should pray for nothing that cannot be referred to one of the seven divisions of the Lord's

> Prayer. Whatever we may ask for which pertains to the glory of God, belongs to the first clause: 'Hallowed be thy name.' Whatever refers to the spread and realisation of the Gospel, belongs to the second: 'Thy kingdom come'; whatever to the observance of the divine teaching, to the third: 'Thy will be done,'" and so on.

To illustrate the folly of absurd distinctions as to which divinities might attend to which prayers, he tells a story of a certain man at Louvain, simple rather than impious, who, after he had made his devotions, used to run about among the various altars, saluting the saints for whom he had an especial liking, and saying: "This is yours, St. Barbara," and "Take this to yourself, St. Rochus," as if he feared that the saints would fall to fighting over the special prayers belonging to each.

A very modern, almost "evangelical" touch is found in a chapter on extempore prayer.

> "It would be very desirable if the whole service of religion, hymns, instruction, and prayer, could be conducted in the language of the people, as was formerly the case, and that all should be so distinctly and clearly spoken that it should be understood by all present. But there are many things in life rather to be desired than hoped for. It is to be wished that public worship should not be too prolonged, for there is nothing worse than a surplus of good things, and that it should be the same among all peoples of the Christian name. Nowadays, what diversities in almost every church! nay, what pains have been taken that one should not agree with the other! With what tedious chants and prayers are some monks now burdened, and with what joy do they escape from their dreary performance!"

We have here an almost complete survey of the outward forms of the religious life reduced to the simple standard of Christian common sense. As a type of Erasmus' activity at this time nothing can serve us better. He was fulfilling his mission as a preacher of simple righteousness, and no clamours of criticism on the one side or the other of the great conflict raging about him could drive him for a moment from his fundamental position. He watched all the stages of that struggle and drew out of the views of the several parties the text for his continuous comment upon men and things. He held himself, as he said, *integer*, "uncompromised," but he shows where his real feeling was. The ruling order might get what comfort it could out of the *Modus Orandi* and similar treatises, but if the suggestions therein contained could have been carried out, a something very like the Protestant churches would have resulted. The authority of Scripture as the standard of religious life; the Lord's Prayer as the all-sufficient test of the forms of worship; the laity as the essential element of the Christian community; the common language as the only proper medium of communication in religious matters; a worship of secondary powers so enfeebled by the limits of common sense that it would surely fall away of itself —all this makes a programme that is nothing less than Protestant in its essence. Stripped of its academic decorations and its elaborate balancing of values, this was a reforming tract of the first importance.

Of course Erasmus used all the trimming portions, both of this and of all similar writings, to demonstrate his loyalty to tradition, but the modern reader, like the "Lutheran" of that day, must see through these to the real thought beneath and must

share his impatience that the man who could go so far could not be brought to take a step farther and carry out these suggestions—or at least help others to carry them out—into definite constructive action. The reply must always be that the world has no right to demand of any man what is not his to give.

So in alternations of calm religious reflection and composition with violent controversial encounters, of painstaking scholarly editing with keenest satirical writing, the residence of the aging scholar at Basel drew to its end.

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In the year 1529 Erasmus left Basel and went to Freiburg in the Breisgau. Why he left Basel and why he chose Freiburg as his residence are questions we can hardly hope to answer satisfactorily, since they involve that whole very difficult subject of his personal equation, to which we have not yet discovered any sufficient key. Perhaps we may say this: that Basel had been an attractive residence for him because its political and religious condition corresponded pretty accurately to his own state of mind. The spirit of the place was eminently one of toleration and good feeling. Even the violent doctrines of the extreme radical party, the Anabaptists and all their kin, were heard with patience, but were held in check and not allowed to influence public action. If we could trust the extravagant eulogy common just after his death[185] we should have to think of Erasmus living at Basel as a kind of intellectual monarch, to whom

> "there came not alone from Spain and France, but

> from the farthest limits of the whole earth, not merely men of noble birth but also the greatest monarchs of the world, popes, emperors, kings, cardinals, bishops, archbishops, dukes, chieftains, barons, and countless princes, rulers, magnates, and governors of various degree, etc."

This is obvious nonsense; but we gain enough glimpses at his manner of life at Basel to make us sure that Erasmus lived there in honour, with every opportunity for congenial work and for association with men of his own kind. His ordinary habits were those of a sober scholar who was compelled by the natural demands of his profession and by the limitations of feeble health to keep strictly within the limits of careful and quiet living. He seems to have surrounded himself with young men, table-boarders, who came to him as the adviser of their studies. His relation to them is very prettily sketched in a letter[186] to a young Frisian, one Haio Caminga, who had applied for a place at his table. He gives the young man fair warning that he will find a table set with learned conversation rather than with choice delicacies,—as far from luxury as the table of Pythagoras or Diogenes. The great productivity of this period would of itself be sufficient evidence of a regular and quiet life. Nor need we doubt that a great many visitors were led to Basel by curiosity or sympathy to make the personal acquaintance of the famous scholar.

One feels at once that this was just the atmosphere for Erasmus. His only real grievance at Basel seems to have been his dread that he might be held accountable for the opinions of someone with whom he did not entirely agree. In the course of time, however, this condition of unstable equilibrium

grew more and more untenable. The actual "Reformation" of the place could not be averted, and rather than remain in a distinctly Protestant community Erasmus broke off all his happy associations and wandered away again. He takes infinite pains to assure everyone that he was not driven away, that he went openly and with the good will of all concerned. His account of the religious revolution shows that it was a very temperate kind of revolution indeed. His friendly feelings are neatly expressed in a bit of verse which he says he jotted down as he was entering his boat to depart.

"*Jam, Basilea, vale, qua non urbs altera multis*
Annis exhibuit gratius hospitium.
Hinc precor, omnia læta tibi, simul illud, Erasmo
Hospes uti ne unquam tristior adveniat."

"And now, fair Basel, fare thee well!
These many years to me a host most dear.
All joys be thine! and may Erasmus find
A home as happy as thou gav'st him here."

At Freiburg he was well received by the magistracy and given a sufficiently splendid lodging in an unfinished palace of the Emperor Maximilian. He has, of course, doubts about his health, but thinks he will stay a year, unless he is driven away by wars. In fact he kept pretty well until the spring of 1530, when he was attacked by a new and painful development of the disease from which he had so long been suffering.

The references to this illness of 1530 occur generally in connection with some allusion to the

great Diet of Augsburg in that year. Erasmus says that he was asked to go to this Diet by many leading men, but expressly states that he was not asked by the emperor. His illness gave him an excuse for not going. He says that he could have done no good at Augsburg and we certainly need no assurance of his to make this quite clear to us. By 1530 affairs had moved on far beyond the point where the only advice he had ever had to give, namely "be good and wise, and all our troubles will end at once," could be of any service. In the years from 1525 to 1529 the whole North of Germany had become welded into a solid mass of resistance to the Roman Catholic system. The Lutheran Reformation had passed the stage of negative criticism and had entered upon that of constructive organisation.

Once more we have to ask: Where was there room for poor Erasmus? It was a pleasant fiction for him, in his comfortable quarters at Freiburg, to imagine that he was really wanted at Augsburg, but who in the world could have wanted him? The time for his "ifs" and "buts" was past and the moment had come when men were ready to set all they held dear upon the hazard of a doubtful war. The Diet at Augsburg obeyed the emperor and renewed the formal condemnation of Luther and his works. The Protestant princes promptly replied by the League of Schmalkalden. Their attitude was simply one of readiness, not of aggression. For the time it answered, and delayed the actual outbreak of hostilities until long after the death of Erasmus.

It is evident that Erasmus had little faith in the Diet. He writes to John Rinckius[187]:

"Friends have written me what is going on at the

> Diet. Certain main propositions have been made: First, that the Germans shall furnish troops against the Turks. Second, that the differences of doctrine shall be remedied, if possible, without bloodshed. Third, that the complaints of those who feel themselves wronged shall be heard. To accomplish all this an ecumenical council of three years would hardly suffice. What will be the issue I know not. Unless God takes a hand in the game, I see no way out of it. If the final decision is not agreed to by all the provinces, the end will be revolution."

Then follows a minute description of his recent illness and again allusions to his personal troubles.

> "I have now for some time been anxious to go hence to some other place. This town is fine enough, but not very populous, remote from a river, well suited for study, an awfully dear place, the people not particularly hospitable, they say, though so far no one has given me any great annoyance. But I see nowhere a quiet haven. I shall have to hold out here until the outcome of the Diet is known. Some are predicting that action will be taken first about pecuniary burdens, and that the question of heresy will be postponed to a general council, and that the priests, bishops, monks, and abbots who have been turned out and plundered will be put off with words."

It is evident that Erasmus saw clearly the danger of the imperial position. His shrewd sense told him that Charles was very far from grasping the real extent of the German resistance. He writes to Campeggio[188]:

> "If the emperor is merely frightening his opponents by threats, I can only applaud his forethought; but if he is really seeking a war, I do not want to be a bird of evil omen, but my mind shudders as often as I look at the condition of things which I think will appear if

> war breaks out. This trouble is very widely spread. I know that the emperor has great power; but not all nations recognise his authority. Even the Germans recognise it on certain conditions, so that they rather rule than obey; for they prefer to command rather than be subservient. Besides it is evident that the emperor's lands are greatly exhausted by continual military expeditions. The flame of war is just now stirred up in Friesland; its prince is said to have professed the Gospel of Luther. Many states between the Eastern countries and Denmark are in the same condition and the chain of evils stretches from there as far as Switzerland.
>
> "If the sects could be tolerated under certain conditions (as the Bohemians pretend), it would, I admit, be a grievous misfortune, but one more endurable than war. In this condition of things there is nowhere I would rather be than in Italy, but the fates will have it otherwise."

No more clever summary of the situation than this can be imagined; and yet the only practical suggestion in it, that some principle of toleration for the sects might be discovered is a complete denial of everything for which Erasmus pretended to stand. It would have been a recognition of the right of revolution, and that was the one horror which haunted all his dreams.

Indeed it was the irony of fate that the man who had spent his early manhood in open attacks upon the Roman system, and his maturer years in trying to make his peace with Rome, should now in his old age find his really virulent critics on the side of the ancient faith. The "sects," as he always contemptuously called them, were quite content with the actual service he had done them and were only too eager to claim him for their own. The one

orthodox fold, in which he steadfastly protested he belonged, was continually producing men who made his life a burden with their reproaches.

As long as the Diet at Augsburg lasted, Erasmus continued to assure his correspondents that he was under the orders of the emperor not to leave Freiburg as he had intended to do. Then the winter began and with it the ravages of the plague, "*nova lues*, formerly peculiar to Britain, but suddenly spreading over all nations." Why he should have been detained at Freiburg against his will he gives no intimation, and, indeed, the whole story, appearing in letter after letter, seems to show only his annual restlessness and desire to say why he did not do something different from what he was doing. At one moment he thinks he must go to France to get some wine. They say it is a dreadful thing to die of hunger, but he really believes it is worse to die of thirst. He really must get some drinkable wine.

During the summer of 1531 he went so far as to write to the magistrates of Besançon, saying that even before leaving Basel he had thought of moving to their city and now when Freiburg is beginning to be a dangerous place, his thoughts are turning thither again.

Freiburg was plainly growing less attractive—or, let us say, was furnishing more and more occasions of complaint. He had spent nearly two years in the abandoned palace of Maximilian without knowing, if we may believe his own story, whether he was the guest of the city, or whether he was hiring the house wholly or in part, or, if he was hiring it, who his landlord was or what he was to pay. When, after two years, he was called upon to move at the end of three

months and to pay back rent for a year and a half, he affects to be overwhelmed with surprise and indignation, and writes a two-column letter to the Provost of Chur, at the far east end of Switzerland, to explain.[189] The result was that he took the hasty, and, as it seems to have appeared to himself, somewhat absurd step of buying a house. He naturally begins the letter, in which he tells this news to John Rinckius, with an enumeration of the disagreeables at Freiburg and ends it by declaring that the house shall not keep him there if things go as he wishes. His account of the affair may serve us as an illustration of the unconquerable humour with which he faced life to the last.[190]

> "But now here is something for you to laugh at. If anyone should tell you that Erasmus, now nearly seventy, had taken a wife, wouldn't you make the sign of the cross three or four times over? I know you would, and small blame to you. Now my dear Rinckius, I have done a thing no less difficult and burdensome and quite as foreign to my tastes and habits. I have bought a house, a fine one enough, but at a very unfair price. Who shall now despair of seeing rivers turn about and run up-hill, when Erasmus, who all his life has made everything give place to learned leisure, has become a bargain-driver, a buyer, a giver of mortgages, a builder and, in place of the Muses, is now dealing with carpenters and workers in iron, in stone, and in glass. These cares, my dear Rinckius, which my soul has always abhorred, have just about bored me to death. So far I am a stranger in my own house, for, though it is spacious enough, there is not a nest in it where I can safely trust my poor body. One chamber I have built with an open fireplace and have boarded it, floor and sides, but on account of the plastering I have not yet dared to trust myself in it."

Five weeks later he writes[191]:

"This house I have bought makes me no end of trouble; and yet there is not a place in the whole of it suited to my body."

APOPHTHEGMES,
that is to saie, prompte, quicke, wi
and sentencious saiynges, of cert
Emperours, kynges, Capitaines, Phil
yphers and Oratours, aswell Grekes, as
maines, bothe verave pleasaunt & profit
ble to reade, partely for all maner of
persones, & especially Gentlemen.
First gathered and compiled
in Latine by the ryght fa-
mous clerke Mai-
ster Erasmus
of Rotero-
dame.
And now translated into
Englyshe by Nico-
las Udall.

Excusum typis Ricardi Grafton.
1542.

Cum priuilegio ad imprimendum solum

TITLE-PAGE TO THE FIRST ENGLISH EDITION OF THE "APOPHTHEG

TRANSLATED BY UDALL, 1542.

The biographer of Erasmus is tempted to draw a somewhat pathetic picture of his last years; an aged man, broken with pain and disappointment, rejected by all parties, without influence in the world, living under continual fear of some unforeseen disaster,—these form, indeed, the elements for a sufficiently mournful description. And yet the end of Erasmus' course was such as he had been deliberately planning for himself all his life long. Isolation from all the various groupings of men upon great public questions had been his avowed ideal, and he had reached it. He had never aimed to form a "school" and he left no followers behind him. On the other hand, his activities were practically unchecked by advancing years. His intellectual output during his residence at Freiburg was hardly inferior either in quantity or quality to that of any earlier period of equal length. His correspondence falls off somewhat in volume, but its style is as fresh and the variety of persons to whom it is addressed continues as great as ever. New friends take the place of those he has lost, and his personal philosophy, always a cheerful one, remains to comfort him to the last. He consoles himself by the friendship of individuals against the slights of parties and their leaders.

The only falling off in Erasmus' productivity during the years from 1530 to 1535 is in the quality of originality. We are no longer to expect a Praise of Folly or a new volume of Colloquies; but we can only marvel at the vitality still evident in everything that comes from his restless pen. His humour, unconquered by the growing weaknesses of his flesh, flashes out with almost its old-time brilliancy. His

industry seems undiminished. He is seldom without a piece of editorial work, and he is constantly being asked to write dedications for works edited by others.

In 1532 he published his *Apophthegmata* or Sayings of the Ancients,[192] a work in some ways similar to the Adages, but showing far less of the machinery of scholarship. These are pleasant little stories, generally told in a few lines in anecdote form and designed to carry some moral lesson. They are arranged in groups under the name of the principal person mentioned as, for example, *Socratica*, Diogenes Cynicus, Philip of Macedon, Demosthenes, and so forth. Doubtless the material for this collection had long been gathering, but the mere arrangement and revision of it was a work to tax severely the patience and endurance of a man so enfeebled by physical troubles as was Erasmus in 1532.

A little treatise of 1533 on Preparation for Death[193] is interesting chiefly for the things it does not say. Its emphasis throughout is on the necessity of a Christian life as the true preparation for a Christian death. The very essence of Protestantism, the direct dealing of the human soul with its God, may be found here. Protest as Erasmus might his devotion to the forms of the Church, when he wrote this essay he was giving more aid and comfort to the enemy than if he had gone over to him with all his arms in his hands. Of course he explains away as much of the clearness of his statement as he can, but the words remain and his own practice went far to confirm them. He emphasises at every turn the duty of respect for traditions, but no man in the year 1533 could write as he does here of the nature of

sacraments without knowing how his words would be interpreted. If the sacraments were, even *quodammodo*, "symbols" of the divine good will to men, then the whole objective, or, to speak technically, the "*opus operatum*" theory of the sacramental system was brought in question, and men would not stop until they had pushed this question to its rational issue. Here as elsewhere, if we would estimate the service of Erasmus to the Reformation, we must try to feel out of the windings of his rhetoric the impression he wished to leave uppermost in the reader's mind, and as to that we can hardly hesitate. Even a devout Catholic could not read carefully this appeal to the essentials of religion without feeling a diminished sense of the value of forms, and a wavering mind could hardly fail to be carried over pretty far towards the conclusion that forms so dangerous as these were better reformed out of existence.

The most important work of the Freiburg period was the great treatise on the Christian minister, to which Erasmus gave the title of *Ecclesiastes*, or The Gospel Preacher (*concionator evangelicus*). In its printed form the *Ecclesiastes* fills over one hundred and sixty folio pages and would make more than two volumes as large as this present one. Of all the evils in the existing church system, none had been more evident since the height of the Middle Ages than the neglect of preaching. The very first effort of the organised Lutheran party had been to restore the right balance between the sacramental and the moral aspects of church administration by emphasising the preaching and diminishing the importance of all sacramental observances. And this is precisely the position of Erasmus. He begins with a careful definition of the Church (*ecclesia*) as the assembly

(*concio*) of Christians. Christ is the great preacher and every other *ecclesiastes* is only his representative and herald. The highest function of the preacher is that of teaching. At first the bishops were the sole teachers; now the teaching has passed to priests and monks, though it is a function far surpassing the dignity of kings.

As a model of the complete bishop Erasmus gives a very beautiful description of Warham, dwelling especially upon his great efficiency in a vast variety of duties, an efficiency made possible only by the strictest frugality of life and the rigid exclusion of all luxury and idle amusement.

This brief notice of the *Ecclesiastes* concludes our review of the writings of Erasmus, and this seems the fitting place to note what was the final judgment upon them of that Church to which he declared himself devoted and from whose teachings he insisted he had never departed by so much as a hair's breadth. It was not until the wave of the Catholic Reaction had begun to rise into a furious torrent that a definite policy of disapproval of Erasmus on the part of the Roman authorities took the place of the former leniency. Lists of books the reading of which was prohibited to good Christians were published in many parts of Europe by sovereigns, universities, inquisitors, or commissions from 1524 on.[194] Such lists were generally called "Catalogues." The papacy as such took no part in this process until the time of the Council of Trent. The earliest papal list or "Index" was published by Paul IV. in 1559. It was arranged in three classes, the first containing the names of authors who were, as it were, heretics by intention (*ex professo*), and all of whose writings were

condemned, no matter whether they had any reference to religion or not. In the second class were names of authors some of whose writings had been shown to tend towards heresy or the superstitions of magic, etc. The third class comprised the titles of books, generally by anonymous writers, which contained specially dangerous doctrines.

In this first papal Index Erasmus takes a place of extraordinary prominence. Not only was he placed in the first class, but a special clause was added to his name: "with all his commentaries, notes, *scholia*, dialogues, letters, censures, translations, books, and writings, even when they contain nothing against religion or about religion." The Index of Paul IV. was, however, by no means generally accepted by the people of Europe. In many countries it was flatly rejected. The Council of Trent at its final session (1562-1563) took up the matter and appointed a commission to revise the harshest clauses. The result of this revision appears in the Index of Pius IV. in 1564. There Erasmus has been dropped from the first class and in the second appear only a few of his most doubtful works, the Colloquies, Praise of Folly, Christian Marriage, and one or two others. In 1590 Sixtus V. replaced him in the first class, and in 1596 Clement VIII. restored him again to the conditions of the Index of Trent.

Thus the fate of Erasmus after death was very much what it had been in his life. As honest Duke Frederick had said: "One never knows how to take him." The highest authority could not quite determine whether he was a thorough-going heretic or only heretical "north-north-west."

In the month of August, 1535, after a residence of

six busy years at Freiburg, Erasmus returned to Basel. Once more, and for the last time, he has to account for a change of residence. At Freiburg he had been continually complaining of the place, his quarters, and the people; yet he says he had no fixed intention of leaving there permanently. He had been giving matter to the press during these six years without any special difficulty, but suddenly he discovers that his *Ecclesiastes* cannot be properly printed at Basel without his presence. He has suffered so much, he writes to the bishop of Cracow,[195] that he prefers to try a change of air even at the risk of death. He was carried in a covered carriage, "made for women," to Basel, "a healthful and pleasant city, whose hospitality I have enjoyed for many years. There, in expectation of my coming, a room suited to my needs had been prepared by my friends."

It is marvellous how the permanent instincts of his life assert themselves to the last. In October, 1535, he writes to a magistrate of Besançon:

> "Almost incredible as it seems, I have left my nest and flown hither, meaning to fly to you when I shall have recovered my strength. The wintry September has compelled me to cast anchor here and so we shall have to wait for the swallows. The pope wants to gold-plate me whether I will or no, and has offered me the provostship of Deventer now that the harpies are all got rid of. But I am determined, though ten provostships were offered me, not to take one of them.... Shall I, a dying man, accept burdens which I have always refused?"

Just as he arrived at Basel he had written:

> "What has happened in England to Fisher and More, a pair of men, than whom England never had a

> better or a holier, you will learn from the fragment of a letter which I send you. In More I seem myself to have perished, so completely was there, as Pythagoras has it, but one soul to both of us. Such are the tides of human life!"

It is pleasant to believe that the last days of Erasmus were cheered by the thought that his protestations of fidelity to the Roman institution were not wholly unrewarded, though, as he says, there were still men at Rome who were doing their best to blacken his fame. He had welcomed the election of Paul III. in much the same language as he had employed in regard to Leo X., Hadrian VI., and Clement VII. He wrote to him at once, but we have, unfortunately, only the brief reply of the pope. It is a very amiable and appreciative note, recognising the value of Erasmus' services and expressing entire confidence in their continuance. It is quite in harmony with his whole career that these congratulations of the pope should have come to him in Basel, now thoroughly converted into a Protestant community, and in the midst of friends the most tried and true he had ever had, all of them Protestants, but all willing to forget differences in their common regard for the dying scholar.

We are not well informed as to the end of Erasmus' life. The last letter in the collection of Le Clerc, perhaps the last he ever wrote, is to his old friend Goclenius at Louvain, under date of June 28, 1536. He is among faithful friends, better friends than he had at Freiburg, "but on account of differences in doctrine I would rather end my life elsewhere. Would that Brabant were nearer!" Again he repeats his declaration that he came to Basel only for a change of air and was intending to go

elsewhere as soon as he felt better. The ruling passion was strong upon him even to his death.

The story of his last days comes to us through the excellent Beatus Rhenanus, his devoted friend and admirer. The winter brought on a terrible attack of gout, succeeded in the early summer by a continuous dysentery which proved incurable. In spite of pain and weakness he never lost a moment's opportunity of work, the witness whereof is the treatise *De Puritate Ecclesiæ* and the edition of Origen. He was in the house of the son of his old friend Froben, the intimates of his earlier residence were all about him, and evidently were glad and proud to have him again in their midst.

We have no suggestion, in the eleven months of his stay at Basel, of any personal dealings with the Roman clergy, nor of the presence of any minister of religion at his death-bed. He had lived a cosmopolitan of the earth; he died, so far as we know, a cosmopolitan of the world to come—a Christian man trusting for his future to the simple faith in right doing and straight thinking which had really been his creed through life. His death occurred on the 12th of July, 1536. Protestant Basel claimed as her own the man who had turned his back on her when she was working through her own religious problem, but who had after all been drawn to her again by the subtle ties of a sympathy he could not or would not openly acknowledge.

> "How great was the public grief," says Beatus, "was shown by the throng of people to take their last look at the departed. He was borne on the shoulders of students to the cathedral and there near the steps which lead up to the choir, on the left side of the church, by the chapel of the Blessed Virgin, was

> honourably laid to rest. In the funeral procession walked the chief magistrate and many members of the council. Of the professors and students of the University not one was absent."

The impression of Beatus' narration is confirmed by a letter[196] of the Leipzig physician, Heinrich Stromer, written immediately after the death of Erasmus to George Spalatin. He adds:

> "The great scholar was completely absorbed in restoring the Greek text of Origen, so that though his illness was extremely painful, he would not give up till death itself wrested the pen from his hand. His last words on earth, spoken in the midst of his heavy groaning, were these: 'Oh, Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy upon me! I will sing of the mercy of God and of his judgment.' And therein you can see the truly Christian spirit of the man."

The last will of Erasmus, made in due form on the 12th of February, 1536, shows him to have been possessed of a comfortable property. He appoints Boniface Amerbach general executor of all his estate. He gives substantial legacies to several friends and servants, provides for the sale of his library to John à Lasco, and finally directs his executor to give the remainder to poor and infirm persons, especially to provide dowries for poor girls and to help young men of good promise.



CHRISTO SERVATORI S

DESIDERIO ERASMO ROTERODAMO

VIRO OMNIBVS MODIS MAXIMO,

CVIVS INCOMPARABILEM IN OMNI DISCIPLI-

NARVM GENERE ERVDITIONEM PARI CON-

IVNCTAM PRVDENTIA, POSTERI ET ADMIRABVNT

ET PRÆDICABVNT.

BONIFACIVS AMERBACHIVS, HIERONYMVS FROBENIVS

NICOLAVS EPISCOPIVS HÆREDES ET NVNCVPATI SVPREM

SVÆ VOLVNTATIS VINDICES, PATRONO OPTIMO,

NON MEMORIÆ, QVAM IMMORTALEM SIBI

EDITIS LVCVBRATIONIBVS COMPARAVIT,

HIS TANTISPER DVM ORBIS TERRARVM STABIT

SVPERFVTVRO, AC ERVDITIS VBIQVE GENTIVM

COLLOQVVTVRO, SED CORPORIS MORTALIS, QVO

RECONDITVM SIT ERGO, HOC SAXVM POSVERE.

MORTVVS EST IV. EIDVS IVL.

IAM SEPTVAGENARIVS,

ANNO A CHRISTO NATO,

M.D.XXXVI.

INSCRIPTION ON THE TOMB OF ERASMUS, AT BASEL.

FROM KNIGHT'S "LIFE OF ERASMUS."

Expressions of grief and reverence for the great scholar came from the men of all parties who could think of him as the prince of learning and the advocate of right living. Only those who could not forgive him his refusal to enter the ranks of any party failed to do honour to his memory.

—

Let us ask once more in conclusion what was, precisely, the contribution of this man to the work of the Reformation. If by "Reformation" we mean only the work which Luther believed himself to be doing, we must limit our answer to the somewhat scanty acknowledgment he was ready to make of his indebtedness to Erasmus as a scholar. But we have learned that Luther's own conception of the Reformation movement was a very narrow and inadequate one. He believed it to be limited to a purely religious revival on the basis of a true understanding of Scripture. In reality it was the whole great revolt of the human mind against arbitrary and conventional limitations, and it is only when we study it in this light that we can measure the influence of Erasmus upon it. First and most important was his insistence, begun in the Enchiridion and continued even through the *Ecclesiastes*, upon the principle of a sound, sane, reasonable individual judgment, not in opposition to the prevailing authority of tradition, but in interpretation of it. To be sure this was no absolutely new thing in the world. It had been before men's minds since the days of Petrarch, but it had never

before found so many-sided and so consistent an expression in the North. It had taken three generations since Petrarch for the slower mind of the northern peoples to ripen to the point of receiving this idea. They took it now from Erasmus with enthusiasm. It came to them in his satire in such form that the humblest reader could understand it. It spoke to them in his serious treatises in language which appealed to the scholar at once by its literary finish and by its enormous learning and seriousness. The private judgment of the individual is really, no matter how concealed, the tribunal to which the reader is continually referred.

Closely akin to this is the appeal, the other distinguishing mark of the Renaissance man, to the essential rightness of what is natural. The mediæval ideal of morals had been that whatever was natural was essentially wrong. It could be right only in so far as it was given a formal guarantee by some recognised authority. Erasmus represents human life throughout as being, of its very nature, in harmony with the eternal law of morality. Especially family life in all its forms, the natural and mutual duties of man and wife, the tender love and care of children, the honourable uses of wealth in the service of the state and of religion, the obligations of friendship, the natural piety of the simple child of God, the dignity and responsibility of rulers as the agents of a divine order among men, the supreme duty of peace, —these are the constantly recurring subjects of his well-trained pen. Even in his literary ideals the same general principle of naturalness prevails. Style is an instrument to be cultivated; it has a charm of its own worth the careful attention of the scholar; but, after all, style is only a means of conveying thought, and the object of it is to carry the highest thought in the

clearest and most direct fashion.

Now one may well ask: How is all this nobility and elevation of purpose to be reconciled with the obvious personal limitations of Erasmus' character? How does this profound interest in the welfare of human society go with a self-centred, nervous dread of criticism which rises at times to the hysterical point? How account for the fear that the very ideas he seems most to cherish might be spread abroad among the very people for whom they seem especially intended? How explain the elaborate contradictions in his own accounts of the motives that led to his most open actions? Such a personality, we are tempted to say, is beneath our honest contempt. It is the very negation of all the ideals of which the man tried to pose as the champion.

The answer to this difficulty is that we find ourselves here before the perpetual mystery of genius. Erasmus partially solved the problem for us when he declared that while he was at work a certain demon seemed to take possession of him and to carry him on without his will. His pen seemed to have a volition of its own and to obey the training of his years of practice by a certain instinct. Just as his powerful will compelled his frail and suffering body to do the bidding of his unconquerable spirit, so the literary impulse carried him on to utterances far beyond the capacity of his personality to realise in action. If Erasmus could have lived up to himself, he would have been the greatest of men. Let us in our judgment of him beware lest we make superhuman demands upon him. It is as idle as it is unjust to ask that Erasmus should be both Erasmus and Luther at once. Our narrative has not sought to cover up or to disguise the repellent aspects of his outward attitude

towards the Reformation. May it on the other hand avoid the error of obscuring his immense service to the cause with which his nature forbade him outwardly to identify himself.

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FOOTNOTES

[1] iii.[1], 552.

[2] See also the long treatise, *de conscribendis epistolis*, i., 341-483.

[3] iii.[2], 1821.

[4] i., 787-810.

[5] *Bibliotheca Erasmiana; Repertoire des œuvres d'Érasme.* Ghent, 1893.

[6] *Bibliotheca Erasmiana; Bibliographie des œuvres d'Érasme.* Ghent, 1897.

[7] *Desiderii Erasmi Roterodami opera omnia, emendatiora et auctiora*, etc., ed. Johannes Clericus (Jean Leclerc), 10 vols., folio. Leyden, 1703-1706.

[8] Horawitz, Adalbert, *Erasmiana*; in *Sitzungsberichte der K. Akademie der Wissenschaften*. Vienna, 1878-1885. Text and documents. *Ueber die Colloquia des Erasmus*; in Raumer's *Historisches Taschenbuch*. 1887.

[9] Vischer, Wilhelm, *Erasmiana*. Basel, 1876.

[10] Fruin, R., *Erasmiana*; in *Bijdragen voor vaderlandsche geschiedenis en ouheidkunde*, new series, x., 1880; 3d series, i., 1882.

[11] Jean Leclerc, *Vie d'Érasme tirée de ses lettres*, etc., in *Bibliothèque choisie*. Amsterdam, 1703 *sqq.*, vols. i., v., vi., viii.

[12] Drummond, Robert B., *Erasmus, his Life and Character as shown in his Correspondence and Works*. 2 vols. London, 1873.

[13] Durand de Laur, H., *Érasme, précurseur et initiateur de l'esprit moderne.* 2 vols. Paris, 1872.

[14] Froude, James Anthony, *Life and Letters of Erasmus*; lectures delivered at Oxford, 1893-94. London and New York, 1894.

[15] Knight, Samuel, *The Life of Erasmus*. Cambridge, 1726. With many valuable documents.

[16] iii.[1], 582-C.

[17] I quite agree with Dr. A. Richter, *Erasmus-Studien*, 1891, that Erasmus cannot be accused of any contempt for the vulgar tongues or any lack of sympathy with common human life, but I do not find his arguments for a thorough command of any modern language altogether convincing. That he could speak French enough for travelling purposes and write it, as he says himself, "badly," is probable.

[18] The careful inquiry of Dr. Richter into the birth-year of Erasmus attempts to fix the year 1466 as the correct date, but rather succeeds in showing the hopeless confusion of our material, and the evident ignorance and indifference of Erasmus himself on the subject.

[19] A papal brief of the year 1517, found recently at Basel, is endorsed: *Dilecto filio Erasmo Rogerii Roterodamensi clerico*. The editor, W. Vischer, believes, on this evidence, that the family name of our scholar was Roger and his baptismal name Erasmus. He thinks it probable that Erasmus had been more frank in his statements to the Pope than he usually cared to be and had given his true name in the petition to which this brief is the answer.

[20] H. Kämmel, "Erasmus in Deventer," in *Neue Jahrbücher für Philologie und Paedagogik*, 1874, Bd. 110, p. 305, quotes from Wm. Bates, an English editor of Erasmus' *Compendium Vitæ* in 1687, the desperate conjecture that this phrase refers to some manual prepared by the father of Erasmus! I suspect —assuming that we have a correct text—that the reference is to some forgotten Latin phrase-book, beginning perhaps with the words "*pater meus*." "*Tempora*" can hardly refer to anything but the tenses of the grammar.

[21] See in ii., 166, 167, the adage, "*quid cani et*

balneo."

[22] Compare page 27.

[23] On the question of the value of Erasmus' letter see note to p. 223.

[24] iii.[1], 1024.

[25] iii.[2]; 1529-D.

[26] It was at the same time that he received from the bishop of Utrecht ordination as priest. Strictly speaking, this ordination was uncanonical, on account of his defect of birth, but we have no reason to think that it caused him or anyone else any scruples until many years afterward, when the point is distinctly covered in a papal dispensation of 1517. —W. Vischer, *Erasmiana*, pp. 26, 27.

[27] Car. Jourdain, *Index chronologicus chartarum Universitatis Parisiensis*, 1862, p. 301, n. I cannot quite adopt Mr. Rashdall's rendering that Master Standonch "took rich boarders and made them support the '*Pauperes*.'" H. Rashdall, *The Universities of Europe in the Middle Ages*, 1895, i., 512, n.

[28] *Colloquia Fam.*, i., 806.

[29] *Gargantua*, i., 37. See also H. Schönfeld, "Rabelais and Erasmus," in *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, viii. 1.

[30] iii.[1], 18-B.

[31] iii.[1], 13.

[32] iii.[1], 27-F.

[33] iii.[1], 5.

[34] iii.[1], 6.

[35] iii.[1], 46.

[36] iii.[1], 86.

[37] iii.[1], 83.

[38] iii.[2], 1837. The approximate date is fixed by a reference to the death of the Bishop of Besançon, Francis Busleiden, on the twenty-third of August, 1502, in whom Erasmus says he had the highest hopes.

[39] Third ed., 1887.

[40] iii.[1], 12.

[41] iii.[1], 41.

[42] iii.[1], 451.

[43] iii.[1], 42-F.

[44] *The Life of Sir Thomas More*, by his great-grandson, Cresacre More, 1828, p. 93. This life is largely made up from earlier sources.

[45] The earliest known letter of Erasmus to More (iii.[1], 55), a mere note, bears date Oxford, Oct. 28, 1499. It refers to former correspondence, and Mr. Seebohm, anxious to save the anecdote of the dinner, is inclined to imagine an even earlier date and, of course, a place other than Oxford. My impression is that the date is correct, that Erasmus heard of More first at Oxford, then began to correspond with him, and out of this correspondence saved only the little note in question.

[46] In *Catalogus omnium Erasmi Rot. lucubrationum ipso autore. Basil*, 1524, i., *ad init.*

[47] iii.[1], 56.

[48] *Ep. ad Coletum*, v., 1263-1264.

[49] *Catalogus lucubrationum*, *op.* i.

[50] *Catalogus lucubrationum*, i.

[51] ii., *ad init.*

[52] iii.[1], 57.

[53] See p. 48 & *ff*.

[54] *Catalogus lucubrationum*, i.

[55] v., 20-D.

[56] v., 23-A.

[57] v., 26-D.

[58] v., 31-D.

[59] v., 36-A.

[60] v., 40-D.

[61] Horace, *Epp.*, i., 6, 36. Conington's translation.

[62] v., 44-A.

[63] v., 47-D.

[64] iii.[1], 337.

[65] iv., 529-F.

[66] iv., 550.

[67] P. de Nolhac, *Érasme en Italie, Étude sur un épisode de la Renaissance, avec douze lettres inédites d'Érasme*, 1888.

[68] *Carmen equestre vel potius Alpestre*, iv., 755.

[69] See page 226.

[70] See the diploma in W. Vischer, *Erasmiana*, Basel, 1876.

[71] iii.[2], 1397.

[72] See Introduction.

[73] In another place he says that he changed his dress in Italy to conform to the custom of the country, iii., 1527.

[74] Beatus Rhenanus, in his brief summary of Erasmus' life, says: "With the exception of the rudiments, he may truly be said to have been self-taught. For the journey into Italy ... was undertaken for the sake of visiting that famous land, not to take advantage of the professors there. At Bologna he heard no one of the public lecturers, but, satisfied with the friendship of Paulus Bombasius ... he devoted himself to his studies at home."

[75] Nolhac, *Érasme en Italie*, Ep. i.

[76] See the adage *Festina lente*, ii., 405, B-D.

[77] It seems quite clear that Erasmus was a victim to what is now known as the "uric acid or gouty diathesis," a condition much more likely to be produced by high living and heavy drinking than by any such experience as he describes in the *Opulentia sordida*.

[78] ii., 554.

[79] There seems to be no sufficient reason to accept, as Drummond does, a previous trip of Erasmus to Rome during his residence at Bologna.

[80] i., 993, 994.

[81] iii.[2], 1375 A-D.

[82] iv., 405-503.

[83] *Epistola apologetica ad Martinum Dorpium Theologum*, ix., 1.

[84] He says elsewhere that More was the cause (*auctor*) of his writing the book. iii.[1], 474-D.

[85] iii.[1], 7-E.

[86] iii.[2], 1840-E. The letter, 1839-E, from Henry as king, used by Mr. Froude at this point to show how urgently Erasmus had been invited to England, belongs probably many years afterwards.

[87] iii.[1], 7-E.

[88] Knight's Life of Erasmus, p. 155, note a.

[89] Knight, Appendix, xl., and Vischer's *Erasmiana*, 1876, pp. 8-15.

[90] iii.[1], 122-B.

[91] For example, by Mr. Mullinger in his History of the University of Cambridge, p. 50 & *ff.*

[92] *De duplici copia verborum et rerum.*

[93] iii., 107-E. It really seems a little too much to place this begging letter, as Mr. Drummond does, in 1512, after Erasmus had received his pension from Warham.

[94] vi., *ad init.*

[95] C. R. Gregory, *Prolegomena* to Tischendorf's New Testament, i., 207-210.

[96] *Catalogus lucubrationum*, i.

[97] i., pp. 1-110.

[98] i., 774-787.

[99] *Modus orandi Deum*, v., 1119-F.

[100] iii.[1], 137.

[101] iii.[2], 1528-A.

[102] If this means anything, it must mean without fees from students, for, supposing Erasmus to have held the Lady Margaret foundation, there was certainly a salary attached to his position.

[103] It is quite possible that the famous Grunnius letter, asking the papal dispensation from the monastic dress, was despatched to Rome at the same time that this letter to Servatius was written from the castle of Ham. The interesting manuscript discoveries of Professor Vischer of Basel[A] have led the learned finder to take a step beyond my suggestion of a strong resemblance between the form of this letter and that of the later Colloquies (see p. 5). He goes so far as to believe that both the letter and the reply to it were a deliberate fabrication of Erasmus after the whole matter of the dispensation had been settled. Its object was, he thinks, to cover up the traces of a previous negotiation with the papacy carried on through Ammonius and intended to free Erasmus once for all from any danger of being forced back again into the monastic life. Vischer's documents give us indeed a very satisfactory explanation of some of the mysterious allusions in the correspondence with Ammonius in 1516 and 1517. They show us plainly that Ammonius, who is here described by the pope as a papal "Collector," was not only the mediator in Erasmus' behalf, but was the papal agent in granting the dispensation issued in 1517. All this, however, does not make it even reasonably clear that the

Grunnius letters were a pure fabrication. With all his shiftiness Erasmus would hardly have gone as far as that. These letters still remain, as to their date and precise interpretation, as mysterious as ever; and their value as history is not increased. Vischer's view that the especial occasion for Erasmus' anxiety about the dispensation was the tumult roused by his New Testament is a reasonable one.

[A] Vischer, W., *Erasmiana*. Basel, 1876.

[104] iii.[1], 141-C.

[105] iii., 1053-E.

[106] iii.[1], 154-C.

[107] iii.[1], 154-B.

[108] iii.[1], 144-B.

[109] iii.[1], 371-C.

[110] iii.[1], 353-D.

[111] iii.[1], 137-D. Leclerc's date, 1514, is probably incorrect.

[112] iii.[1], 169-A.

[113] iii., 185.

[114] iii.[1], 794.

[115] iii.[1], 874-F.

[116] iii.[1], 1009-F.

[117] iv., 593-612.

[118] iv., 593-594.

[119] iii., 137 E-F.

[120] iii., 353-A.

[121] iii.[1], 343-E.

[122] i., 423-D.

[123] iii.[1], 444-D

[124] This is Leclerc's date. Stichart prefers Dec. 18, 1517.

[125] iii.[1], 436.

[126] iii.[1], 490.

[127] vii., 969.

[128] iii., 513-D.

[129] iii.[1], 514-A.

[130] The reference is to a celebrated fraud perpetrated by the Dominicans of Bern to demonstrate their superiority over their Franciscan rivals. The fraud was detected and the ringleaders were burned alive, 1509.

[131] iii.[1], 665-B.

[132] iii.[1], 537.

[133] iii.[1], 538-C.

[134] iii.[1], 431.

[135] Karl Hartfelder, "Friedrich der Weise von Sachsen und D. Erasmus," in *Zeitschrift für vergleichende Literaturgeschichte*, etc., N. F., iv., 1891.

[136] *Friedrichs des Weisen Leben und Zeitgeschichte*, von G. Spalatin, Jena, 1851, p. 164.

[137] Walch, Luther's *Werke*, xxii., 1623-4.

[138] iii.[1], 484.

[139] Albrecht Dürer's *Tagebuch der Reise in die Niederlande*. Ed. Fr. Leitschuh, 1884, pp. 83, 84.

[140] iii.[1], 651-C.

[141] iii.[1], 748.

[142] iii.[1], 472.

[143] *Hutteni opera*, ed. Böcking, 1859, i., 367.

[144] iii., 817-B.

[145] iii.[1], 790. Also in *Hutteni opera*, ed. Böcking, ii., 178.

[146] *Hutteni opera*, ii., 180.

[147] *Expostulatio*, § 180.

[148] *Spongia*, § 274, x., 1660-E, and *Hutteni opera*, ii., 306.

[149] *Spongia*, § 176, x., 1650-B, and *Hutteni opera*, ii., 291.

[150] iii.[1], 793, 804.

[151] iii.[1], 844.

[152] *De libero arbitrio* Διατρίβη *sive collatio*, ix., 1215-1247.

[153] In a letter to Aloisius Marlianus (iii.[1], 545-C), Erasmus says: "I know that everything ought to be borne rather than that the public order should be disturbed; I know it is the part of piety sometimes to hide the truth, and that the truth ought not to be put forth in every place, nor at every time, nor in every presence, nor in every way, nor always in its entirety."

[154] ix., 1241-F.

[155] ix., 1243-B.

[156] ix., 1244-A.

[157] ix., 1246-B.

[158] Walch, Luther's *Werke*, xviii., 2049. An English translation by Henry Cole. London, 1823.

[159] iii.[1], 783-E.

[160] Ranke, History of Germany, bk. iii., ch. iv.

[161] ix., 1064-1066.

[162] iii., 1274-1277.

[163] iii.[1], 941-A.

[164] iii.[1], 1028-A.

[165] iii.[1], 917, D-F.

[166] Adalbert Horawitz, *Ueber die Colloquia des Erasmus von Rotterdam*; in Raumer's *Historisches Taschenbuch*, 1887, pp. 53-121.

[167] i., 627.

[168] Luther's *Werke*, ed. Walch, xxii., 1612-1630.

[169] vii., *ad init.*

[170] iii.[2], 1713-F.

[171] iii.[1], 884.

[172] iii.[2], 1132, 1133.

[173] iii.[2], 1189-F.

[174] iii.[2], 1206. We are fairly well informed as to

Berquin through French sources, quoted, for example, by H. M. Baird, History of the Rise of the Huguenots of France, 1879, i., 130. The account of Erasmus agrees strikingly with these other sources, but it seems a little too much to reproduce it with all its literary decoration as a history of Berquin's trial, as is done by Mr. Drummond and in Haag, *France Protestante*, s. v.

[175] *Desiderii Erasmi Declarationes ad Censuras Lutetiae*, etc., *IX.*, 813-954.

[176] iii.^{2}, 1168-D.

[177] v., 646-D.

[178] v., 651-F.

[179] v., 724-A.

[180] iii.^{1}, 845-E.

[181] *Virginis et Martyris Comparatio*, v., 589-600.

[182] See p. 20.

[183] v., 1099-1132.

[184] v., 1122-F.

[185] i., *ad init. Epitaphia in Laudem Erasmi.*

[186] iii.^{2}, 1128.

[187] iii.^{2}, 1299-B-D.

[188] iii.^{2}, 1303-A.

[189] iii.^{2}, 1426-E.

[190] iii.^{2}, 1418-D.

[191] iii.^{2}, 1419-F.

[192] *Apophthegmata lepideque dicta principum, philosophorum ac diversi generis hominum*, etc., iv., 93-380.

[193] *Liber quomodo se quisque debeat præparare ad mortem*, v., 1293-1318.

[194] F. H. Reusch, *Der Index der verbotenen Bücher*, 1883, i., 347-355.

[195] iii.[2], 1511-C.

[196] Adalbert Horawitz, *Erasmiana*; in Sitzungsberichte der Wiener Akademie der Wissenschaften, xcv., 608.

Transcriber's note

Obvious printer errors have been silently corrected. Original spelling was kept. Variant spellings were made consistent when a predominant usage was found.

Illustrations have been slightly moved so that they do not break up paragraphs while remaining close to the text they illustrate. Blank pages have been skipped.

Chapter headings and illustration captions have been harmonized and made consistent so that the same expressions appear both in text and in the lists of Contents and of Illustrations.

The following emendations were made:

- Page 12: "text" replaced by "pretext" (this gives Erasmus a pretext for an assault).
- Page 39: "Icthyophagia" replaced by "Ichthyophagia" (he borrowed his illustration directly from the *Ichthyophagia*).
- Page 54: "noir" replaced by "noire" (a reference to his *bête noire*).
- Page 91: Footnote anchor [51]: location conjectured; not found in the original.
- Page 94, note 53: "p. 486-99" replaced by "p. 48 & *ff.*" (See p. 48 & *ff.*)
- Page 195, note 91: "p. 50 8 *ff.*" replaced by "p. 50 & *ff.*" (by Mr. Mullinger in his History of the University of Cambridge, p. 50 & *ff.*)

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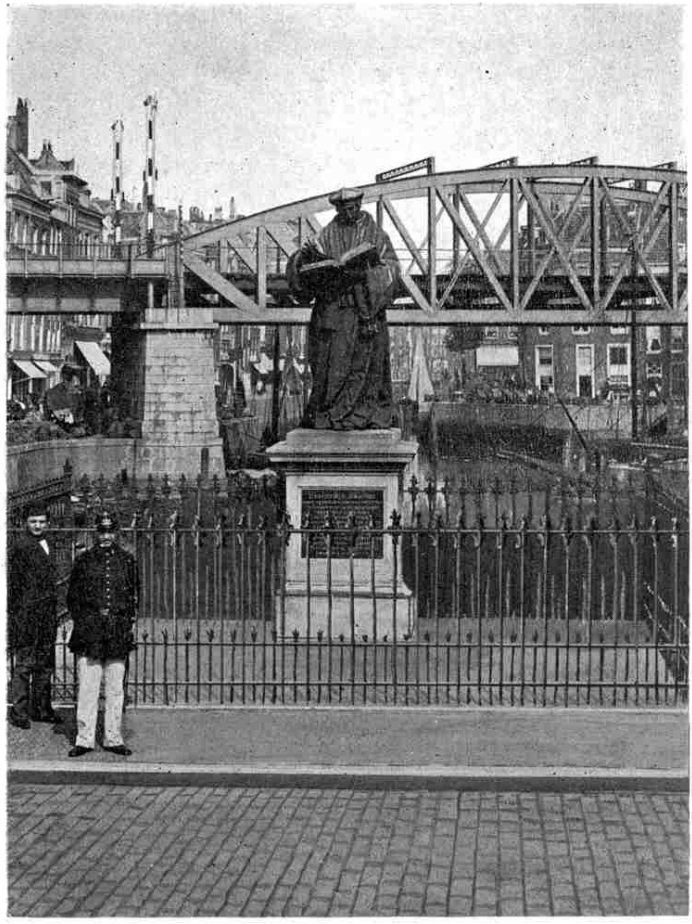
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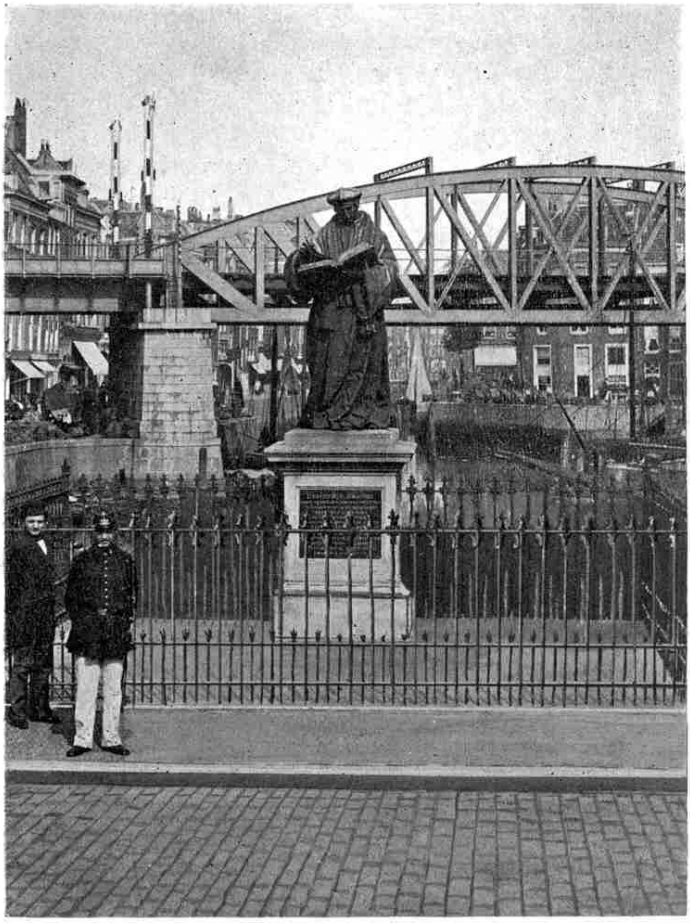
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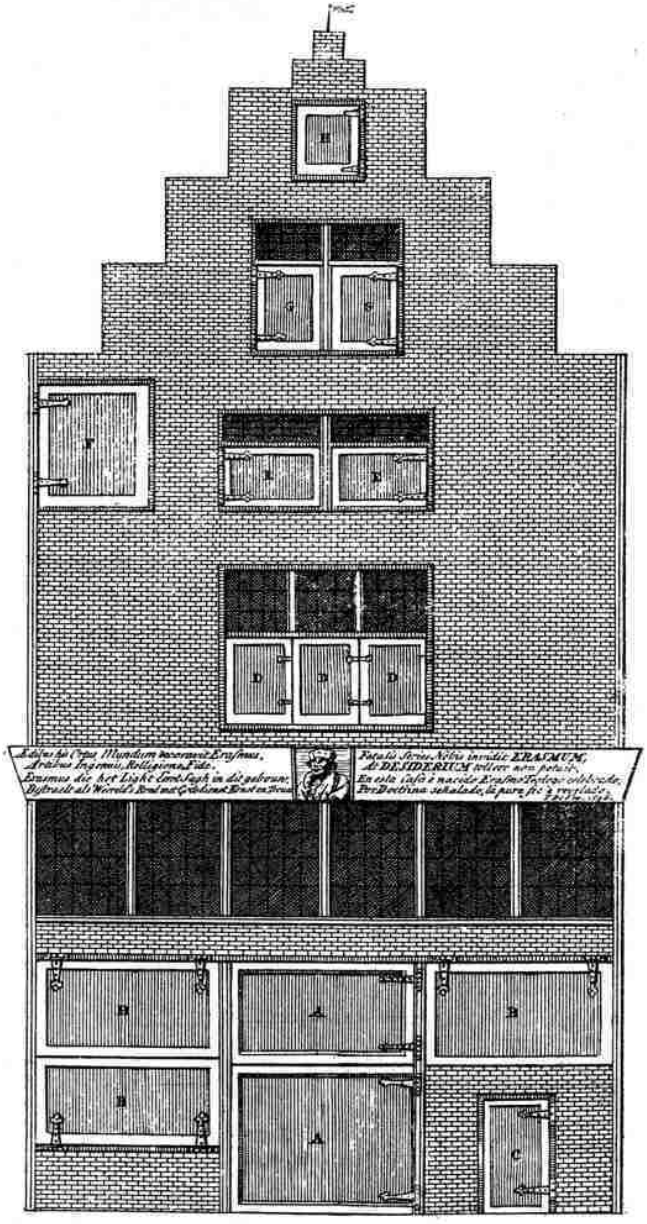
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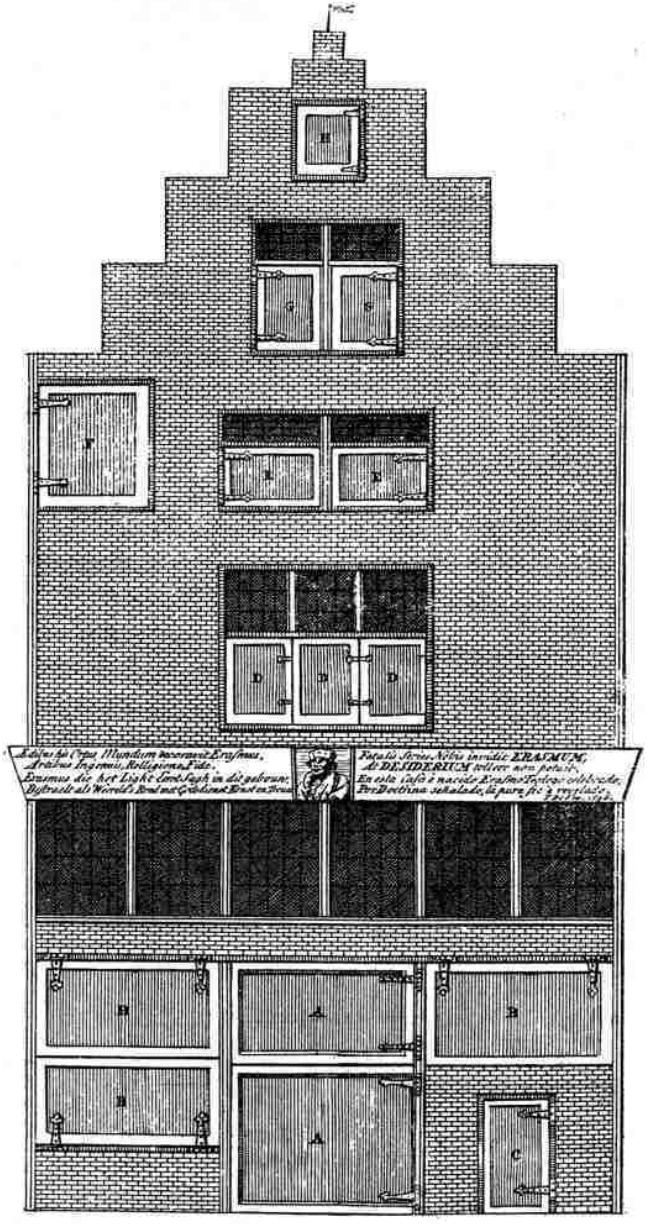
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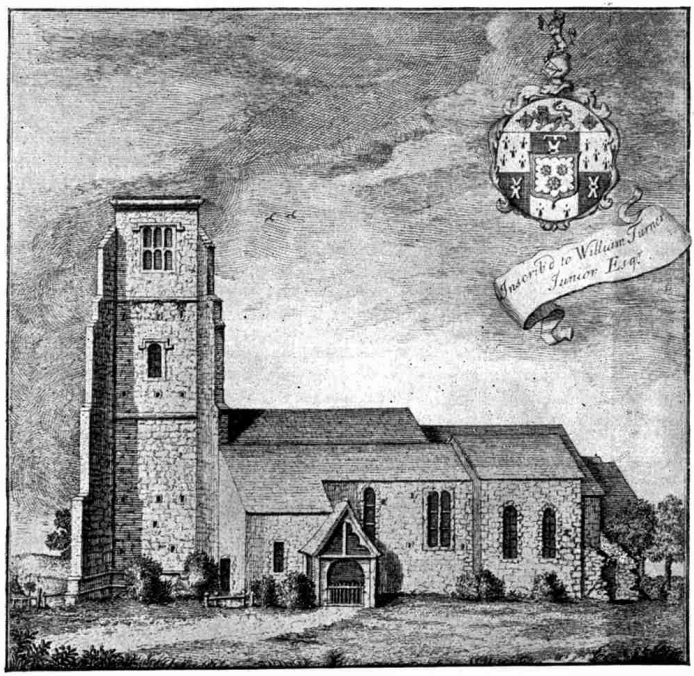
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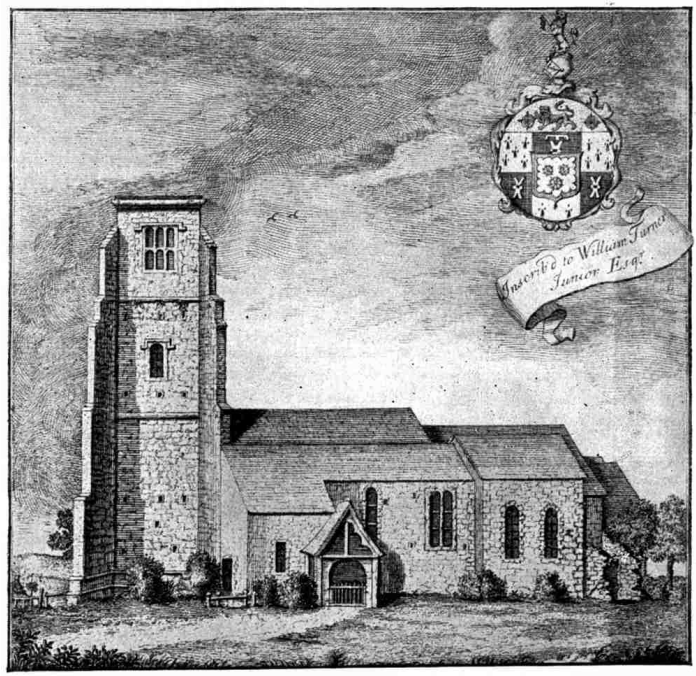
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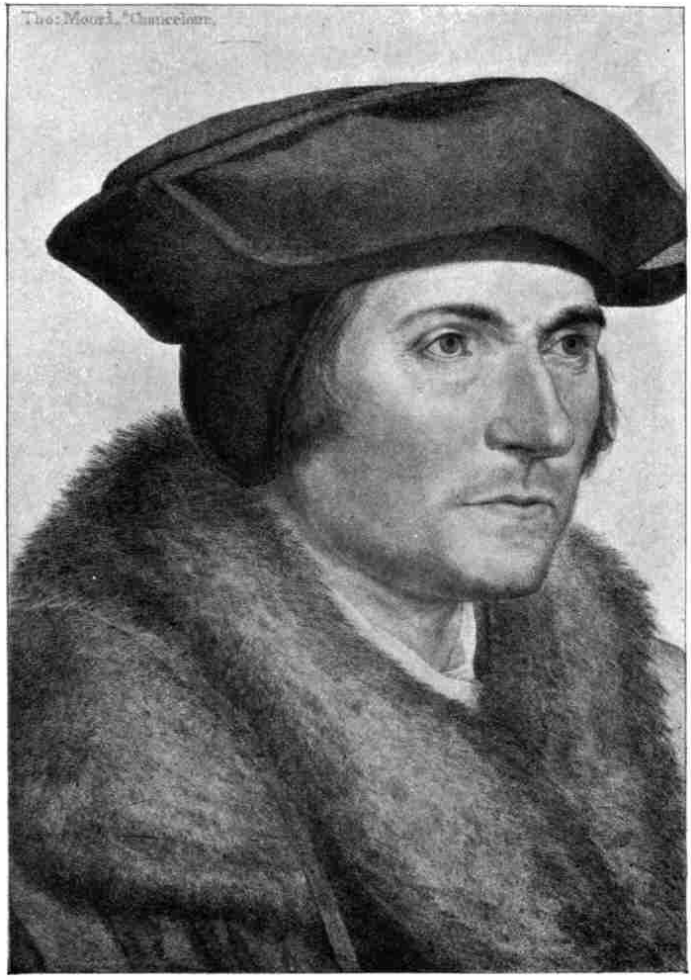
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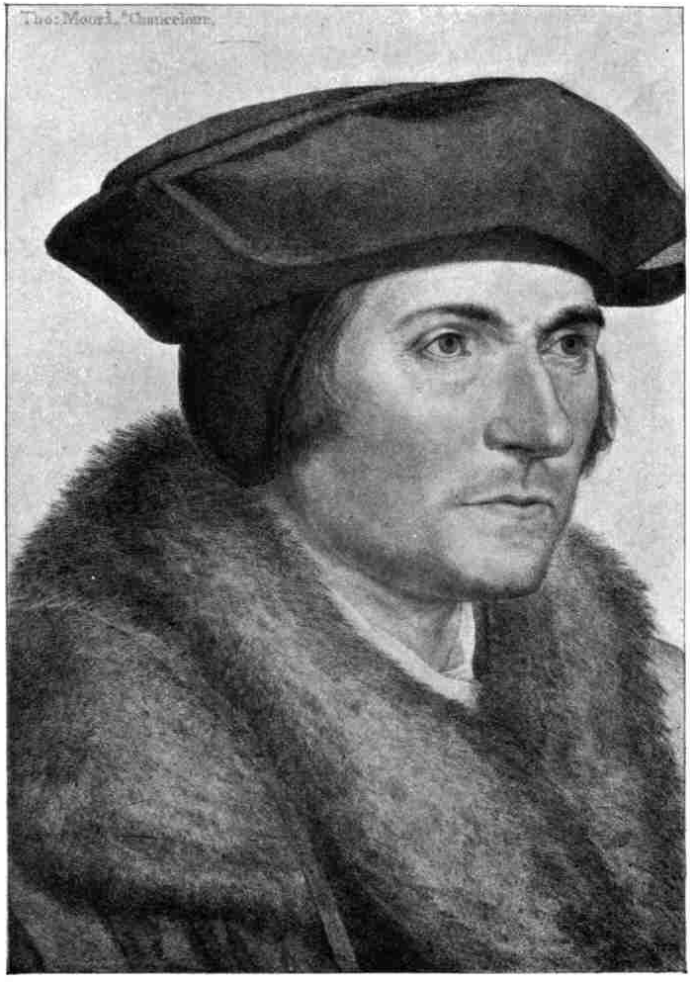
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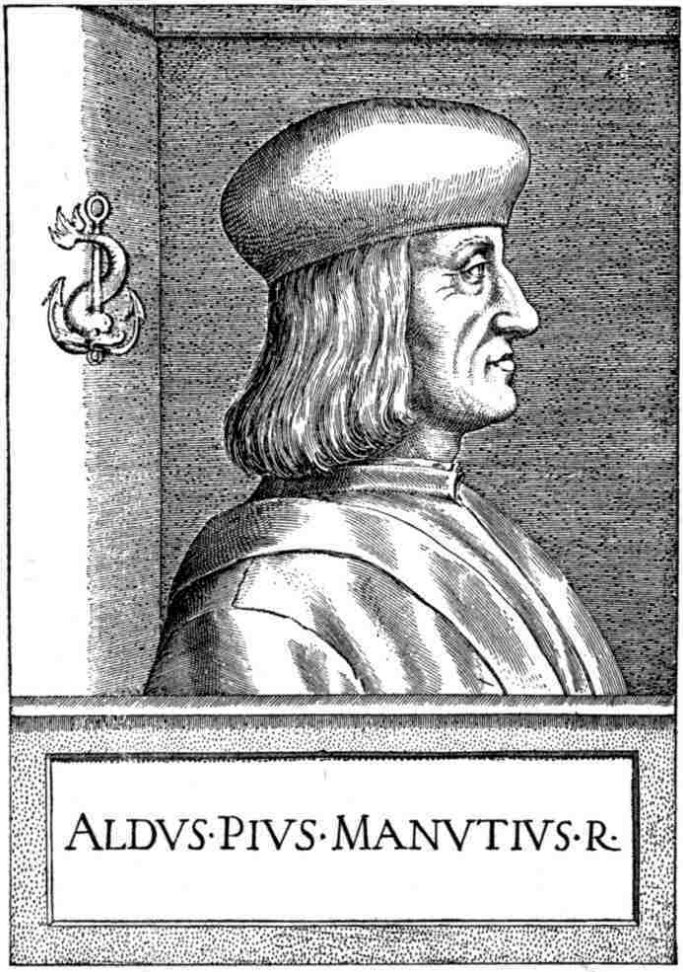
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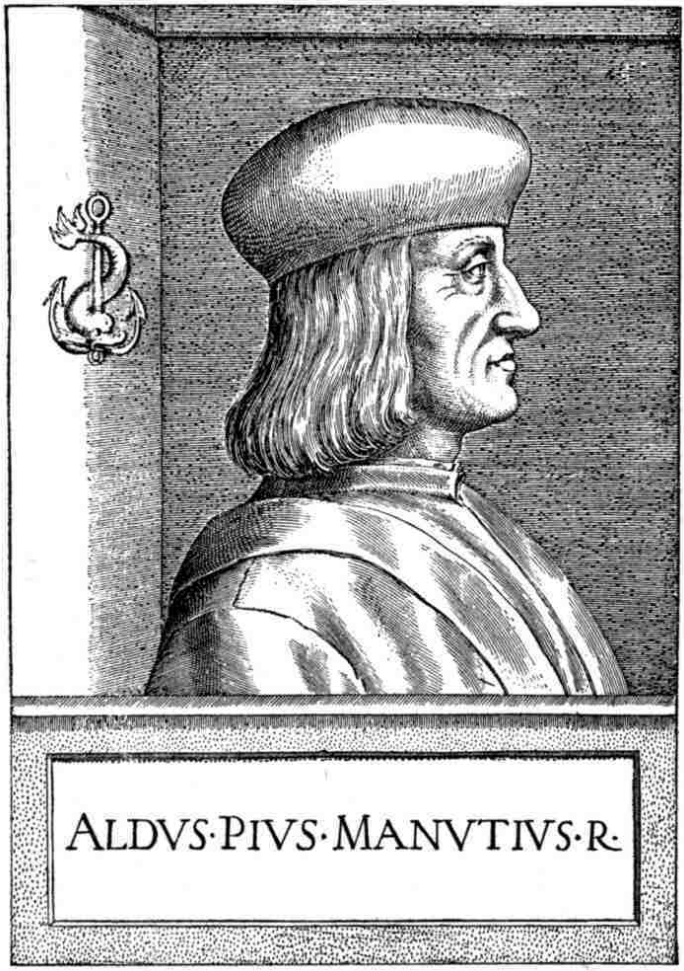
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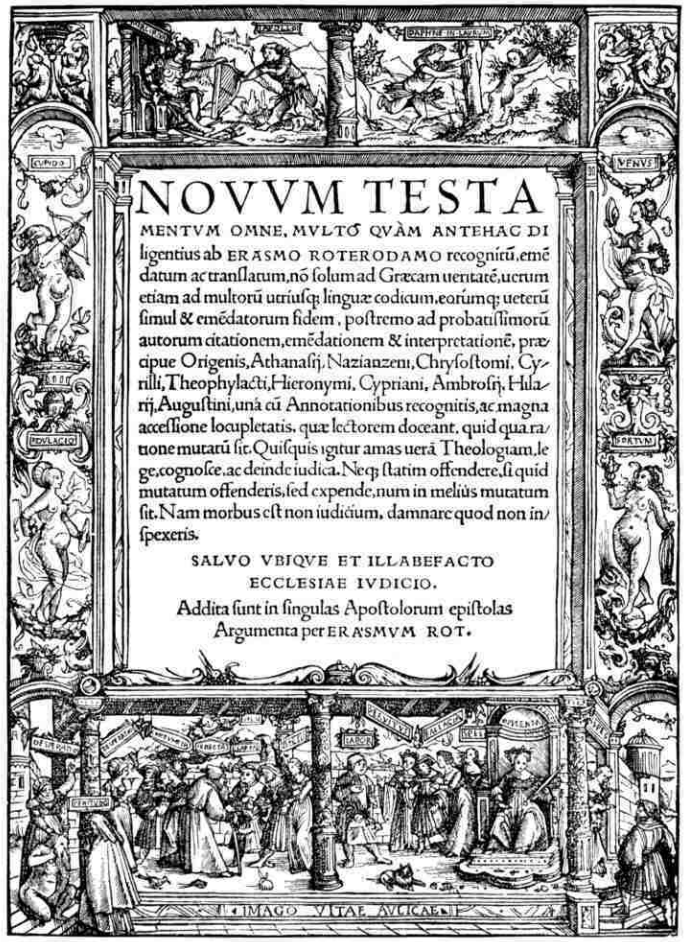
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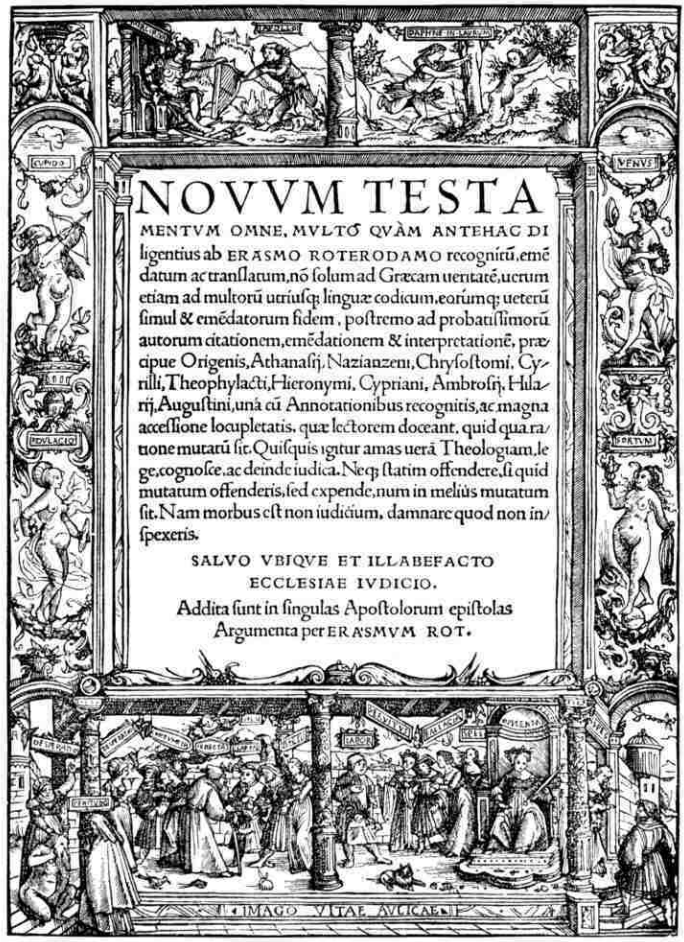
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ECCLESIAE IVDICIO.
Addita sunt in singulas Apostolorum epistolas
Argumenta per ERASMVM ROT.
IMAGO VITAE AVLICAE

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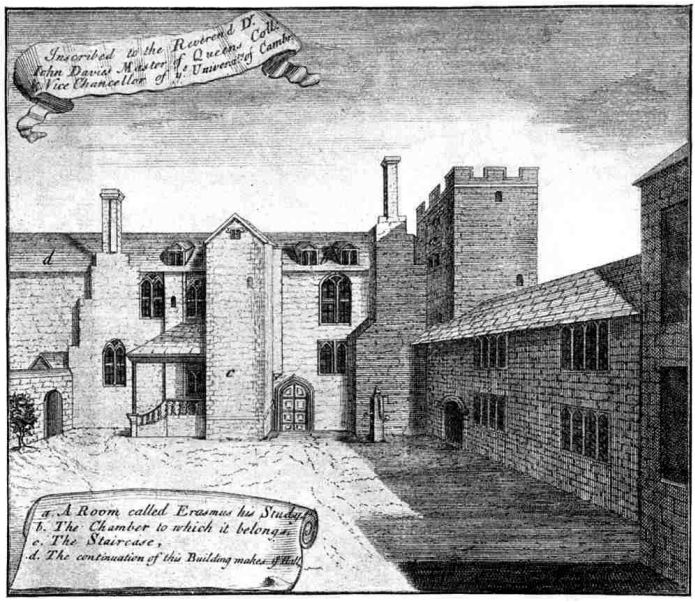
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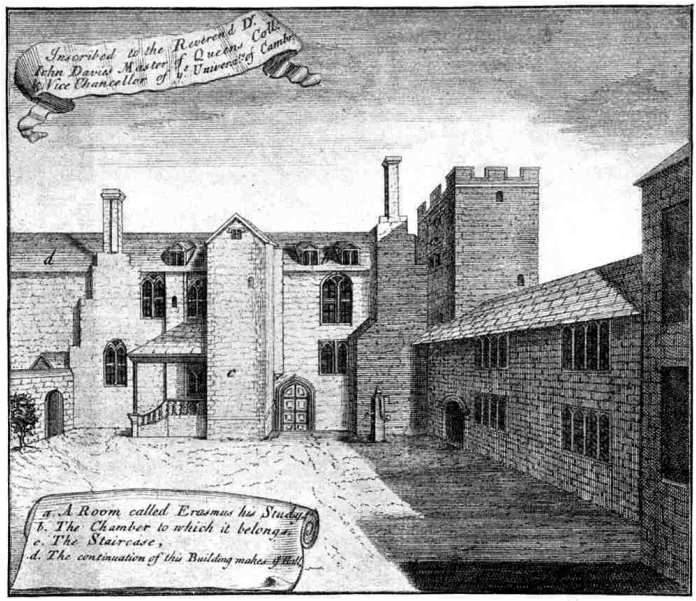
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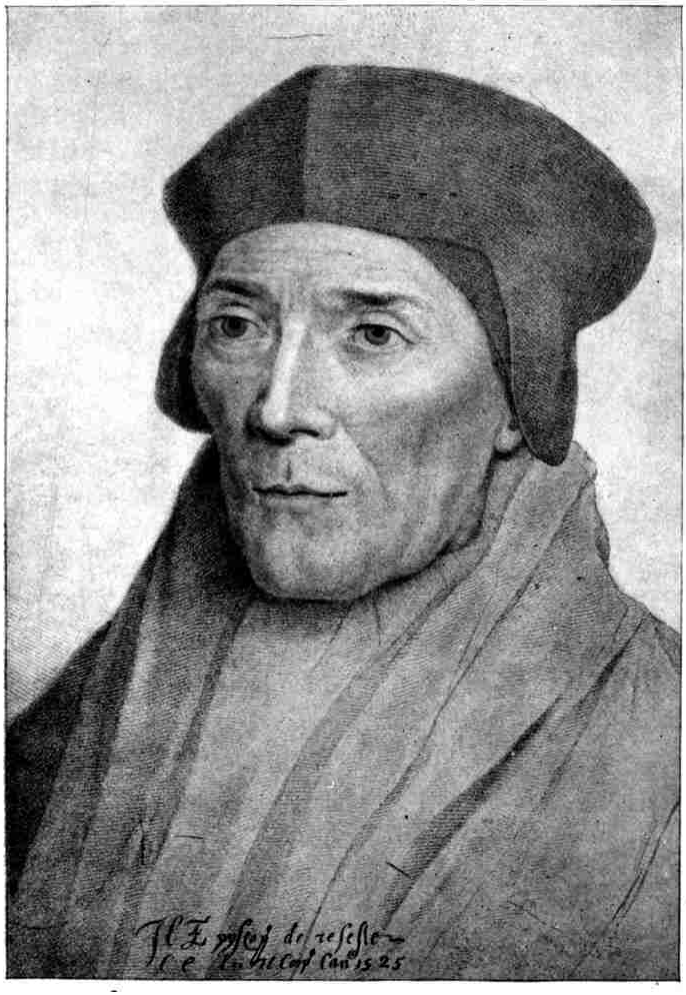
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Inscribed to the Reverend D.
John Davies Master of Queens Coll.
& Vice Chancellor of ye University of Cambr.
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a A Room called Erasmus his Study
b. The Chamber to which it belongs
c. The Staircase,
d. The continuation of this Building makes it full

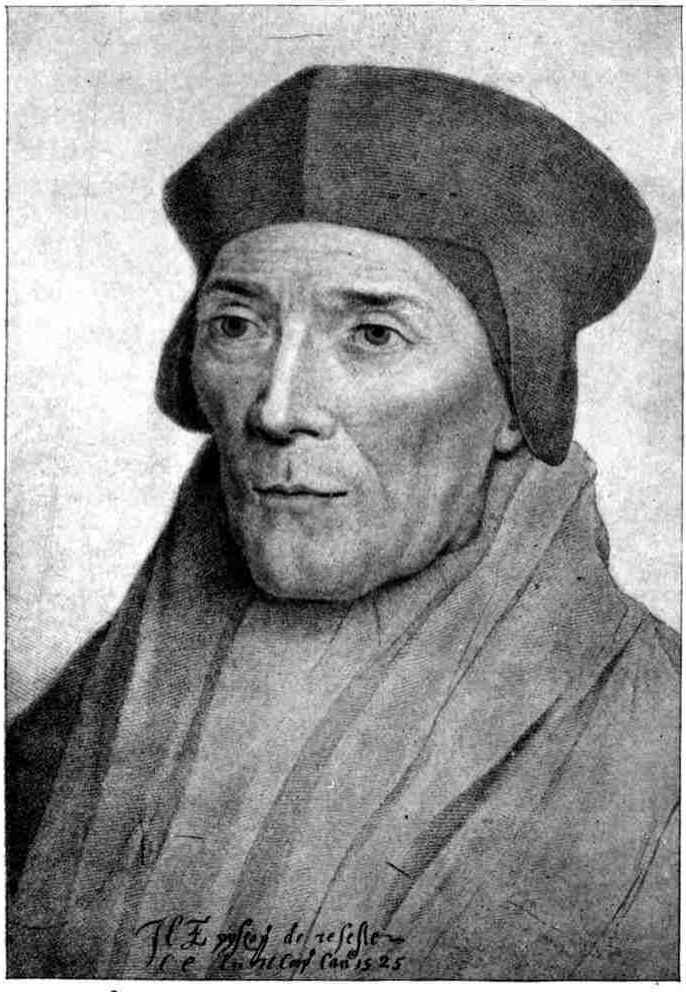
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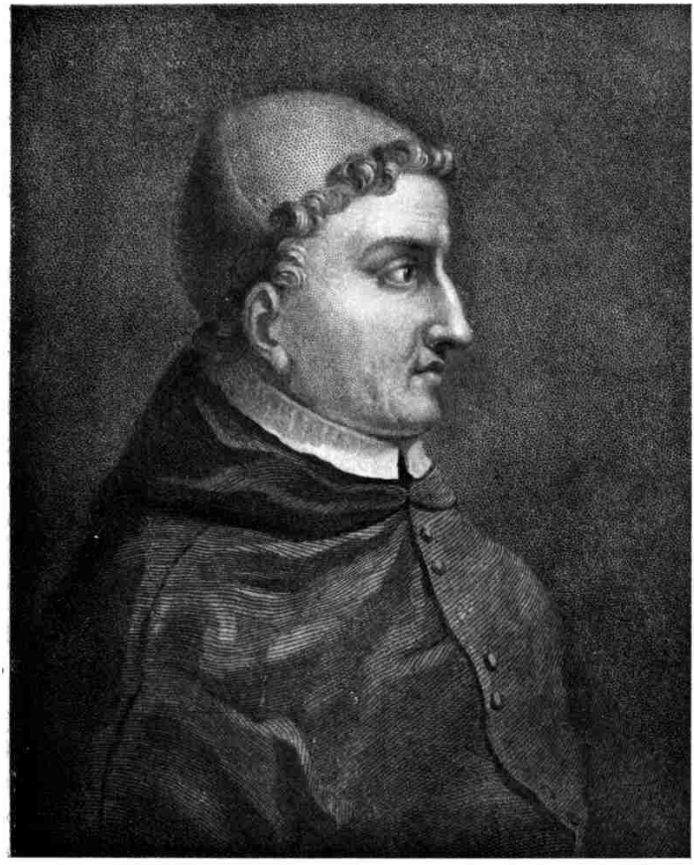
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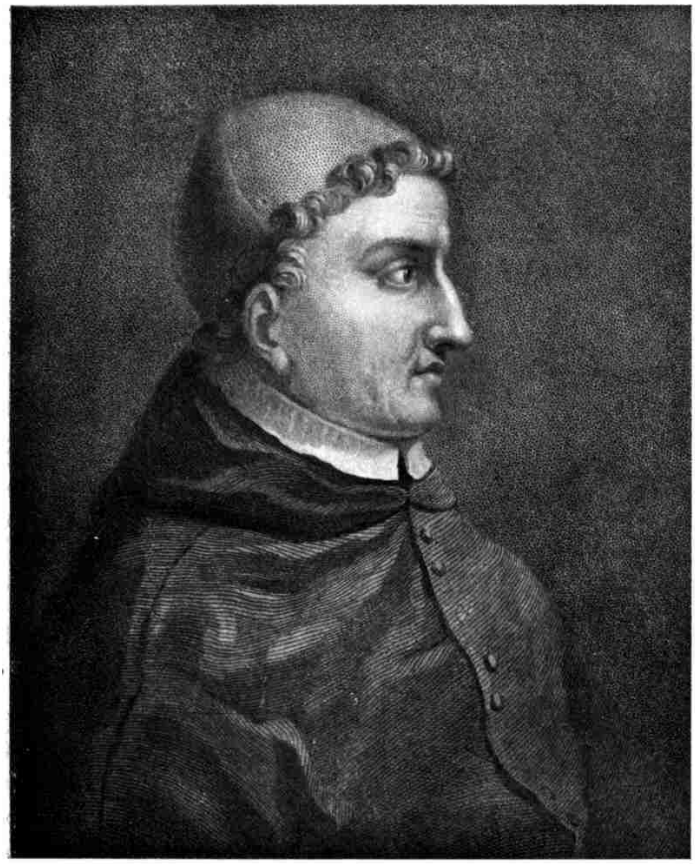
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Epitaphium Io. Frobenii.
per Eras. Rot.

Arida Ioannus tegit hic Lapis ossa Frobeni.
Orbe viret toto nescia fama mori.
Moribus hanc nimeis meruit studiisq; iuvandis
Quæ nunc maesta iacent orba parente suo.
Rettulit, ornauit veterum monumenta sophorum
Arte, manu, curis, aere, fauore, fide.
Huic vitam in coelis date numina iusta perennem,
per nos in terris, fama perennis erit.

— Officinae Frobenianae faveamus. quæ non solum non cessabit ob heri sui decessum, sed summa vi adnitetur, ut quod ille instituit semper in maius melius q; provehatur.

Ex autographo Erasmi.

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Epitaphium Io. Frobenii.
per Eras. Rot.

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Orbe viret toto nescia fama mori.
Moribus hanc nimcis meruit studiisq. iuvandis
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Ex autographo Erasmi.

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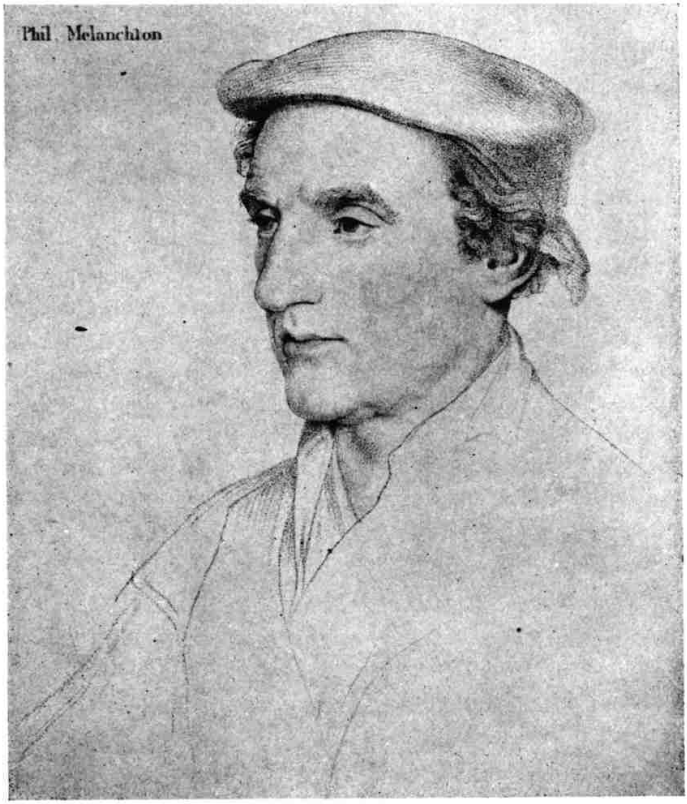
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·ER·ROT·
TERMINVS
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Hanc ait, æternum Bibliotheca colat.
Dædaleam monstrat Musis Holbeinnius artem,
Et summi Ingenii Magnus Erasmus opes.

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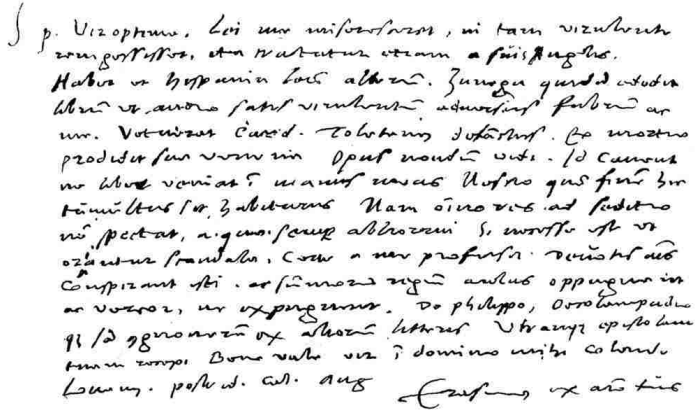
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IMAGO · ERASMI · ROTERODA
MI · AB · ALBERTO · DVRERO · AD
VIVAM · EFFIGIEM · DELINIATA ·
THN · KPEITTΩ · TA · ΣΥΓΓΡΑΜ
MATA · ΜΙΞΕΙ
· M D X X V I ·

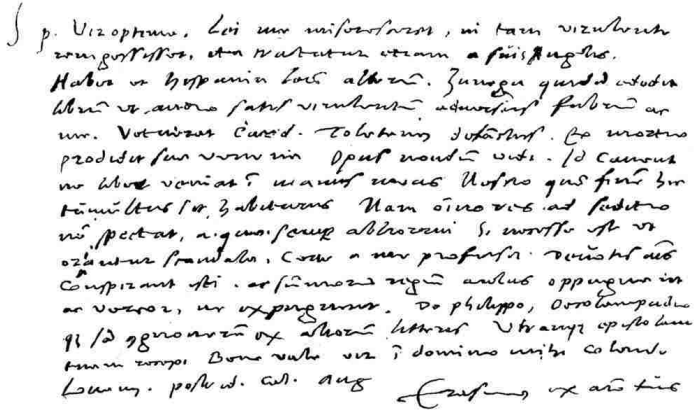
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MOVENDO
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Cum notis ſelectis VARIORUM.
Addito Indice novo.
Accurante CORN. SCHREVELIO.
P.P. Sc.
AMSTELODAMI,
Ex Typographia BLAVIANA, MDC.XCIII.
Sumptibus Societatis.

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First gathered and compiled in Latine by the ryght famous clerke Master Erasmus of Roterodame.

And now translated into Englyshe by Nicolas Udall.

Excusum typis Ricardi Grafton.

1542.

Cum priuilegio ad imprimendum solum.



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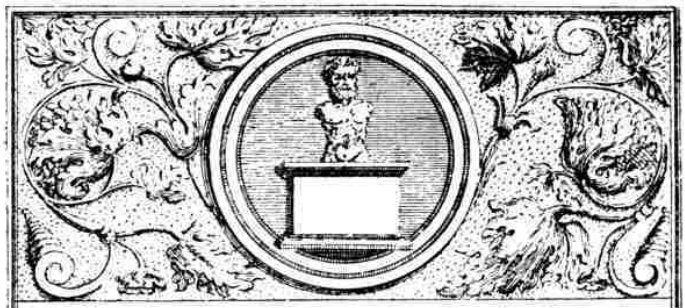
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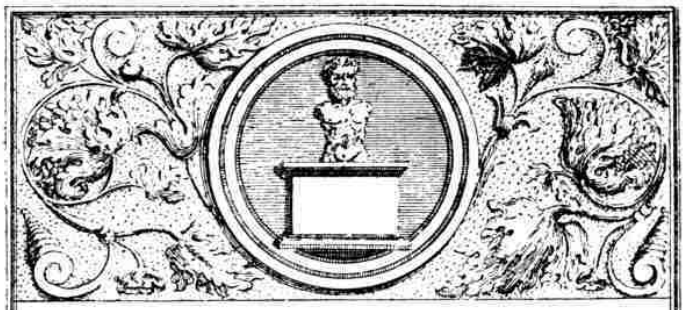
CHRISTO SERVATORI S.

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