

CHAPTER VI

THE EGG WHICH ERASMUS LAID AT PAUL'S

WE HAVE NOW examined the ideas of Erasmus upon the functions and methods of grammar school. We have seen that he was closely connected with Dean Colet in founding Paul's, and furnished or took oversight of most of the basic texts used in that school. It remains to examine in some detail the curriculum at Paul's as a concrete embodiment of the theories of Erasmus.

Unfortunately, the early history of Paul's curriculum still rests in wholly unnecessary obscurity. It is thus obligatory first of all to clear up the fundamentals at Paul's. We can then examine the theory and textbooks of Erasmus to give us a fair picture of the original idea. This will make it possible to watch the idea evolve at Paul's and elsewhere through the century. Of course, we can give here but the barest sketch, and the educational experts should then attend to their sadly neglected duty by carrying the matter to a detailed conclusion. Sufficient for our purpose if we can but outline the process.

Because of its predominant influence, it is absolutely necessary to clear up the fundamental principle at Paul's. Since Dean Colet's statutes keep echoing through those of numerous grammar schools in the sixteenth century, it is only fair to suspect that the curriculum is also reflected. It was the grammar evolved at Paul's by Colet, Lily, and Erasmus, which under the name of Lily became by 1540 the only allowed one, and retained its primacy almost to the present day. Since the grammar was the very backbone of grammar school, this book tended to shape the curriculum. Paul's curriculum must have been a powerful influence. Unfortunately, no identified early curriculum for Paul's has hitherto been forthcoming, but it can now be shown that a suggestion made long ago by Strype and approved by Knight¹ is correct, and that Wolsey's famous curriculum of 1528 at Ipswich is only a copy or a close adaptation of Paul's.²

Strype (Paul's 1657-61) and Knight (Paul's c. 1696) would have no difficulty in recognizing a familiar friend, since as Paul's boys in the second half of the seventeenth century they had been subjected to practically the same curriculum. Our earliest known complete curriculum for Paul's belongs to this period, being supposed to date

¹ Strype, John, *Ecclesiastical Memorials* (1733), Vol. I, p. 118; Knight, *Colet*, p. 127n.

² Cf. Appendix III.