

the royalty and greatness of Europe, clad in the monk's gown, pleading his case, and refusing for conscience sake to retract the principles set forth in his books; we think of him in the lonely Castle of Wortburg engaged on his great translation; we think of him in his midnight conflict with the powers of hell, flinging his ink-bottle at the very fiend himself. Yes, Luther was a moral hero of the mediæval type,—grand, rugged, and somewhat grotesque withal.

But if his character has assumed such faultless and heroic lines, transmitted through the medium of church historians, while that of Erasmus has been synonymous with genius and meanness, with culture and moral littleness, with vast power, but truckling and time-serving, time, which rectifies the errors of contemporaries, and the judgments of partizanship, is doing justice to both, and while it softens the gorgeous light which has dazzled our eyes in the former, is taking away the mists of ignorance and prejudice which have eclipsed the glory of the latter. Erasmus, whose name is associated with those of the Oxford Reformers, Colet and Sir Thomas More, differed widely from Luther, sometimes to his honor, sometimes to his shame. Erasmus was a broad and enlightened statesman; one whose mind took in the fundamental principles of government. His work on the "Christian Prince" announced the startling truths, that the object of Government is the common weal of the people; that the people's choice was the King's sole right to the throne, and that the Golden Rule should guide the actions of princes as well as peasants. Judging him by the spirit of the times, remembering the almost universal tendency of government to despotism, of power to oppression; remembering, too, that even down as far as Louis XIV, the most enlightened statesmen hardly dreamt that the people were not made for the pleasure of the King, we cannot fail to admire his prescience and genius. Luther entered into no such broad views. Expediency was not in his vocabulary. He did not work calmly, with quiet, self-contained strength.—Wherever and whenever he saw the devil he made a blow at him. Erasmus was cosmopolitan, Luther was a zealous bigot; what he did

not love he hated with all the energy of a passionate and vigorous soul; and what he hated he denounced with more energy than politeness. His denunciations were not classic, his wit was not elegant, his satire not polished. The party of Henry the Eighth who had broken a lance for the Pope he calls "Hogs of Thomists," from the learned Doctor Thomas Aquinas. Again he says of his opponents, "Put them in whatever sense you please, roasted, or fried, or baked, or skinned, or beat, or hashed, they are nothing but asses." One comment of Erasmus on Luther was, "Sometimes he wrote like an Apostle, sometimes like a raving ribald." It would be a great mistake to suppose that Luther was always right. It was partly through his influence that the rebellion of the peasants broke out in 1525. Let any one examine the twelve demands they made, the first of which was the right to choose their own pastors, and see if they are beyond reason and justice. Yet Luther did what Erasmus would not and could not do; he hounded on the brutal and tyrannous nobles at the head of their mercenaries to the work of massacre and extermination. This was a fault of the head, not of the heart. In some measure his very vices were the necessary concomitants of his virtues. Luther was the slave of creeds. He disputed with Zwingli on the Lord's Supper, and the controversy on his part was bitter. Luther hated Erasmus. "All you who honor Christ, I pray you hate Erasmus," he wrote. And again, "I take Erasmus to be the worst enemy that Christ has had for a thousand years." But Erasmus was Luther's friend. He always spoke kindly of him, always defended him, though he deplored his violence and rashness. It was through Erasmus that the Elector of Saxony stood firmly by Luther at the Diet of Worms. The Elector sent for him and eagerly asked him what he thought of Luther. "Luther has committed two crimes. He has hit the Pope on the crown and the monks on the belly," was the reply. Still he found fault with Luther's abusive and violent language. Erasmus, in common with the Oxford Reformers, worked for reform, not schism. They did not wish to subvert the papacy. They wished only for a return to Apostolic purity and simplicity. For this he