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REVIEW.

Leben des Erasmus von Rotterdam. Mit einleitenden Betrachtungen über die analoge Entwicklung der Menschheit und des einzelnen Menschen. Von Adolf Müller. Eine gekrönte Preisschrift. Hamburg, bei Friedrich Perthes. 1828. pp. 394. 8vo.

ON the third of August, 1826, the Philosophical faculty in the University of Berlin, offered a premium for the best work upon the life and literary influence of Erasmus. The prize was awarded in the following year to the work before us, composed by a young man of Berlin, of whom we know nothing, but the fact which he mentions in the preface, that he is totally blind. Of this volume, eighty-six pages are occupied with a treatise on the analogy between the progress of human society, and that of the individual man. That this disproportionate mass of abstract disquisition is wholly irrelevant and foreign from the subject, we have the author's own authority for saying. He apologizes, in his preface, for this large excrescence, confessing that it was appended to his book precipitately, and before he had allowed himself to see that it was inappropriate. It is clear, too, although he does not say it, that the discovery when made, was made too late, and that his parental fondness, as an author, forbade the sacrifice of his misplaced abstractions. With these Prolegomena we shall not meddle, but proceed to the life itself. Even on that, however, we shall offer little in the way of criticism, but rather avail ourselves of its assistance, in pre-

senting a compendious view of the life of the great man, whom it commemorates. The biography of Erasmus is, by no means, a new subject; but must always be an interesting one. His merit as a writer and a scholar, in itself considered, would suffice to give him a high rank among modern literati, an elevation much enhanced by the part which he bore in the revival of letters, and the relations in which he stood to the Reformers and the Reformation. In the different accounts of his life and character which have been given, there is some discrepancy, confusion, and obscurity. Erasmus was too deeply involved in the absorbing and momentous controversies which disturbed his times, to maintain the pacific neutrality at which he aimed. He was not without enemies, nor without imprudent friends. His picture has, therefore, been often overdrawn. Malice has exaggerated all his faults; partiality has softened all his foibles, and both at the expense of historical and moral truth. It is gratifying, therefore, to find the subject treated dispassionately and impartially, by one who has given much attention to the subject, and in a work which comes recommended by the preference and sanction of a learned faculty in one of the first Universities of Europe. It was not to be expected that any thing essential or important could be added to the facts already known; nor is such the case in relation to this work. But that doubtful questions should be solved, contradictions reconciled, falsehoods detected, obscurities elucidated, and the truth exhibited at equal distance from the opposite extremes of favour and dispraise, were all desiderata. How far they are accomplished in the work before us, we shall not pretend to say, but shall make use of what it has accomplished, to exhibit an impartial, though concise, account of the subject to our readers. In so doing, we shall state the leading facts chronologically, without unnecessary disquisition, or minute and scrupulous detail.

Erasmus was the illegitimate son of one Gerard, a young man of respectable connexions at Gouda, a considerable village near to Rotterdam—and of Margaret, the daughter of a neighbouring physician. The intended marriage of his parents was opposed with great violence by Gerard's relations, who used every method to induce him to become a monk. At first, however, they succeeded only in driving him from home by their opposition to his wishes. To avoid their importunities, he betook himself to Italy, where he was residing when his celebrated son was born at Rotterdam on the 28th of October, 1467. After this event, the unfortunate mother seems to have experienced more favourable treatment from the family, as we find her afterwards engaged in bringing up the infant, in amicable union with the mother of Gerard. To Gerard, meantime, information was conveyed, that his mistress was no more ; in consequence of which intelligence, he instantly took orders. Returning, however, on a visit to his friends, he found to his astonishment, that he had been deceived ; but refused to abjure or violate his vow. He thenceforward devoted his attention to the child, whom he called after himself, Gerard. This title his son afterwards exchanged for *Desiderius Erasmus*, Latin and Greek words, equivalent in meaning to his Dutch baptismal name.

From the circumstances which attended this illicit amour, and especially the efforts made to drive Gerard into a convent, the manner in which it was finally accomplished, and the consequent prevention of his marriage with the mother of Erasmus, there naturally resulted in the minds of both, a deep and embittered hatred to monastic institutions. This feeling would, of course, insinuate itself into the lessons which they taught their child ; and to this source our author very plausibly attributes the invincible dislike to monks and monasteries, which Erasmus manifested from a boy, and which was abundantly confirmed and strengthened, by his own personal experience.

Bayle and other writers have insisted warmly that Erasmus must have given, and actually did give, in his infancy, the clearest tokens of superior genius. Yet we find him, in his fifth year, admitted a singing-boy into the choir of the Cathedral church at Utrecht. Why such a situation should have been selected for a child which exhibited so early, indications of extraordinary aptitude for learning, is a point which these writers have left involved in mystery. For our own part, we incline to think with the author of the work before us, that the best explanation of the fact is furnished by the tradition still prevalent in Holland, that so far from exhibiting a precocity of intellect, the infant Erasmus was singularly stupid and unpromising. Even to this day, the parents of dull children comfort themselves with the recollection, that the great man of Rotterdam was at first apparently a dunce. It is probable, therefore, that the contrary hypothesis has rather been deduced by a fanciful analogy, from subsequent events, than founded upon fact.

But whatever may have been the child's capacity for other studies, he seems, at least, to have been destitute of musical abilities. After four years of unprofitable residence at Utrecht, in the study of an art, for which, as he says himself, he was not born, he was removed to the celebrated school at Deventer, where his mother also took up her abode, in order to be with him. This institution was established in the fourteenth century, and at the time of which we speak, was among the best existing, though involved in a portion of the darkness which still brooded over Europe. It was in the hands of a number of ecclesiastics, who lived together in society, though they were bound by no vow, and formed no regular religious house. The principal was Alexander Hegius, and among the teachers was John Sinsheim, memorable for his efforts to import into his native country the reviving zeal for letters, which had already been enkindled in Italy. The school was also visited occa-

sionally by Agricola, the most learned German of his time, and one whose whole soul was devoted to the propagation of learning and the sciences among his countrymen. These two distinguished men soon discovered the abilities of young Erasmus. The attention of Agricola was first excited by a Latin theme presented by the lad, when he was on a visit to the school; on which occasion he is said to have predicted, with great confidence, his future greatness; and our author seems inclined to think, that the impression which this prophecy originally made, and the recollection of it afterwards, largely contributed to its accomplishment. For notwithstanding Erasmus's frequent disavowals of all ambition and love of praise, it is certain that in this, and many other instances, he shewed himself both pleased and proud *laudari a laudato viro*. During the two years which he spent at Deventer, he completed the circle of scholastic philosophy, Logic, Physics, Metaphysics, and Ethics, and committed to memory the whole of Horace and of Terence. The latter author was his favourite, and he has somewhere said, that the elegance and purity of the Latin language can in no way be better learned than by perusing Terence.

He was thirteen years of age when the plague deprived him of his mother; and as the whole household was infected, he returned to Gouda. There, he soon after lost his father, who is said to have died of grief, and with his death began the trials of Erasmus. The estate which Gerard left, though moderate, was quite sufficient for his son's support. Unluckily, however, he committed it to men who shamefully abused the trust. As they were also the guardians of the heir, they proposed that he should go into a convent. This he peremptorily declined, and insisted upon being sent to complete his education at some university. These conflicting schemes resulted in a constant struggle, similar to that maintained by Gerard with his relations. Every art was made use of to subdue the invincible aversion of Erasmus

to the cloister, but without effect. Persuasions, promises, and threats, were alike unavailing; and at last, his guardians, weary of the contest, sent him to Bois-le-duc, in Brabant, where a society of ecclesiastics educated children, with a special view to create, in them, a taste for the monastic life. Their assiduities, however, were wasted on Erasmus. The instinctive antipathy which, as our author expresses it, he had imbibed with his mother's milk, could not be overcome by the cajoleries of these good fathers. They could neither seduce him by their flatteries and promises, nor frighten him with tales of ghosts and apparitions, and of men, who, attempting to escape from convents, had been carried off by dragons and devoured by lions. He lived, or to use his own expression, *lost* four years at Bois-le-duc, without, in the least, relaxing his stubborn opposition to his guardians' wishes, at the end of that period, he fell sick, and was brought back to Gouda, where he remained three years in open war with his ungenerous and selfish guardians. At the end of that period, he fell in company with one Verdenus, who had been his school-fellow at Deventer, and who, at this time, was a monk in the religious house at Stein, near Gouda. This young man gave Erasmus such a flattering description of the comfort and liberty which he enjoyed, the advantages for study which the cloister offered, and the literary riches of the convent-library, that his repugnance seems to have been vanquished, and his scruples to have disappeared at once. An end was now put to the contest which he had maintained for six years, with his guardians, by his final compliance with their wishes, in 1486, the nineteenth year of his age.

From this event, our author draws an unfavourable inference, with respect to the character of Erasmus; on the ground, that nothing but an utter want of stability and moral firmness could have overcome, so suddenly, and on such a slight occasion, the resolution, which for six years, he had stubbornly adhered to. At the same time, he seems dis-

posed to censure the tenacity with which he first refused to give into the scheme, ascribing his aversion to monastic life, to mere restlessness of disposition, and impatience of controul. From these conclusions we dissent. That there may have been some admixture of this spirit in the motives which led him to refuse at first, and that there was something wild in the abruptness with which he afterwards consented, we admit. But we do not believe, that this mutation of his views was the mere-result of caprice and fickleness. The whole tenor of his history evinces, that from the time when his mind was first developed, he was literally an enthusiast for learning. It was his distinguishing characteristic throughout life, and runs through all his acts and writings. While we agree, therefore, with our author, that his prejudice against monastic institutions may have been derived, in some degree, from the instructions and misfortunes of his parents, we believe that it is chiefly attributable to his love of letters. In his conflicts with his guardians, he expressed but one desire, which was, to be sent to the University. By degrees, he became accustomed to contrast as opposites, the college and the convent, a religious life, and the pursuit of learning. Of course, as his thirst of knowledge became more intense, his aversion to the cloister grew proportionally, so that his literary ardour, which is allowed on all hands, to have been extraordinary, is alone sufficient to account for his obstinate resistance to his guardians wishes, even apart from other causes which did really exist. Such being the motives of his conduct in the first instance, it is easy to explain the alteration which took place without impeaching his consistency or courage. By the statements of Verdenus, the monastic life was presented to him in a novel point of view, and one which produced a revolution in his sentiments. He was brought to regard the convent, as an agreeable retreat, where his studies, instead of being thwarted, and discouraged, would enjoy facilities

that could not be had elsewhere, and be aided by a ready access to learned society and well stocked libraries. That he gave ear to this flattering description somewhat rashly, may be true; but if he did give ear to it, and suffer it to influence his movements, it follows, that the self-same motives which impelled him to hold out against his guardians for six years, induced him finally to acquiesce in their interested scheme. At the same time it must be remembered that Erasmus was an orphan at thirteen; that his frame was weak, his temper pacific, and his feelings sensitive; all which may have co-operated, and we doubt not, did, with the cause assigned above, to overcome his obstinate resistance to his guardians.

Whether Erasmus was already so well known, that the monks of Stein were anxious to secure him as a brother, or whether they were governed by the influence of his guardians, we know not. Certain it is, however, that during his noviciate, he was treated with singular indulgence, conventual rules being relaxed or dispensed with, to suit his convenience, and gratify his whims. But notwithstanding this strange policy, he could not reconcile himself to such a life, and it required all the art and authority of his guardians and the monks combined, to prevent his abandoning the monastery at the close of his noviciate. After all, they appear to have succeeded, only by working on his sense of shame, and by representing his continuance as a matter of necessity. Overcome at last by importunity, and weary of contention, he made his profession, in a fit of desperation, took the vows, and became a canon regular.

Every day, however, he grew more disgusted with his situation, and impatient to escape from it. Verdenus, to whom he was indebted for his cowl, appears to have been a very selfish friend, whose only object was to profit by the instructions of so ripe a scholar, in supplying or covering his own deficiencies. A more congenial spirit, was a young ecclesi-

astic from his own town, Gouda, by the name of William Hermann, a scholar and a poet, known subsequently as the author of *Dearum Silva*. With him he lived in habits of strict intimacy, and appears to have derived from his society, the only satisfaction which his residence afforded him.

Five years had now been spent in this disagreeable abode, when an unexpected incident gave him an opportunity of bettering his condition, and it need scarcely be said, that he embraced it joyfully. Henry à Bergis, Bishop of Cambrai, who, at that time, was intriguing for a red hat, found it necessary to proceed to Rome in person; and was anxious to procure a secretary who could speak and write pure Latin. This post he offered to Erasmus, whom he knew by reputation, and obtained permission for him from the Bishop of Utrecht, and the Friar of the convent, to accept the offer, which he did, A. D. 1491, in the twenty-fourth year of his age.

During his residence at Stein, Erasmus did not, as he has himself confessed, escape the contagion of corrupt example. But although the licentious lives of the recluses led him into some immoralities, we believe his own assertion, that he went not far astray, and so far from going to the same excesses with his older brethren, detested and despised them from his soul. He wrote while in the convent, many pieces, both in prose and verse. Among the rest were Hymns to Christ and the Virgin Mary, elegies, odes, satires; a funeral panegyric on a pious widow; a discourse on peace and discord, and a treatise *de contemptu mundi*, in which he describes freely, the corruption of the world, and, still more freely, the corruptions of the cloister. Of this date also are the earliest of his epistles extant. They are addressed to Cornelius Aurotinus, a priest of Gouda, in defence of Laurentius Valla, of whom Erasmus was a zealous and enthusiastic advocate. Our author, indeed, thinks, that the character and conduct of this illustrious Italian, were the models upon which Erasmus formed his own.

Erasmus, though in orders at the time when he left Stein, was not ordained priest till the following year, on which occasion, he became acquainted with the Abbot of St. Bertin, and the learned Jacob Battus, with the latter of whom he afterwards maintained a correspondence. In his hopes, however, of visiting Italy, he was wholly disappointed, the Bishop being forced to relinquish his designs by the want of pecuniary resources. He retained Erasmus, notwithstanding, in his house, and treated him for five years with respect and kindness. This period, however, seems not to have been a productive season as to literary matters, from the fact, that there are extant no productions of his pen, not even letters, of the date in question. At length, in 1496, he obtained permission of the Bishop to repair to Paris, at that time the most celebrated school of scholastic theology in Europe. A place had been procured for him in one of the colleges, where he could reside without expense, and the Bishop promised him a pension; a pledge which he was unable, or neglected to redeem. In consequence of this disappointment, Erasmus was reduced to utter want. He was not only unable to provide himself with books, but was driven by his poverty into a situation, the miseries of which he has described in the most revolting terms. He was now compelled to seek the means of subsistence by instructing private pupils, though it was an occupation which he seems to have disliked, probably because it consumed the time which he wished to devote to his own improvement. Among his pupils, at this time, was a young English nobleman, Lord Montjoy, who gave him an annuity of a hundred dollars, and continued his friend and patron throughout life. At his request, Erasmus wrote his treatise on Epistolary composition, which drew upon him afterwards the censure of the monks, because he expressed in it a preference of matrimony to celibacy. About this time he refused an invitation to become the private tutor of a rich young Englishman.

who had given up a bishoprick from a sense of incapacity, and now wished to qualify himself, by study, for another. In the beginning of the year 1497, he left Paris, to recruit his health, which was very much impaired. After visiting the Bishop at Cambrai, he proceeded to Berges, where his friend Jacob Battus was engaged in teaching the young prince of Burgundy. In this way he became acquainted with the prince's mother, the Marchioness de Vere, distinguished for her liberality to monks and learned men. From her, besides many other favours, he received a yearly pension, which was punctually paid. At her request, he composed a moral treatise for her son, a prayer to Christ, and several to the Virgin Mary. The latter he professes to have written, merely in compliance with her wishes, and against his better judgment. His health being now restored, he took a journey into Holland, and then returned to Paris; but was forced to leave the city, not long after, by the appearance of the plague. He remained three months at Orleans, where he was hospitably entertained by the Professor of Canon Law, J. Tutor. On his return to Paris, he appears to have abandoned the serious study of scholastic theology, and devoted himself to classical literature, particularly Greek, a complete knowledge of which, was then a rare accomplishment. As he had never had a teacher in this language, he adopted the practice of translating into Latin entire Greek works, in order to fix his attention and extend his acquaintance with both tongues. These versions he afterwards committed to the press, a fact which accounts for the large number of classical translations extant among his works. The health of Erasmus, which had been improved by his residence abroad, had failed once more, and continued still precarious. And our author takes occasion in this part of the biography, to expose the inconsistency with which Erasmus gravely attributes his recoveries, from illness, to the care of St. Genevieve, while in his *Christian*

Soldier's Manual, composed about this time, he ridicules and censures the invocation of saints, as a heathen superstition. As the plague still raged in Paris, Erasmus determined to accept an invitation which he had repeatedly received from his pupil, Lord Montjoy, to visit him in England. With his first visit to that country, he appears to have been singularly pleased. The climate, scenery, and manners of the people, but especially the state of learning, and the reception which he met with among learned men, delighted him. Among the distinguished characters with whom, on this visit, he became acquainted, the celebrated Sir Thomas More, and Dr. John Colet, Professor of theology at Oxford, may be particularly mentioned as his most intimate associates. During his stay at Oxford, he perfected himself in the Greek, by attending the instructions of Latimer and Grœcyn, who had succeeded in reviving the study of that language. He was also introduced to the young Duke of York, afterwards Henry VIII. to whom he addressed a Latin poem, and with whom he corresponded till his death. After a stay in England of about a year, he returned to Paris, and notwithstanding a disagreeable adventure at the Dover custom-house, whereby he lost twenty pounds, he appears to have gone home with impressions very favourable to the country and its inhabitants. On a visit, which he soon after paid to Holland, he became acquainted with Vitrier, a Franciscan monk, devoted to the study of the Fathers, who encouraged him in a design which he had previously formed of publishing the Fathers, with translations of their Greek works into Latin. The next memorable incident in his biography, is a quarrel with his former patron, the Bishop of Cambrai. They were never reconciled; yet on the Bishop's death Erasmus wrote four epitaphs upon him, one in Greek, and the rest in Latin, for which he received six florins, a munificence of recompense, which he ridicules in his epistles with some bitterness. The occasion of this quarrel was probably

the unwillingness or inability of the Bishop to yield him such pecuniary aid as he expected. From the same cause he became displeased with his friend, the Marchioness, who, after his mishap at Dover, transmitted him eight franks, two of which, he says, he took to pay the post. He appears indeed, throughout his life to have given much vexation to his friends by constant importunities for money. In the year 1500, he published his *Adagia*, though incomplete, for the purpose of relieving his necessities. He dedicated it to Lord Montjoy, and added a panegyric upon England. In 1502, we find him studying theology, at Louvain, under Adrian, who was afterwards Pope Adrian VI; at the same time prosecuting, with great zeal, his study of the Fathers, and of Greek. He still kept up his early practice of translating into Latin, and indeed continued it through life, a fact, which, as LeClerc has well observed, evinces that he must have been endowed with as much patience as refinement and acuteness. His favourite among the Fathers was Jerome, among the Greek writers Lucian; though he also expresses a lively admiration of Plato and Plutarch. About this time, he began to study Hebrew; but soon abandoned it, because, as he says himself, it was so new and strange, and because he was unwilling to dissipate his powers by grasping at too many objects. In 1504, he published a work of Laurentius Valla, which he found in a convent library at Brussels. It was a critique on the vulgate, comparing that translation with the original Greek text. To this Erasmus added a discourse, intended to demonstrate the necessity of a new version, and recommend the study of the original tongues.

The reputation of Erasmus, as a classical scholar, and an elegant writer, was now so well established, that the States of Brabant fixed upon him, to pronounce a panegyric oration in their name, before Philip the Fair, on his return from Spain. He accepted this honourable office, though reluc-

tantly, being conscious that he wanted the confident address and self-possession which an orator should have, and at the same time afraid of being branded as a flatterer and sycophant. The oration, however, was delivered in the palace at Brussels, on the sixth of January, 1504; and although, as he had himself foreseen, his motives were misconstrued, his reputation was increased by the performance. Philip, himself evinced his satisfaction by a handsome present, and an invitation to reside at court. The offer was declined; but Erasmus seems from this time to have lived in greater ease and comfort. Still, however, he had not the means of accomplishing his favourite design of seeing Italy, and taking the degree of Doctor at an Italian university, till 1506, when he found himself enabled to defray the charges of this long projected journey, by the liberality of English friends. With a view to this event, he came to England, near the end of the preceding year, and after a short stay in London, visited, first Cambridge, and then Lambeth, where he was presented to Archbishop Warham, Lord High Chancellor, by his friend and instructor Grocyn. He had previously prepared a Latin version of the Hecuba of Euripides, with a dedication to his grace, which he put into his hands, when introduced. To his great surprise, however, the Archbishop treated him with coldness and suspicion, and made him, in return, a very frugal present. This conduct, however, was explained by Grocyn, to arise from a suspicion, that the book had been inscribed to other men before, a trick, not uncommon, as he said, among hungry authors. Surprised and hurt at this imputation on his honour, Erasmus, as soon as he returned to Paris, sent his translation to the press, with another from the same tragedian, and dedicated both to the Archbishop. By this step, he not only proved his own sincerity, but secured the favour of his grace, who from this time, loaded him with benefits. From Orleans, Erasmus was accompanied to Italy by the son of

the King of England's chief physician, whose literary ardour made him an agreeable companion. The first place in Italy at which he tarried any length of time, was Turin, where, in September, 1506, he received the degree of Doctor in Theology, an honour to which he had long been looking forward.

From Turin, he proceeded to Bologna, to which place Pope Julius was at that time laying siege. He passed on to Florence, therefore, but returned in time to witness the triumphal entrance of his Holiness into the conquered city. At Bologna he became acquainted with a number of distinguished scholars, particularly with the Greek Professor, Paul Bombasius. In January 1507, he reached Rome, where he was present at the second triumph of the Pope over the conquest of Bologna, which he appears to have regarded with disapprobation and disgust. On his return to Bologna, he acted as tutor to Alexander, Archbishop of St. Andrew's, a natural son of James IV. of Scotland. At the same time he pursued his own private studies so intensely that he remained in utter ignorance of the Italian language, character, and manners, a circumstance, which sometimes led him into absurd and dangerous situations. One of these adventures is detailed at length, by most of his biographers. The only circumstance attending it, which we shall mention, is its consequence, which was a dispensation from the Pope permitting him to exchange his friar's habit for the dress of a secular priest.

After residing about a twelvemonth at Bologna, he repaired to Venice, for the purpose of putting his *Adagia*, which he had employed himself in enlarging and improving, into the hands of Aldus Manutius, the most celebrated printer of the age. Aldus received and entertained him with the most profound respect, and forthwith put his book to press. When this job was completed, he engaged Erasmus to correct a new edition of Plautus and Terence, for which service he presented him with twenty dollars, a moderate sum certainly

compared with the rewards which are sometimes given, in the present age, for intellectual labour. The merits of Erasmus appear to have been fully estimated by the Venetians. He was allowed the free use of private libraries and valuable MSS., so long as he resided there, and at last could scarcely obtain the consent of his friends to his departure.

His next removal was to Padua, where the young Archbishop was residing, thence with his pupil to Sienna, thence to Rome. In the latter city, he seems to have met with the most flattering reception. John de Medicis, afterwards Leo X., the Cardinal Grimani, and the general of the Augustines, vied with each other in their courteous attentions to the stranger. The Cardinal Grimani, in particular, made him offers, which, if not mere compliments, were certainly extravagant. He urged him to reside in Rome, and share with him a palace, one of the most magnificent in Italy, and a library, inferior in value, only to the Vatican. These and similar proposals, it is probable, would not have been despised, had not circumstances led Erasmus to look forward to an honourable settlement in England. Henry VII. died in April, 1509. His successor was a personal acquaintance, friend, and correspondent of Erasmus. We have already seen, that he was partial to the country, and had more respect for the English literati, than for any others. He knew, too, that freedom of opinion was more tolerated there, than elsewhere, and that the condition of society, and manners of the people, were more favourable to his own independent and capricious temper. Such being his opinions and feelings on the subject, the intelligence of Henry's death excited his attention to the probable effect which it might have on his own condition. In this state of mind, he received communications from Montjoy and other friends, inviting him to England, and promising him great things, in the name of the King, and his patron,

the Archbishop.* These letters appear to have determined him at once. The proposals of the Roman dignitaries were respectfully, but peremptorily, declined, including an offer from his Holiness himself, of a place among his *Penitentiaries*, an honourable post, and one affording easy access to the highest dignities. Leaving Rome, Erasmus passed through Tuscany and Lombardy, across the Alps, and along the Rhine, to Holland, whence, after a short stay, he sailed for England.

What were the actual impressions made upon Erasmus, by his residence beyond the Alps, with respect to Italy and its inhabitants, it is hard to ascertain. His letters from that country are all full of exaggerated eulogy, while in those of a later period, he runs to an opposite extreme. As the former were written in the full tide of his popularity at the Papal court, and the latter, when his reputation as a Catholic was somewhat on the wane, we may safely conclude, that both pictures are considerably over-drawn. For whatever may have been the virtues of his character, it cannot be dissembled, that fearless, frank, sincerity, was never one of them.

On his arrival in England, he took up his abode with his friend Sir Thomas More, for whose amusement he composed his *Praise of Folly*, which was sent to France and printed there, and had such sale, that within a few months, seven editions were exhausted. Notwithstanding its popularity, however, it brought upon its author the displeasure of the Romish clergy, whose iniquities it sacrilegiously exposed. Indeed it is said, that from the date of this publication, he began to be regarded as a heretic.

The high expectations of profit and preferment, with which Erasmus came to England, were, as might have been

* It is a curious fact, that Archbishop Warham backed this invitation by a remittance of five pounds, to defray the expenses of a journey, over land, from Rome to London!

expected, disappointed. In fact, Lord Montjoy, in the letter before mentioned, had given pledges in the name of other men, without authority, presuming on the good will of the King and the Archbishop towards his friend. Erasmus, of course, therefore, found his prospects of aggrandizement and wealth overclouded. He was hospitably entertained, it is true, and provided with a sufficiency for his support. But either from the want of all economy, or his enfeebled health, which multiplied his wants, he was unable to procure himself subsistence. We find him in one of his letters to Dean Colet, suing for fifteen angels as the price of a dedication. He refused a profitable living which was offered to him by Archbishop Warham, professedly from conscientious scruples with regard to sinecures; and yet seems to have wearied the patience of his patrons by his constant importunities.

Our author seems disposed to think, that this discontent with his abode in England, sprang neither from a want of patronage, nor from his own extravagance; but from a restlessness of disposition, which rendered him incapable of strong and permanent attachments. That he was treated with all honour and respect in England, there can be no doubt. His society was courted by the most distinguished men, and his merits talked of, even by the vulgar. At Cambridge he was appointed Professor both of Divinity and Greek, and the lectures which, as such, he occasionally read, were heard with flattering attention and applause. Notwithstanding all this, however, he grew more and more dissatisfied, and multiplied his complaints and importunities, till at last his English friends and he were heartily weary of each other. Such was the position of affairs, when political commotions and the prospect of a war with France, diverted the attention of the King and the nobility from letters altogether, and Erasmus, of course, began to be neglected. This circumstance, together with his gradual decline in

health, increased his desire to leave the country, which is manifested very unequivocally in his letters to the Cardinal Grimani, and other friends at Rome, which at this period contain the most fulsome panegyrics upon Italy, Italian learning, and Italian learned men. His regret at having left that country was increased, too, by the elevation of his friend, the Cardinal de Medicis, to the pontifical office. Such were his feelings, when in 1513, Bishop Fisher was appointed, by the King, to represent England in the Lateran Council. Erasmus instantly resolved to leave England in his suite; and although the Bishop was not sent, he persevered in his determination, which indeed, was strengthened by an invitation to the court of Charles, Archduke of Austria. After taxing his English friends for money to defray his charges, he accordingly set sail; and after much distress about the apprehended loss of his baggage, and especially his manuscripts, arrived at Calais.

During his residence in England, besides many smaller pieces, religious discourses, hymns, and prayers, he composed his treatises *de copia verborum ac rerum*, and *de partibus orationis*, elementary books in rhetoric and grammar, intended for the use of a school, established by his friend, Dean Colet. He was chiefly employed, however, in the reading of Greek authors, and in making preparations for his critical edition of the New Testament.

On his return from England, he repaired to Brussels, where he was received with great distinction, and appointed a counsellor of State, with a pension of four hundred florins. The Archduke also gave him a Sicilian bishopric; but unfortunately, it was afterwards discovered, that the right of presentment belonged to the Pope, and had been exercised in favour of another. This mistake, instead of grieving, seems to have amused Erasmus, who, in his private letters, laughs, as well at the nomination, as the disappointment. The only duty which he seems to have performed as a

counsellor of state, was the composition of a treatise for the benefit of Charles, then fifteen years of age, entitled *Institutio Principis Christiani*. This work proved both beneficial and acceptable to Charles, and his younger brother, Ferdinand, and procured for the author additional honours and rewards.

The chronology of this period of his life is somewhat confused, and differs considerably in the different accounts. We find him, however, in the early part of 1516, at Basle, where he went to have his New Testament printed, by John Froben, the most celebrated printer of the day, excepting Aldus. In the course of the same year, the work was published, with a dedication to the Pope, and met with such success, that a second edition was issued in 1518, and a third in 1522. This will not be thought surprising, when it is considered, that the Greek text had never yet been given to the world; that the revival of classical learning had directed the attention of the learned to the subject; that Erasmus was the most celebrated scholar of his times; and that his edition had the sanction of pontifical authority. The text was accompanied by a Latin version, altogether new, and varying in many cases from the Vulgate, with annotations, which, though ostensibly mere critical remarks upon the text, abound in declamation and invective against scholastic theology and the monks. To his second edition, he prefixed the recommendation of Leo X. under his own hand; an appendage of great service, at a time, when his orthodoxy was suspected, and the church divided into zealous parties. To the third he prefixed a vindication of vernacular translations of the scriptures. His next publication was his paraphrase of the New Testament, of which Melancthon's eulogium is well known. Our author, however, while he admits its elegance, seems to question its utility.

With his brief residence at Basle, Erasmus seems to have been much delighted. With the learned printers, Amerbach

and Froben, and the sons of Ammerbach, who were Hebrew scholars, his time was very pleasantly spent. He also became acquainted with Beatus Rhenanus, Oecolampadius, Berus, and the Bishop of Basle, who used every effort to induce him to remain there.

On his return to Brussels, he was urged to accompany King Charles to Spain, but could not be prevailed upon. Soon after, he received a pressing invitation to reside at Paris, which was communicated to him by Budaeus from Francis I. himself. This offer, though he gave no positive refusal, he did not accept. His roving habits had become so fixed, that he was now unwilling to accept of any offer, which would lay him under obligations to forego the capricious independence which was his delight. From the same motive he declined repeated invitations to reside in different countries, and among the rest, an application from the Duke of Bavaria, who wished to give respectability to his new university at Ingolstadt, by the name and influence of so great a man, and who, with this view, offered him two hundred ducats yearly, without requiring any other service in return, than residence at Ingolstadt. The five years intervening between 1516 and 1521, he appears to have passed in constant motion, sometimes in Flanders, sometimes in England, and seldom many months successively in either. Our author mentions here, the impossibility of tracing the movements of Erasmus accurately, by the dates and contents of his letters; it being notorious, that in his printed correspondence the dates are often falsified, and the epistles mutilated. During the period in question, his external circumstances were more comfortable than at any former time. He mentions incidentally, himself, that he enjoyed a constant income of three hundred ducats, besides the benefactions of his patrons, and occasional supplies from other sources. During the same period, he published his *Querela Pacis*, and began his edition of

the Works of Jerome, which he dedicated to Archbishop Warham.

The last of the three sections, into which the work before us is divided, contains a view of the relations which Erasmus bore to the Reformation. On a subject so familiar as the origin of that great revolution, detail must be unnecessary. Our author has rendered this part of the subject interesting by inserting facts and extracts, which exhibit in a clearer light the sentiments and feelings of Luther and Erasmus towards each other, at an early period. It appears, that the latter took no notice for some time, of the dispute about indulgences, regarding it as nothing more than one of those dissensions, which were constantly arising in the bosom of the church. The Reformer on the contrary, had watched Erasmus, keenly, and with great anxiety, and in his letters had expressed opinions in relation to his character, evincing great sagacity, and fully verified by subsequent events. While he gave him all due praise for classical learning, eloquence, and wit, he appeared to doubt the soundness and firmness of his principles ; and although he coincided with him in opinion, respecting the abuses and corruptions in the church, which Erasmus had exposed, he disapproved in toto of the unbecoming levity with which the latter had described and ridiculed them.

When the dispute with Tetzal grew more serious, and threatened to produce momentous consequences, the attention of Erasmus was attracted to the subject, and he seems to have regarded it with lively interest. Our author here suggests a supposition, which we think affords a satisfactory solution of the fickle and capricious conduct of Erasmus during this eventful period. It is, that he at first imagined Luther to be just such another as himself, a reformer in the same sense, and with the same design ; that is, a zealot in the cause of learning, and an enemy to superstition for the sake of learning. Under this impression, he appears to

have applauded the first movements of the reformation, as a mere continuation of his own proceedings; for it must be owned, that the exposure of the gross abuses which existed in the Romish church, was made in the first instance by Erasmus, though with motives very different from those which subsequently governed the Reformers. When at length he discovered his mistake, and was aware, that Luther acted upon principles and with intentions wholly diverse from his own, and that he was engaged in an enterprize which if unsuccessful, must be ruinous, he instantly drew back. The interests of religion manifestly had no place among his motives, or at least no influence upon his conduct. He acknowledges himself that he, at one time, was opposed to Luther, because he thought his movements were inimical to learning—a sufficient explanation of his whole history. For our own part, we believe, that there is not on record an instance of more deep and exclusive devotion to an object, than that of Erasmus, to the interests of Greek and Roman learning. We need not go back to his early life, for proof of the assertion. All his motions seem to have been regulated by a reference to this ruling passion. Such, indeed, was the intensity with which he clung to his favourite pursuits, that although he changed his residence so often, and enjoyed such opportunities of intercourse with different nations, he actually lived and died in ignorance of the English, French, German, and Italian languages. In fact, if we leave out this circumstance, his history is an enigma, and his character a riddle. It is not surprising, therefore, that when consistency and conscience, came into contact with the god of his idolatry, he chose to sacrifice the former, as he did, when he endeavoured to retract his first opinions, and entered the arena of religious controversy, as the antagonist of Luther. But it was too late. The treatise on free-will which he composed, (in compliance with the wish repeatedly expressed by the Pope, the King of England, and innumera-

ble friends, that he would write against the heretics,) not only drew upon him a tremendous castigation from the hand of Luther, but actually exasperated the resentment and suspicion of those whom it was intended to conciliate. Do what he would, he never could persuade the monks and common people that he was not an accomplice of the reformers. He was denounced from the pulpit and the press, and held up to execration, even in his presence. His early writings could not be forgotten. It grew into a proverb, that Erasmus laid the egg, and Luther hatched it, and he had the mortification to hear prayers put up for the conversion of Luther and Erasmus, the persecutors of the church. At the same time the reformed regarded him as a temporizing hypocrite, a very Gallio, who cared not for these things. Rejected, thus, by both parties, he would have sunk into insignificance, but for a reputation independent of religious controversy. For it is a curious fact, that amidst the very heat of this contention, while Luther was heaping him with coarse, but just reproach, on one hand, and the Sorbonne were burning his productions on the other, he continued to receive most pressing invitations and attractive offers, from the Emperor, the King of England, and the Pope himself!

In 1521, he had removed to Basle, where he continued to reside, with occasional interruptions, till 1529, when the magistrates and people of that city made a public renunciation of popery. On this event, Erasmus found himself compelled to change his residence; not that he apprehended violent or unkind treatment on the part of the inhabitants, but because he thought that his remaining there would be construed into an adhesion to the new opinions. He accordingly removed to Friburg, where he was received with great distinction—and lodged in a palace built for Maximilian, and once occupied by the Archduke Ferdinand. He had in view, at first, nothing more than a temporary stay, but was so well pleased with the city and the people,

and felt himself so weakened by disease and age, that he bought a house and took up his abode there.

Our author gives detailed accounts of several disputes, in which Erasmus was involved during his residence at Basle, of which we shall only say, that he owed them all to his disingenuous and timid policy of siding with the strongest, and that they all resulted in a partial diminution of his dignity and influence. His principal literary labours during the same period, were, his edition of the works of Hilary, and his celebrated *Colloquies*; afterwards condemned by the Sorbonne and the Inquisition.

At Friburg, he continued to dispute, and write, and publish, as at Basle, without ceasing. His most important publications at this period, were editions of the Fathers and the classics, with introductions, notes, and a correct text. Each of these he inscribed to some distinguished man, and seldom failed to receive a handsome present in exchange. This was, indeed, an honour which the great men of the day prized extravagantly high, as a passport to immortal fame. In the mean time, Erasmus still maintained a correspondence with the crowned heads and learned men of Europe, some of whom testified their friendship in a way more substantial than mere letter-writing. But while thus receiving honour at the hands of Kings, he once more sacrificed his peace and dignity by entering the lists with Luther, in reply to a letter of the latter, printed probably without his knowledge, and containing much severe reproach upon Erasmus. From this affair neither party reaped much honour, and Erasmus certainly deserved none.

In 1535, he yielded to the importunities of his imperial patrons, and agreed to visit Flanders; but first paid a visit to Basle for the purpose of saluting his old friends, and of putting to press, his *Ecclesiastes*, then just finished. He was detained, however in that city, a whole winter, by ill health, after which he never left it. While at Basle, he re-

ceived a letter from Pope Paul III. in answer to an epistle of congratulation, which he had addressed to him on his election. At the same he received intelligence from Rome, that his Holiness designed to offer him a Cardinal's hat, and other ecclesiastical preferments. But although the yearly income of the office was fifteen hundred ducats, independently of other revenues, which would have been bestowed upon him, he declined it, probably from a conviction, that his end was near. The circumstance, however, serves to show, the light in which the court of Rome regarded him, after his disputes with Luther.

In the spring of 1536, he was seized, in addition to his old disorders, with a dysentery, which continued an unusual length of time, and carried him off upon the 12th of July. He retained his gaiety and love of study, to the very last, endured his sufferings with patience, and expired with these words on his lips, "Domine Jesu, miserere mei." He died and was buried, without any Popish ceremony, though a multitude thronged to behold his body. The coffin was carried by students of the University, and followed by the Magistrates, Senate, and Professors, to the Cathedral church, where his monument still stands, and where his ring, seal, pencil, knife, and sword, his portrait, (a master-piece of Holbein,) and his autograph of the New Testament, are still exhibited to strangers. At Rotterdam, his native place, his memory has been perpetuated by statutes, medals, and inscriptions, with as much zeal as at Basle, and in both cities, there are colleges which bear his name. In his will, he constituted Ammerbach his heir; but left many legacies to other friends, and several bequests for charitable purposes. When he died, he was not quite sixty-nine years old.

In the rapid sketch, which we have given, in the foregoing pages, we have attempted nothing more than a succinct view of the subject, in the order adopted by the author of

this work, with a notice of such views and sentiments suggested by him, as appeared entitled to attention from their novelty or force. His extended criticism on the writings of Erasmus we have left untouched, because it can neither be abridged nor analyzed. His views in relation to the moral character and literary merits of Erasmus, we have partially exhibited, although their full development engrosses a large space in the original. On this point we have little more to say, than a reiteration of the fact, that his characteristic quality, was a supreme, exclusive, and unwavering devotion to the cause of literature, to which may be added, the remark of Luther, who appears to have known him better than he knew himself, that Erasmus was quick to detect error, but slow to learn the truth. In drawing a parallel between these celebrated men, our author becomes eloquent, and contrasts with a species of enthusiasm, the heroic consistency of the one, with the time serving policy of the other. He exhibits, indeed, a manifest dislike to the character and conduct of Erasmus, which has freed his work from the excess of extravagant and undue partiality, so common in biography, without, however, warping in the least, his fairness as a critic and historian.