

**TWENTY SELECT
COLLOQUIES
OF ERASMUS**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649163410

Twenty Select Colloquies of Erasmus by Sir Roger L'Esrtange & Charles Whibley

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

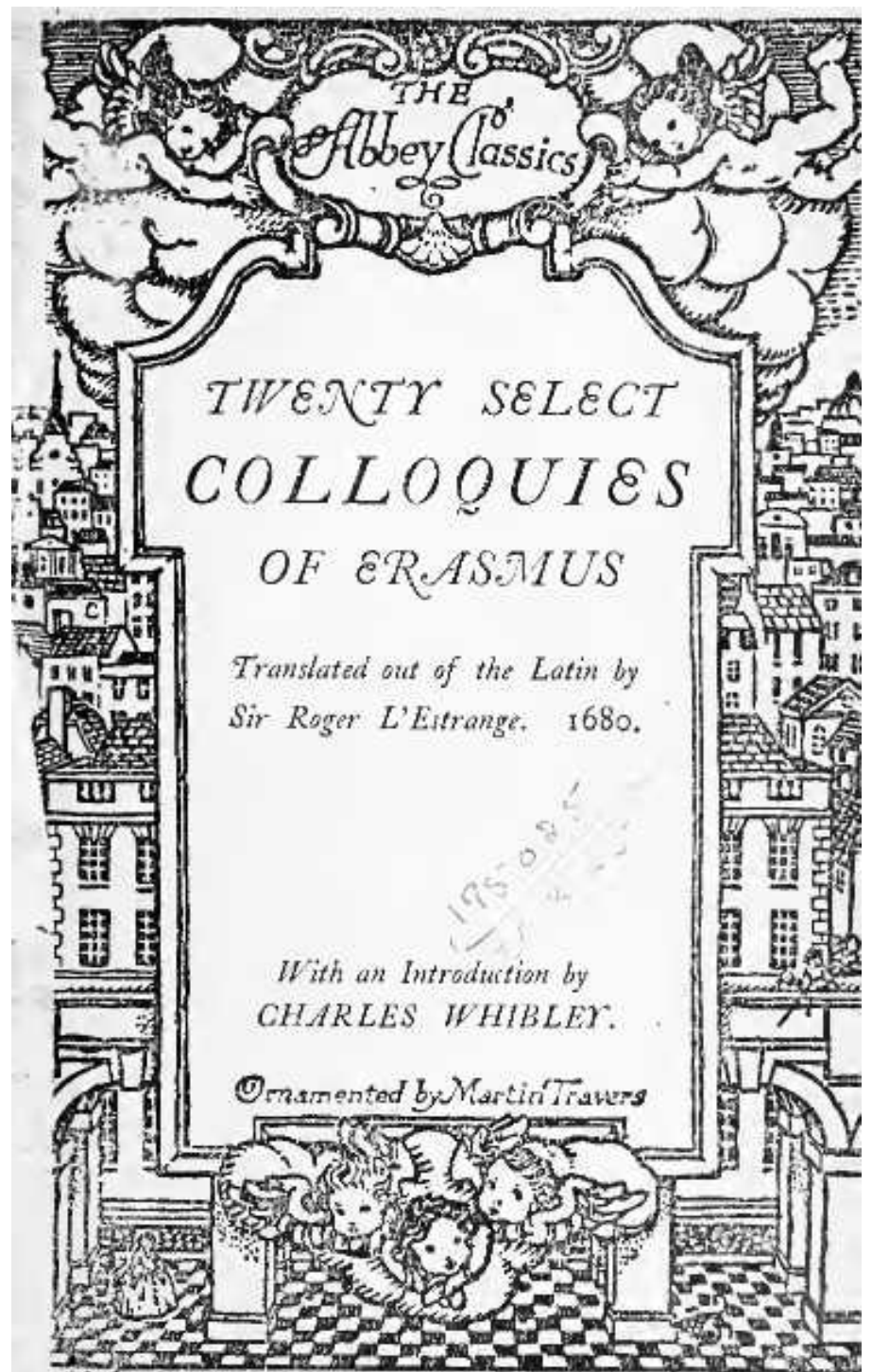
SIR ROGER L'ESRTANGE & CHARLES WHIBLEY

**TWENTY SELECT
COLLOQUIES
OF ERASMUS**

424
THE ABBEY CLASSICS—XVII

ERASMUS
TWENTY SELECT COLLOQUIES





THE
Abbey Classics

TWENTY SELECT
COLLOQUIES
OF ERASMUS

*Translated out of the Latin by
Sir Roger L'Estrange. 1680.*

*With an Introduction by
CHARLES WHIBLEY.*

Ornamented by Martin Travers

Published by CHAPMAN & DODD, from their offices
at 66 Gt Queen Street, in the County of LONDON.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

ERASMUS, DESIDERIUS (Gerrit Gerritsoon), illegitimate son of Gerrit Elias, b. Rotterdam, 1466. Ed. Deventer, Stein (where he took priest's orders) and Paris. His life was spent at various of the European seats of learning, chiefly in England and at Padua, Basle, Louvain and Freiburg. Though the chief of the New Learning, and inimical to the Sorbonne, the stronghold of ecclesiastical teaching, he was attacked by the Lutherans for his refusal to throw in his lot with their leader, an attitude due to his intense dislike of any form of fanaticism. It was not until late in life that he was openly acknowledged the leader of scholarship in Europe. He died at Basle in 1536. His chief works, in addition to his *Letters*, are *Enchiridion Militis Christiani*, *Encomium Moriae*, *Colloquia*, together with his editions of *The New Testament* and the *Works of St. Jerome*.

L'ESTRANGE, SIR ROGER (1616-1704). Ed. Cambridge. During his early life he was a strong Royalist adherent, and was imprisoned by the Parliamentary party from 1644-1648. Thereafter further Royalist intrigues led to his flight to Holland. He returned to England in 1653, and was for many years an agent of Charles II as well as a strong pro-monarchy pamphleteer. After the Restoration (1663), the King appointed him surveyor and licenser of the printing presses. He also founded several news-sheets, *The Intelligencer*, *The News*, and *The City Mercury*. He became M.P. for Winchester in 1685, and was in the same year knighted. He was deprived of office in 1689, and underwent several terms of imprisonment between this date and 1696. In addition to many pamphlets, his works include translations of *Quevedo's Visions* (1667), *Aesop's Fables* (1692) and *Josephus' Histories* (1702).



INTRODUCTION

WHEN Sir Roger L'Estrange sat him down to translate the *Colloquies of Erasmus*, he was not persuaded to his task merely by a love of letters. He made his choice of a subject, he tells his readers, for his own sake, and not theirs. "The Fanatiques," says he, "will have me to be a Favourer of the Plot, or (as all Episcopal men are accounted now a days) a Papist in Masquerade." And true it was that all wise men moved warily in the dark hour of the Plot. Nobody was safe from the attacks of Oates and Bedloe. A half-understood danger seemed to threaten all those who touched the bitter controversy. The fear bred of ignorance and suspicion was universal, and never was it more clearly proved than in 1678 and the years that followed what agitation and false witness might achieve. There were no limits which the credulity of a panic-stricken people did not reach. Every fire which flared in London, even the Great Fire itself, was ascribed to the direct and personal malice of the Pope. "Milton was a known frequenter of a Popish Club," said Titus Oates; "Lambert a Papist of thirty years standing." Cromwell himself was in league with the Jesuits, who, having set on foot the Great Rebellion, were active in 1650 with the Presbyterians of Scotland to the undoing of Charles II. In this gallimaufry of lying and superstition, what honest man would not take fright?

Even the stalwart heart of Roger L'Estrange failed him. Although he could not restrain his hand from the controversy, he abated his ferocity before the terror of Oates, whom he treated with an unaccustomed courtesy,

INTRODUCTION

and assumed a tone of moderation and uncertainty, strange in one so deeply "Plot-learned" as he. He confessed that the future was dim in his eyes. "They fear, they wish, they love, they hate, they know not what," he had written forty years before, and truthfully he repeated it; "and yet against this terrible nothing, shall they engage their lives and fortunes as zealously as if their souls were at stake, and as ridiculously as if they fancied these same innovations to be an army of flying dragons and the Pope leading them on a hobby horse." And if the future was hidden from him, he knew well enough that he was a marked man. He loved not the word "Protestant." He preferred to call himself a "reformed Catholique," because he took "the Catholique to be the ancients family of the two." He had been bold enough to say that he had known Catholics who kept their faith, and whose word might be trusted. It is not wonderful, then, that to Oates' blurred vision he was, after the Duke of York, the bitterest enemy of mankind. When the Pope was burnt in effigy, his image, with the infamous Mrs. Cellier at his side, was dragged in a car to Smithfield, as a warning to all disbelievers in the Plot.

So loud became the clamour against him, that he at last found refuge in flight—a rare act of pusillanimity (or prudence) in a long and bold career. He also protected himself after his own fashion. He wrote many an eloquent pamphlet in terms as brave as the prevailing terror would permit, and he set in a second line of defence his version of the *Colloquies* of Erasmus. He was not of those who write without a purpose. If he looked back to the past, he kept his eyes fixed resolutely upon the present. Therefore, he turned the scorn and irony of Erasmus to the useful purpose of proving himself no favourer of the Papists. If the fanatics declared that he favoured the Plot, the other side denounced him for

INTRODUCTION

a fanatic. "So that," in his own words, "with Erasmus himself he is crush'd betwixt the Two Extremes. Upon the sense of These Unkindnesses, he has now made English of These Colloquies, as an Apology on the One hand, and a Revenge, on the Other."

Roger L'Estrange (or R.L.S. as he liked to call himself) could have chosen no better author to translate, in justification of himself, than Erasmus, and no better book than the *Colloquies*. Not that there is any close resemblance between the two men, but that L'Estrange, a lifelong lover of exchanging blows, held himself for the moment, what Erasmus never ceased to be, an enemy of fanaticism. Of the heavy weapons, which served L'Estrange for the combat, Erasmus knew nothing. The most that can be said of him is that he forged the weapons, which others put to a use, of which he disapproved. He was a student, a man of ease and of the world, not a fighter, and though he would not suppress his opinions, he had no intention to go to the stake for them. He could not in any circumstances have grown into a pamphleteer. He preferred reason to passion; he put the growth of wisdom before violence. He stayed always within the limits of the Church; he never wavered in his allegiance to Rome; and while he held himself free to criticize whatever abuses he observed, he had no desire to destroy the system in which he had been brought up. He was one who loved learning for its own sake, a quiet scholar, who left his study, not to engage in battle, but to indulge in the love of travel, which never left him. Above all, he disliked the noisy disputes of the theologians. "Luther is no more to me," said he, "than any stranger he might meet; and as for the man's books, I have not had time to turn over more than one or two pages. And yet it is pretended—so I am told—that he had my help in his work."

L'Estrange, then, did not in tranquil times look upon

INTRODUCTION

life from Erasmus' point of view. He was, in his essence, a man of the market place. If he was a student, and he was in his hours, it was from a harsh necessity. Thus the sympathy of the two was complete only in a reluctance to die for an opinion. When More and Fisher went to the scaffold for a tenaciously held belief, Erasmus not only deplored the death of his friends from a full heart; he was seized by a kind of anger that men so good as they should die for so poor a hazard. And L'Estrange, you may be sure, though he would gladly have driven Oates and his gang to prison or to death, was not prepared to die himself, or to invite his friends to die for the mere exposure of an invented plot. If he had an imperfect sympathy with the love of quiet sense which shaped the mind of Erasmus, he found in the *Colloquies* the best book in the world to serve as an apology and a revenge. It is at once out-spoken and amusing. It castigates especially the follies of those who make a pretence of religion; it ridicules superstition, and it tears the mask from those who use piety as a cloak for lust and covetousness. No wonder that L'Estrange thought that the mere Englishing of such a book would absolve him from the unjust suspicion that he was something worse than a "reformed Catholic."

Erasmus himself, when he wrote his *Colloquies*, was intent to prove nothing. His purpose was to make a work of wit and humour, a work which would give full play at once to his irony and his sense of style. He wrote them at his leisure and with the greatest care. They were destined not only to entertain the reader, but to show with what ease and familiarity the Latin language could be written. The first news we have of them is in a letter written to Butt in 1500, a letter in which he speaks of "some every-day phrases, which we use in accosting each other and at table." He promises that Butt shall see them, and then a year later asks for