

ERASMUS.

Aid He Gives to the Modern Advocate of Peace.

ERASMUS AGAINST WAR. With an introduction by J. W. Mackail. (The Humanists' Library. Edited by Lewis Einstein.) 8vo, pp. xxxiii, 65. Boston: The Merrymount Press.

The series in which this volume appears was inaugurated about a year ago with a collection of extracts from the notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci. In that publication, and in others which are to follow, the due course to be printed, the appeal made particularly to the man of letters, to the student of those old writings which have been addressed, upon the whole, to the more advanced classes of humanity. Erasmus was not a man of culture and wrote in a simple language, yet the essay which is here translated in a sixteenth century translation is one of those works which ought to have the widest possible circulation. Its message is directed to the hearts of all men. Surely in an age witnessing an extraordinary advocacy of peace, not only through such mediums as the Hague conference, but in books, magazines and unnumbered newspapers, the help of a great voice from the past should not be neglected. Luxuriously printed in a limited edition this volume is nevertheless not for the dilettante alone. It brings something to the current of modern thought.

Originally it formed part of the "Adagia," the best collection of essays which has been published as "a manual of the wit and wisdom of the ancient world for the use of the modern," edited by commentary in Erasmus's finest but which, as Mr. Mackail observes, owes its reputation largely to the willingness of readers to take its merits on faith. "No one ever said him," said Voltaire of Dante, "and so his fame is likely to increase." But the essay in condemnation of war was bound to get itself read through the generations for the reason that it was energized by a peculiar enthusiasm. With temperance Erasmus could not but be reared by the sanguinary passions of his time, and again in his letters there crops out the hatred which he felt for violence, whether it were impulsive in the individual or organized and fostered in armies. When, in his maturity, he came to write this formal protest, he gathered up into it ideas which had been fermenting in his brain all his life long. Mr. Mackail, in his introduction which, for all its brevity, is uncommonly vivid in portraiture and in the indication of historical perspective, well exhibits the peculiar conditions under which these pages were written. The glories of the Renaissance still illumine Italian civilization and radiating their beams to other parts of Europe. Living under the pontificate of Leo X, and struggling with that splendid churchman in mind, Erasmus was not unhopeful of better conditions in his society. He closes on an optimistic note, believing that "by peace restored now to the world, Leo shall get more true glory than Julius Caesar by so many wars that he either boldly began or prosperously fought and achieved." He did not divine the tremendous wars that were to ensue a few years after his own death, and the mean time he liked to dream of a permanent reformation. At the same time he had much common sense and too keen an insight into human nature to be really deceived by any outward seeming, and his essay is as vehement in tone as though he were beseeching the world to listen on the eve of a great conflict, whose rising murmurs he could faintly hear. Mr. Mackail speaks of his "sacred fury" in the cause of humanism. We have no better example of it than that which is embodied in the essay against

"warred after a gentler fashion than we do," and noting that "they warred not for so light causes as we Christian men do," he pays this tribute to the ancient soldiers, a tribute which sounds quaint enough on his lips, but, taken with the context, aptly illustrates his skill in debate:

They rejoiced to advance and enrich such provinces as they had conquered by war; and the rude people, that lived like wild beasts, without laws, learning, or good manners, they taught them both civil conditions and crafts, whereby they might live like men. In countries that were not inhabited both fair and profitable. And the places that were not very sure, they fenced, for safeguard of the people, with bridges, banks, bulwarks; and with a thousand other such commodities they helped the life of man.

The reader need not beguile himself, however, into thinking that there are wars and wars. All wars are "filthy and cruel." There is no argument to be brought in their favor the speciousness of which he does not expose, as there is no burden entailed by war which he does not make mercilessly clear. It is an old book, but it lives because the truth is in it,

came from Stratford and was Shakespeare's friend, did not detect it—or else perhaps was another sharer of the secret. Southampton also, said Mr. Nicol, wrote sonnets, whose hero was the Earl of Pembroke. What, then, of the allusion of Francis Meres to the "sugared sonnets" which Shakespeare distributed among his "private friends"? Mr. Nicol had a prompt way out of this difficulty. "Southampton was Meres too!"

Lastly, the "Chronicle" representative asked Mr. Nicol why, if he knew where the MSS. were hidden, he did not immediately organize a party to find them. "Well," answered Mr. Nicol, "I cannot, of course, absolutely guarantee that they are there. There were several contemporary people who knew of the cipher, including a woman. It is possible, too, that some later student has discovered the secret, and gone quietly and taken them away."

We have given space to this man's folly because it is an excellent illustration of the utter idiocy to which the defamers of Shakespeare resort.

A LINK WITH THE PAST.

Glimpses of Society in the Last Century. From The Athenaeum. A link with the long past was severed by the death last week of Mrs. M. C. M. Simpson, the

poet Rogers showed her much kindness, talking to her assiduously at his famous breakfasts, yet sometimes breaking off disappointingly to say, "But people don't care for these Old World stories now." Of Wordsworth, whom she met at Rogers's, she could remember only that he wore green spectacles. She saw much of Thackeray. Calling one day to take him to a dinner party, she heard him say, "Wait a few minutes till I have killed her." The "her" was Helen Pendennis. As they drove through Curzon street he said suddenly: "Look at that small house. That is where Becky died, and I lost hundreds of pounds."

LITERARY NOTES.

"The Art of William Blake," a volume from the pen of Miss Elizabeth Luther Cary, is announced for publication this autumn. It will contain many illustrations.

Mr. Quiller-Couch's truly delightful anthology, the "Oxford Book of English Verse," is to have a successor in similar form in the shape of Mr. St. John Lucas's "Oxford Book of French Verse." This volume, which will be joyfully welcomed here and abroad by all who have a reading acquaintance with the French language, contains 317 poems, many of them copyright and none by a living author. Biographical and other notes and a long critical introduction on French verse contributed by the clever editor add to the genuine interest of the volume.

While on the subject of French literature we may remind our readers that a limited edition of a volume entitled "Prosper Mérimée, l'Homme, l'Ecrivain, l'Artiste," is coming out in Paris. It offers a biographical essay and seventy-four hitherto unpublished letters.

Miss Anna Seward, the "Swan of Lichfield," is the central figure of a volume of literary history, which the busy E. V. Lucas is about to publish. The book ought to be an entertaining one, for a great many odd or clever personages of eighteenth century England circulated about this lady—who, by the way, has been called "mendacious" by high literary authority. Many readers remember her chiefly as inspiring Porson's lines ridiculing the absurd flattery she exchanged with Hayley:

Miss Seward, loquitur:
"Tuneful poet, Britain's glory,
Mr. Hayley, that is you."
Hayley, respondet:
"Ma'am, you carry all before you,
Trust me, Lichfield swan, you do."
Miss Seward:
"Ode, didactic, epic, sonnet,
Mr. Hayley, you're divine."
Hayley:
"Ma'am, I'll take my oath upon it
You yourself are all the Nine."

An undoubtedly interesting book which the English critic, Mr. W. L. Courtney, is about to publish, is entitled "The Literary Man's Bible." Mr. Courtney found its origin in a talk on the literary merits of the Bible: "The question was whether a book that had come so near to our business and bosoms could possibly be relieved from its didactic implications and regarded as a collection of texts illustrating the characteristic tendencies of Jewish writers and exhibiting certain high standards of literature." The book will deal with the narrative literature, the prophetic literature and the poetic and philosophic literature of the Bible.

Did Shelley in his gruesome tragedy, "The Cenci," founded as he acknowledged on a story "eminently fearful and monstrous," place too much credence on the manuscript communicated to him in Italy? Mr. Marion Crawford has written an article which shows, it is said, the falsity of the history used by Shelley. The novelist has lately acquired two Cenci family documents, one of these being a long letter written by the abominable Francesco Cenci himself. A copy of another Cenci letter has been given to him, and he has framed from these and from careful study of the case what he believes to be a true relation. It will probably need to be extraordinarily convincing proof that will change opinion in Italy in regard to the terrific tragedy of the Cenci family. Mr. Crawford's article is to appear in a future number of "The Century."

At the recent meeting at Cambridge (England) of the Classical Association some interesting resolutions were passed. The first—proposed by the Council—was to the effect "that it is not desirable to begin the school study of two foreign languages, ancient or modern, at or about the same time." The second resolution stated "that in the earlier stages of teaching Latin and Greek the teacher should aim at making his pupils very familiar with such words, inflections and constructions as occur most commonly in the authors, and especially the first author, to be read at school." The third resolution, moved by Professor Mackail, was this:

"That a scheme of reading in Latin and Greek authors should be carefully organized and graduated with the view (1) of the selection of such authors as are suitable in respect of both their language and their subject matter to different stages of learning; (2) to the literary and historical value of the authors or parts of authors selected." Canon Lytelton moved, as an addition to the resolution: "And with a view to the attainment of this object the same simple narrative, prose or verse, should be selected, as far as possible, for the younger pupils." This was carried.

Mr. George E. Woodberry, who has just produced a new book, "The Appreciation of Literature," has taken up residence in a Massachusetts country town, where he is busying himself in literary work.

Professor Percival Lowell, the American astronomer, whose theory as to the existence of artificial canals on the planet Mars has aroused much discussion, has prepared a captivating series of papers for the coming year of "The Century." These deal with Mars as a possible abode of life and are illustrated by the latest photographic views of the home of the not impossible Martians. Mr. Lowell's conclusions, by the way, are disputed in a soon to be published volume, "Is Mars Habitable?" by Dr. Alfred Russel Wallace—a volume in which an alternative theory is put forward.

Tennyson figuring as a champion of the imperilled rights of property is thus quoted in William Allingham's lately published "Diary." "I was once in a coffee shop in the Westminster Road at 4 o'clock in the morning. A man was raging, 'Why has so-and-so a hundred pounds and I have not a shilling?' I said to him, 'If your father had left you a hundred pounds, you would not give it away to somebody else.' He had not a word to answer. I knew he had it."



ERASMUS.

(From the drawing by Albrecht Dürer.)

and, as we have indicated, it is doubly welcome to-day.

CHATTER ABOUT SHAKESPEARE.

A Little English Schoolmaster with a Cipher Up His Sleeve.

The force of absurdity can no further go than in the chatter of a little English schoolmaster, who claims that he has discovered in Shakespeare's plays a cipher showing that their real author was Shakespeare's friend, the Earl of Southampton, and who also claims that he knows the hiding place of the MSS. supposed to be lost in the Globe Theatre fire. "I can tell you," said this young Mr. Nicol to a representative of "The London Chronicle," "that every misprint in the First Folio is intentional, and has its meaning, and also the wrong numbering of the pages. As with Donnelly, my original key was the word 'heart,' occurring exactly in the middle of the second column in the induction to the second part of 'Henry IV.' I began by counting from that—choosing a word such and such a distance from the top of each column, and, if that didn't suit, such and such a distance from the bottom. The words thus strung together made a sentence. My final discoveries were, however, upon a different plan. The heart of the cipher is, I may tell you, in 'Cymbeline.'" The patient person conversing with this youth put a few general questions:

"Does the cipher," he asked, "run right through the First Folio, prefaces and all?"
"Yes," said Mr. Nicol.
"It includes, then, Ben Jonson's lines to 'my beloved master, William Shakespeare?'"
"Yes," said Mr. Nicol.
"Then Ben Jonson was in the secret?"
"I don't know," Mr. Nicol answered. "It is possible that the lines were not written by Ben Jonson at all, but by the Earl of Southampton himself, who assumed all sorts of names."
"But Ben Jonson was alive at the time—surely he would have objected?"
"I cannot see that he should. He had been the Earl of Southampton's amanuensis, and matters might have been arranged."
Thus Mr. Nicol would have it that the Earl of Southampton not only wrote the poems as well as the plays, but dedicated "Venus and Adonis" with immortal eloquence to himself, and managed the fraud so cleverly that even the printer, Field, who

daughter, and in her youth the constant companion, of Nassau Senior. Born in 1825 at Kensington, she had seen through her nursery window Cobbett working in his garden; old Talleyrand, with a mass of white pomatumed hair and corpulent face, limping round the Square; and D'Orsay, resplendent in vast shirt front and waving locks, handling daintily, with white kid gloves, the reins of his dashing cabriolet. She danced with the youthful John Stuart Mill; was petted by Sir Thomas Lawrence; romped with child loving Whately, her father's closest friend, and with Sydney Smith, who invited her to Combe Florey, and gave her "The Mysteries of Udolpho" to read at nine years old. She watched the coronation procession from Crookford's, and sat a spectator in the House of Lords when the Queen, with a steady countenance and voice, but a shaking hand, announced her approaching marriage.

Miss Senior became the constant companion of her father, who knew every famous man and woman in Europe. With him she visited King Leopold; the great astronomer Quételet; Charles Albert, whose face was the saddest and most interesting she had ever seen; and Cavour, not yet notable beyond his own country. In France Louis Philippe still sat upon the throne; she was introduced to Lamartine, handsome and affected, accompanied always by two magnificent white greyhounds; to Tocqueville, small and delicate, with long black hair and sparkling eyes—"porcelain all through," Mrs. Grote called him—said to be a perfect specimen of the gentleman of l'ancien régime; and was admitted to the little salon in which Chateaubriand, Ampère, Mme. Récamier, Mme. Mohl and Ballanche assembled every evening.

Her special intimate in England was Mrs. Grote. She made her friends read Lady Eastlake's memoir of that wonderful woman, and would tell stories of her wit, omniscience and eccentricity. She spoke also of Mrs. Grote's "illustrious partner," as his wife was wont to call him, declaring in her conjugal appreciation that no sculptor or painter had ever been able to convey the mingled sweetness and majesty of "the historian's" countenance. Here Mrs. Simpson met Mendelssohn, who played his best for his accomplished musical hostess, and Jenny Lind, sitting with the "Nozze" on her knee, and humming the part of Susanna, in which she was shortly to appear. Here, too, was Mrs. Marcet, whose charming little book, "Willy; or, the Seasons," delighted and educated the nurseries of seventy years ago; here, lastly, Abraham Hayward, with his incessant anecdotes, his dominating "My dear fellow, I am always right," and his habit, distasteful to young ladies not yet hardened, of telling questionable stories. The