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ERASMUS
AND OTHER ESSAYS

BY
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MDCCLXII.
PREFATORY NOTE

Of the Essays collected in this volume, those on “Confucius” and on “Christianity and Civilisation” have been already published in Good Words; the address on “Preaching” was separately issued by Messrs. Maclehose of Glasgow; the Essay on “Marcus Aurelius” was printed in the Madras Christian College Magazine; and the remaining papers were contributed to the British and Foreign Evangelical Review. To the Editors and Publishers concerned I am indebted for permission to republish. Some of the papers are rather out of date, and had I been writing them now, I should probably have expressed myself differently on one or two points, but I have judged it better on the whole to reprint without alteration.

M. D.

Edinburgh, October 1891.
CONTENTS

I
ERASMUS . . . . . . . . . . . . 1

II
CHRISTIAN ELEMENT IN PLATO . . . . . . 63

III
HIPPOLYTUS'S HOMILY AGAINST NOETUS . . . . 94

IV
CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA AND HIS APOLOGETIC . 119

V
FREDERICK DENISON MAURICE . . . . . . 165

VI
CONFUCIUS . . . . . . . . . . . . 239
vii

christianity and civilisation . . . . 266

viii

on preaching . . . . . . . . . . 317

ix

marcus aurelius . . . . . . . . . 349
ERASMUS

Whoever has looked upon the portrait of Erasmus—that portrait which he himself was so reluctant to sit for—must have wished to acquaint himself with the soul that dwelt behind those brightly intelligent but melancholy and sceptical eyes. Whoever has considered that large eloquent mouth, whose proportions are preserved by the finely-cut curve which denotes scholarly taste, and whose massiveness is relieved by the humorous, ironical smile which plays about the upturned corners of the lips, must have


2 "Vix extortum est amicorum precibus, ut se pingi pateretur."—*Vita Erasmi*—prefixed to the Colloquies.
said to himself, There is a man who has known and thought much, but who has strength enough to be free and airy in his movements with all his burden of knowledge,—a man who has seen strange and sad experiences in this world, but who has spirit enough to be gay, nay, to be hopeful and tender throughout,—a man who must have been the best of company while living, and who must have dropped from these lips pregnant sayings which cannot die. It is one of the great faces of the world, to be ranked with that of Dante, or of Newman; though distinctly memorable from the first glance we get of it, it draws one back again to look at it, as if there were a meaning we had not taken up, or perhaps a capability which even all the difficulty of threescore years and ten had not developed. ¹ And it is not the face alone which attracts us. The most superficial facts of his life show us that it must be one of the most significant ever lived. The man who laid the egg which Luther only hatched;

¹ In the nearly magnificent but queer Valhalla at Ratisbon, in which the busts seem to have been made to order rapidly and in large numbers, at so much per hero, neither inartistic dulness nor payment by the piece has availed to chisel that face into insipidity. But it is doubtful whether it was judicious to place amid all the solemn dignitaries, a face whose curl of the lip seems to be pouring perennial satire on the whole affair.