PERCY STAFFORD ALLEN

1869–1933

PERCY STAFFORD ALLEN was born at 2 Twickenham Park, Twickenham, on 7 July 1869, the second son of Joseph Allen, a London bill-broker. He received his early education at a school in Rottingdean, kept by William and James Hewitt, where he was well grounded in the classics by an excellent teacher, the Rev. Francis Riley, who remained always a valued friend and correspondent. From Rottingdean he went to Clifton College, where he was in Watson's House. The Head Master was James Wilson, one of the Victorian minor prophets, but with the air and stature of a major prophet. With Wilson as with Riley, Allen kept up to the end an intimate and affectionate correspondence. One of the assistant masters was S. T. Irwin, to whose Greek and Latin learning, as well as to his zeal for all good literature, Allen often bore grateful testimony. The first boy who spoke to him at Clifton was Bernard Pyne Grenfell, later to achieve European fame as a papyrologist. *Nescia mens hominum*—Allen could not guess that it would one day fall to him to be the guardian of Grenfell's last years and clouded mental faculties. From Clifton he passed to Corpus Christi College, Oxford, of which College he was a Scholar from 1888 to 1892. Among the Corpus dons of the period there were several whose character and attainments made them notable. The President was Thomas Fowler, a man just, benign, competent, and the author of an excellent history of the College. Among the Fellows were Arthur Sidgwick, a born teacher, and a man of fine quixotic temper; Charles Plummer, saintly, scholarly, full of shy wit, full of good deeds done in secret; Cuthbert Shields, a mantic figure and personality, in whose inspired thinking and talk there ran in fact a strain of madness; Robinson Ellis, the most learned Latinist of his time,[1] who

[1] Ellis, in fact, came to Corpus when Allen was in his fifth year, taking

looked like Dominie Sampson and, except for a certain astute vanity, probably was a little like him; Henry Devenish Leigh, part author of *How and Leigh*, and author or editor of most of the 'Spoonerisms' attributed to Dr. Spooner. Of these learned men perhaps the one with whom Allen had most in common was Plummer. It was a special pleasure to Plummer that it fell to him, when in 1924 Allen was elected President of Corpus, to be the first to carry the news to him.

Allen took a first class in Classical Moderations in 1890, and a second in 'Greats' in 1892. It is probable that the philosophical side of 'Greats' made no strong appeal to him —to the last he was wise without being logical, reflective but without bent for argumentation. When he had taken his final schools, he stayed on in Oxford for the first term of a fifth year, reading with a view to the Chancellor's English Essay Prize. The subject was *Erasmus*; a subject in which, so far as I can discover, he had no previous interest. His essay was written at 20 Pembroke Street in the last months of 1892; but it did not get the prize.[1]

In February 1893 Allen made a voyage to Australia and New Zealand, in company with a pupil. He was absent the greater part of the year; but his experiences in the Antipodes interested him either too little or too much, for in later life he never referred to them. He came back to Oxford in October 1893, and in the lodgings at 13 Oriel Street which he had occupied as an undergraduate he took up anew his studies in Erasmus. Early in the Michaelmas Term his diary records that he breakfasted with James Anthony Froude; and throughout this term and the term following

the place of Conington. But whereas Allen had no debt to Conington, he owed much both to the example of Ellis and to his practical help.

[1] The Prize went to an excellent essay, which I have read, by W. H. Porter of Lincoln. The examiners were the Public Orator (W. W. Merry, Rector of Lincoln), the Professor of Poetry (F. T. Palgrave), R. W. Raper of Trinity, and A. E. Haigh and S. G. Hamilton, both of Hertford. They were likely to bring to their task no kind of prejudice and no knowledge of the subject.

he attended Froude's lectures on *The Life and Letters of Erasmus*. In the Preface to his first volume he mentions his debt to Froude; and it has been mistakenly inferred that it was to Froude's lectures that he owed the beginnings of his interest in Erasmus. In fact, as the dates show, this interest was long prior. Erasmus was selected as the subject for the Chancellor's Essay in the summer of 1892; and Froude's lectures on Erasmus belong to the two winter terms 1893–4. Whether the Chancellor's Essay had anything to do with Froude's choice of a subject I do not know.

In the summer of 1894 Allen won the Chancellor's Prize for a Latin Essay on the character of Alcibiades. It would be difficult to think of anybody less fitted to write well about Alcibiades—or better fitted to write well about Erasmus. But academic prizes, like the great prizes of life, would lose half their attraction if they did not sometimes go to the wrong people. Allen's Latin Essay was in any case a competent, and even characteristic, performance, full of good Latinity and grave moralizing. The Chancellor's Prizeman was entitled by custom to a prize of books from his College; for his Corpus prize Allen chose Froude's *History*, in twelve volumes, together with the volume of Froude's Erasmus lectures which had just come from the press: on the fly-leaf of the Erasmus he has noted—'Perlegere incepi a.d. xiij Cal. Nov. MDCCCXCIV, quo die periit ejus auctor.' A few days later he attended the memorial service for Froude in Oxford.

In the following year he became a master at Magdalen College School, teaching, in the lower fifth form, all subjects except mathematics and French: he was, however, a good mathematician, with a keen interest in astronomy; and at any rate in later life proficient in French. In January 1897 he sailed for India, to take up a five-year appointment as Professor of History in the Government College of Lahore. He returned to England in the summer of 1898, marrying in September his cousin, Helen Mary Allen, from that time on the partner in his life-work. He had not forgotten Erasmus in Lahore. Visiting Oxford in this year

he stayed with the President of Corpus, who invited Bishop Stubbs to meet him: and with Stubbs he discussed the project of an edition of Erasmus' correspondence. Stubbs properly advised him that the work could not be done in India, but only from within reach of the great European libraries. Allen returned to Lahore, and for three years 'under the gloom of Indian summers and in high valleys in Kashmir'[1] prosecuted undiscouraged his Erasmian studies.

But the climate affected seriously the health both of himself and of Mrs. Allen; and in 1901 he came back to England. During the journey home he worked at a volume of Selections from Froude, for Messrs. Longmans. The book was finished at Rome in April. Allen retained to the end a profound admiration for Froude. Of the Lives of Erasmus, Froude's only counted with him; and though he had a temper from which theological partisanship was alien, his attitude towards the Reformation was always substantially that of Froude.

While in Rome, Allen, besides finishing the Selections from Froude, worked in the Vatican, bringing to light there two new letters of Erasmus. From Rome he went to Venice, hunting material in the Library of St. Mark's and in the Frari Archives. Thence he visited the Library at Basle—one of many visits to that inexhaustible quarry of Erasmus material.

He came back to Oxford in October 1901. In the Corpus Library an omen waited him: he found his pens and paper in the seat which he had always occupied, and where he had left them four years previously. He had resolved to dedicate himself to Erasmus. He had been so far encouraged that the Delegates of the Clarendon Press, to whom specimens of his work had been submitted in 1899, had undertaken, subject to certain conditions, to print at least one volume of the Letters. He was at this time wholly without means. But his father had agreed to make him an allowance of £250 a year; and on this small income he set

[1] *Opus Epistolarum*, i. v.

up house at Longwall Cottage. The £250 was supplemented by occasional pupils (to some of whom he even taught logic) and occasional examining. During the spring of 1904 he acted as secretary to the Vice-Chancellor, D. B. Monro, Provost of Oriel; and during Hilary Term 1907 as Secretary of Faculties. The remuneration attached to these posts was small but acceptable; and Allen valued the experience which they gave him of University business. Meanwhile, Longwall Cottage was a cottage; the only study was the dining-room, and Allen's writing-table was the dinner-table. But his temper was that of the heroic age of scholarship. He had, moreover, a sense for method amounting to genius; and above all, whether by nature or by discipline,[1] he had serenity of mind.

Two hundred years had gone by since the last edition of Erasmus' Letters had appeared, that of Leclerc, included in his Leyden edition of the *Opera Omnia*.[2] A new edition was long overdue; and the project of one had already engaged the interest of several scholars: notably of Adalbert Horawitz of Vienna and K. Hartfelder of Munich. Both these scholars, however, had died at the beginning of their undertaking. In the year in which Allen came back to Oxford, Francis Morgan Nichols, a former fellow, later honorary fellow, of Wadham College, had published the first volume of a translation of the Letters. Allen had known in 1895 that Mr. Nichols was engaged upon this work; and he had satisfied himself, and Mr. Nichols, that his own

[1] I have been told by persons who knew him in youth that this serenity of mind was in fact a conquest, and did not belong to his early period. If this be so, the change is comparable to that recorded by Erasmus in the character of Colet. I am obliged to say that, for myself, I knew him intimately for thirty years, and that I never once encountered in him any harsh mood. I never saw him angry or irritable; nor even, when I knew he was troubled in mind, depressed.

[2] Published in ten volumes, 1703–6. Vol. iii, which contains the Letters, makes in fact two volumes. In 1706 these two volumes seem to have been reissued separately, as a single volume; though this reissue is not noted by the editors of the *Bibliotheca Erasmiana*.

undertaking involved no kind of trespass or rivalry. Mr. Nichols was, in any case, nearly seventy when he took up his task. When his first volume appeared, he was seventy-five; he finished his third volume when he was in his eighty-third year—it was published posthumously, with an Introduction by Allen prefixed. Mr. Nichols was, as Allen calls him in the Introduction, 'an amateur in the best sense of the word'. His Translation, which takes in more than 800 letters, and is accompanied by Introductions containing valuable critical and biographical matter, illustrates impressively and attractively some of the best elements in Oxford scholarship.

A year after the appearance of Mr. Nichols's first volume, Allen, who had taken great pains to satisfy himself that he had a clear field, made the disconcerting discovery that, so long back as 1899, the Berlin Academy had commissioned Dr. Max Reich to edit the complete correspondence of Erasmus, and had made a considerable monetary grant to enable him to prosecute the search for manuscripts. That Dr. Reich was adequately qualified seemed not too certain. Certain it was, however, that the Berlin Academy were not a negligible institution, and that they were taking him seriously. Would the Oxford Press carry on in face of a competition so formidable? Allen's perturbation of mind was great. Acutely conscientious, he put the question to the Delegates at once. By this time the Delegates had a good knowledge of Allen's quality, and full information as to the scope and character of his work and its progress up to date. Of Dr. Reich they knew nothing. But they knew that life is uncertain, and that the man who was to give the world the definitive edition of Erasmus' Letters had needs be both long lived and lucky. They decided to go ahead. Two years later, in fact, Dr. Reich fell ill; and in the autumn of 1904 he died. His papers were purchased by the University Press for Allen's use; but the Nachlass, when it arrived, showed that he had made very little progress.

But the Berlin Academy were not the only power to be

reckoned with. In 1904 the Dutch Historical Commission included in their published scheme of projected undertakings an edition of Erasmus' Letters. By this time, however, there were a good many persons on the Continent who knew the work which Allen had done and was doing. Through the good offices of Professor Blok the Commission were prevailed upon to await the first volume of Allen's edition, and to agree, if satisfied with it, to proceed no further with their own undertaking. This, however, was not all. Dr. J. R. F. Knaake, who had edited competently the Correspondence of Luther, was found to be engaged in editing that of Erasmus. But his course also was destined to be brief and unfortunate: he died in 1905. His papers, which Allen was allowed to examine, afforded, like those of Dr. Reich, very little new material.

The memory of all these fellow workers was always present to Allen, admonishing him of the greatness of his task and of the shortness of life. He was not a man prone to superstition; yet more than once I have heard him remark that all editors of Erasmus seemed fated to die 'without publishing'. None the less, until the last months of his illness he believed, I think, that he was destined to finish his work.

Erasmus could no more be edited from Longwall Cottage than from Government College, Lahore. The material had to be sought in the great continental libraries; from some of which, indeed, it had to be dug out. On his way home from India, Allen, I have noticed, had worked in the libraries of Rome, Venice, and Basle—in the Vatican, he had brought to light two new letters of Erasmus. But at dates not now exactly determinable he had visited earlier a good many other libraries where manuscripts of Erasmus were to be seen. Between 1892, when he took his degree, and 1897, when he went to India, he had already surveyed the material available in Hamburg, Freiburg-im-Breisgau, Strasbourg, Brussels, Ghent, Gouda.[1] All these were

[1] On one of these early journeys to the continent, I think his first journey to Freiburg, he had for companion Charles Plummer; and they

revisited, some of them frequently, at later dates. In the period immediately following his return to Oxford the costs of travel were a serious consideration.[1] In 1906 the University Press—from the beginning sympathetic and generous—made him a grant of £100 for the purpose of travelling abroad. But already in the summer of 1902, and in the spring of the three successive years, 1903–5, he had found the will and the means to visit most of the libraries on which he depended. In 1902 he was working at Paris and Sélestat; in 1903 at Ghent, Brussels, Louvain, Utrecht, Leiden—in Leiden he allowed himself the luxury of buying Froben's edition of the *Opera Omnia* (it was not till nearly thirty years later that he was able to buy Leclerc's edition); at Ghent he met much kindness from MM. Vander Haegen and Vanden Berghe, who had just begun upon their great *Bibliotheca Erasmiana*. In 1904 he was at Paris, Sélestat, Basle, St. Gall, Munich; in 1905 at Brussels, Ghent, Leiden, Deventer, Gouda—it was in this year that he found at Gouda 'exciting new MSS. of Erasmus, Cornelius and William Herman'; within a month of their discovery these 'exciting MSS.' were at his disposal in the Bodleian.

In February 1903 fifty Letters of Erasmus were dispatched to the Press for a 'cast-off'; and in May a first specimen proof was delivered to him. He had reckoned

were joined by Bishop Gore. It amused Allen to recall a serious difference of opinion with the Bishop: not upon any abstruse question of theology, but on the question of *cheese*. The Bishop had a steady predilection for a certain very strong cheese; such a cheese as, in the opinion of Plummer and Allen, had no place on a gentleman's dinner-table. Feeling about it ran high; in plain matters of right and wrong, and on any question which involved the moral sentiments, both Plummer and Allen were men notably inconcessive. It was only with difficulty that a compromise was effected, whereby the Bishop was allowed to have his cheese, on the understanding that a place was found for it, not on, but under, the table.

[1] An old friend, Mrs. Rosalind Norris, made him a gift of £100 in 1904—she had intended to leave it to him in her will, but felt that it would be more useful now. They called the gift a 'studentship'.

to be ready with the complete copy for his first volume by the end of 1903. It was in fact finished and sent to the Press on 5 July 1906, and was published in the same year. The grant of £100 made to him in that year by the Press enabled him to spend the whole of the Long Vacation in study abroad—in Basle he unearthed Boniface Amerbach's Letter-books, containing, *inter alia*, nearly fifty letters from Boniface to Erasmus: in Zurich he found two letters of Erasmus to Zwingli, in Erasmus' autograph; in Donaueschingen he satisfied himself that a reputed manuscript of Erasmus was nothing of the kind. Besides revisiting Hamburg, he added Stuttgart and Nuremberg to his list of libraries investigated. At the end of October Robinson Ellis proposed to the Governing Body of Corpus that Allen should be elected to a research Fellowship. But he failed to carry his motion. It had in fact the goodwill of everybody; but Corpus was not then a rich college; and it was doubtful whether it could afford a new Fellowship and at the same time discharge its obligations to the tutorial pension fund. This year was darkened for the Allens by the loss of an only child, dying as soon as born.

The Summer Vacation of the year following was given wholly to research in continental libraries; at Wolfenbüttell, in September, he examined the supposed autographs of Erasmus, and found them to be merely copies. Some part of the year was given to the preparation for the Clarendon Press of a small volume of *Selections from Erasmus*—a delightful book, which enjoyed for a considerable period the distinction of being a text-book for the History Previous Examination. At the beginning of December the Governing Body of Merton considered the question of electing him to a Fellowship. No immediate decision was taken, but the omens were fair; and on 5 March following the election was made. After the Corpus disappointment the event fell especially welcome. Allen held his Merton Fellowship for fifteen years; and it was characteristic of him that, even when he had ceased to be a Fellow, 5 March was a day

marked for him with a 'white stone', and he always made a point of coming into Merton on that day.

The Merton Fellowship was the first public recognition that had come to him. That he had to wait fifteen years for it was due, in part, to the conditions of the time—Oxford still hovered between the ideal of a finishing school and that of a place of learning—and in part to himself: Nature had done much for him, but she had left out the advertising instinct. To the end Allen could never be brought to ask for anything for himself.[1] During these fifteen years of waiting he had been loyally backed by the University Press—for whom Erasmus was necessarily a very unremunerative undertaking. The Secretary of the Press, Charles Cannan, a man of fine and bold perceptions, showed himself throughout a most helpful friend; in his first estimate of Allen and Allen's Erasmus he relied, I fancy, a good deal on the judgement of Bishop Stubbs. Another good friend, whom I have already mentioned, was Robinson Ellis. That the only life he knew—the scholar's—was the best possible, it never occurred to Ellis to question. If this prejudice sometimes impaired his influence, he was yet so single-hearted and disinterested that his good word carried weight. But of all his friends the one to whom Allen owed most was Bywater. The last written scrap which I received from him was a picture-postcard, sent from Sidmouth, just after the begin-

[1] I may illustrate this by a rather absurd accident. Allen held a Fellowship at Merton terminating, but renewable, at the end of seven years—this was statutory in all colleges at the time. There was never any question of not renewing his Fellowship—the renewal was, in such a case, taken for granted. But Fellowships usually fell in on 6 October; Allen's fell in on 5 March—the day on which he had first been elected. The second time, accordingly, that he came up for renewal, everybody but himself had forgotten that he was due to be re-elected; and he was too modest to breathe a word on the subject to any one. As a result, nothing was done; and the omission could not be remedied till a date some months later. This accident cost Allen, I think, something like £60; part of which, if I remember rightly, it was found possible to recompense by a grant for purposes of travel.

ning of his final illness, at the end of January 1933. The picture showed Salcombe, and underneath Allen had written: 'In this valley sepultus est magister noster.' (We had been together when in 1914 Bywater was buried by the side of his wife in Salcombe churchyard.) He always thought of Bywater as in a very especial sense his 'master'; and not only is Bywater's imprint plain upon every page of *Erasmus*, but I have the feeling that Allen was always consciously testing his scholarship by the standards which Bywater had set up for him. Bywater called him, in 1915, 'the most learned man in Oxford'. But if the range of his learning was remarkable, still more remarkable was its pure quality; and this pure quality derives from Bywater. The same temper characterized the scholarship of both of them: a temper from which what may be called the casual impurities of intellectual life—pedantry, hurry, irrelevance, pretentiousness, cleverness—had been purged away.[1] So far as Erasmus is concerned Allen may be allowed to speak for himself.

When the Clarendon Press undertook an edition of the *Letters of Erasmus* Bywater readily charged himself with the supervision of the book. This task might have been light if he had wished to spare himself, but he made it heavy by his thorough scrutiny of texts and notes. Three volumes of 600 pages each passed under his hand and came back sometimes with convincing emendations, sometimes with addition to the notes of sources that should have been cited, the publications of antiquarian societies—and once even a College magazine at Cambridge—or corrections in the forms of names or in the initials of German scholars. With his characteristic reserve he would say no word of praise or compliment: but he could let his dissatisfaction be felt if necessary, and he was unhesitating in esteeming work which he approved.[2]

Bywater, it should be added, remained to the last a Delegate of the Press, with something of the authority there of an oracle. What he said was so; what he praised was good—and was published.

[1] I borrow the description of this temper from some sentences of my own about Bywater, written in 1919, and reprinted in W. W. Jackson's Memoir of Bywater. [2] *Journal of Philology*, vol. xxxiv, pp. 7–8.

Allen was nearing his fortieth year when he first became a Fellow of a College. But he had been a member of the Corpus Senior Common Room since his return to Oxford; and was not much affected by those processes of modernization which have made the don of to-day so different from the don of the early nineties. It was not merely that he did not expect undergraduates to call him by his Christian name. But it was still natural to him to think of a College as a place, primarily, of religion and good learning. I emphasize 'natural', because no man could have been more natural in all the relations of life; and in the particulars I mention Allen's simplicity of heart and mind was remarkable. It is proper to set on record that he was old-fashioned enough to conceive the College Chapel (where, from the time that he became a Fellow, he was to be seen daily) as still in a real sense the centre of the corporate life. That there was some degree of paradox in this, he himself was aware. There were many articles of what is called Christian belief which he did not accept. There were clauses in the Creed—some of which many persons would regard as vital—which he did not feel himself conscientiously able to recite. It was notable that, when he attended Chapel, he left these out. But to himself it seemed not notable, but natural. I more than once asked him whether he came to Chapel as an exercise in the higher criticism; and I sometimes rallied him on what seemed to me a more than Erasmian complaisance. But he did not think it possible to be too much like Erasmus; and he came to Chapel, he told me, because (among other reasons) he liked to begin and end the day in quietness of thought and in the midst of tranquillizing and stabilizing influences. He was not only a 'soul naturally Christian', but he was a natural Churchman. The tradition of the Church—and indeed all tradition—exercised in all periods a powerful sway over him. He never cared to dispute, there was no element of dispute within his nature; no disturbance of soul marked the growth of his beliefs or disbeliefs, but they were a natural matura-

tion, as in the quiet sun of knowledge and experience. In the matter of religious belief, as in all matters, he was very tender of hurting the susceptibilities of others. I think he would have said of all clauses of the Creed what Erasmus said of one: 'Ut est prudentiae Christianae non facile pro certo credere quod non expressum est in litteris sacris, ita modestiae Christianae est non reiicere petulanter quod piorum hominum religiosa contemplatio prodidit vel ad solatium vel ad eruditionem credentium.'[1]

One article of his belief I must not omit, for it was, I think, fundamental with him. Though the power of the past, and of the great or good men of the past, was strong upon him, he esteemed it a light thing for religion in comparison with the manifestations of the divine spirit which he believed himself to behold daily in the lives of the men and women around him. Socrates, Sir Thomas More, even Christ himself—all of these he felt to be in some degree less real for him than the men and women he knew. For religion, as he understood it, those three meant less to him than 'Scott Holland or Osler' (his own examples). This is explicable only in the light of a characteristic of his nature which in itself seemed to many of his friends inexplicable. He could never be persuaded that the men and women about him were not a great deal better and nobler than they were; that they acted from any motives but the highest. And this did not proceed from any sort of sentimentality—nobody was less sentimental; I think, indeed, he distrusted sentimentality more than need was. But it seemed to him natural that the men and women about him should incarnate the divine spirit.

Allen, as I said, regarded a College as still primarily a place of religion and good learning. Like the majority of the Fellows of Merton, he held a Fellowship which carried with it no tutorial duties. Living, moreover, out of College, his opportunities for contact with undergraduates were mostly such as he himself was able to create. Though I

[1] *Symboli Catechesis*, iv.

never quite understood how he managed it, he knew nearly all of them; many he knew well, keeping in touch with them after they went down. The old-fashioned Oxford breakfast-party was, already when he came to Merton, old-fashioned. But he was a man who would not willingly let any old tradition fall to the ground; and once in every week of the term he had a breakfast-party in the Common Room, usually, I think, of about a dozen undergraduates. In conversation with young men he had always a perfect courtesy. A gentle seriousness characterized his talk. Just as he thought his friends better and nobler than they were, so, I fancy, he thought undergraduates both more serious and better educated than some of them were. Books, men who had made books, men in books; travel, the great places of the world, and the little places where every one should go and where no one ever went; the odd corners of the past, Time's broken effects: it interested him to talk about all these, and he did it in the happy way of one taking it for granted that all men were naturally interested in interesting things. If an undergraduate had never heard (as might happen) of Simancas or Tarudant, or Boniface Amerbach or Hieronymus Balbus, it did not much matter; he did not lose status; he retained, and felt himself to retain, the status of a well-informed man who by some odd accident had missed a good thing. Allen directed his talk, I think, consciously to the desire to influence young men; it seemed to him merely natural that an older man should try to interest his juniors in things of good report. An intense desire to *help*, indeed, was the most distinguishing feature of his character. I have hinted that he sometimes took young men too seriously; but it is a fault which they easily forgive. Upon moral questions the outline of his thinking was sharply and hardly defined; and brought up against the 'peccant irregular passional force' of youth, or the world, his temper was, I thought, sometimes unsympathetic. There was a region of human frailty where his imagination moved with defective understanding of the conditions.

The first weeks of the Long Vacation of 1908 were spent in the libraries of Belgium, and at Darmstadt, Strasbourg, Sélestat, and Basle. In February 1909, the proofs of the second volume of Erasmus began to come in. In the spring he was in Paris, Rome, Florence, Bologna, and Basle—in Basle he unearthed copies of the *Julius Exclusus* written in the hands of Beatus Rhenanus and Boniface Amerbach (Allen believed, with Froude, that the *Julius Exclusus* was written by Erasmus. Erasmus denied authorship; it was a work about which he felt entitled to be merry and indifferent honest). On 22 December the last proofs of volume ii were 'finished off at 1 a.m. in bed'. I put it on record here that Allen used to work in bed and read P. G. Wodehouse in bed.

His diary records that volume iii was 'begun' on 17 January 1910—meaning, I take it, that the work of 'assembling' then began. The first 100 letters of it were sent to the Press on 4 January 1912. The spring of each of the years 1910 to 1913 was spent in foreign libraries. These repeated sojourns abroad were, after Erasmus—their prime cause—the principal pleasures of his life. It was made a reproach to Erasmus by his enemies, and sometimes by his friends, that he could never stay still in one place. Whether Erasmus in fact enjoyed travel is doubtful. He was for ever in motion. But he moaned as he moved. His motions were mostly directed by the prospect of monetary advantage. In most of his journeys he met, or invented, misfortunes; showing himself in self-commiseration astonishingly fertile. Allen loved travelling; and he did not ask and could not afford to travel luxuriously. The places he visited were for the most part a kind of holy ground to him. Either Erasmus had been before him, or there were books or letters of Erasmus; or there were scholars who shared his zeal for Erasmus. He had friends in most of the great libraries—and in the little ones as well. The Great War brought with it no calamity which more deeply afflicted him than the severance, or interruption, of his friendship with continental

scholars. He talked and wrote excellent French and German; and he could converse in Italian, Spanish, and even Dutch.[1] A spot to which he always looked back with special fondness was the town of Sélestat.[2] He remembered with particular gratitude the Librarian there, M. Gény. He had an affection for the old lady who kept the inn there in which he lodged and habitually charged him too little. Her nephew had been *chef* in a London hotel, and liked making English cakes for him.

A word may be said here of his method in connexion with the material which he collected in the various libraries.

It was his habit to copy 'fair' each Letter in the library where the manuscript of it (or, sometimes, a printed text) was to be found. The copy so made furnished always the 'printer's copy': there was no intervening draft; a new draft meant the possibility of new errors coming in by transcription. The first printer's proof of each letter was corrected in the library where the copy had originally been made. This meant that each of the libraries concerned was visited at least twice. Many of them were in fact visited again and again. As a decipherer Allen was without rival, at any rate within the range of those centuries with which he was primarily concerned. Erasmus apologizes for his own 'cacography'. But it was calligraphy itself compared with the script of some of his correspondents and copyists, for example, Boniface Amerbach.

In Oxford the tenor of his days was singularly even. The

[1] In India, he added Hindustani to his list of languages.

[2] The following is a more or less complete list of the places on the continent at which he worked in the years immediately preceding the War:

1910: Middelburg, Vere, Ghent, Brussels, Lucerne, Einsiedeln, Basle, Freiburg, Sélestat, Cues, Laach, Bonn;

1911: Nîmes, Carpentras, Paris;

1912: Paris, Toulouse, Barcelona, Tarragona, Valencia, Seville, Cordova, Toledo, Madrid, Coca, Simancas, Valladolid;

1913: Le Mans, Paris, Milan, San Daniele, Udine, Innsbruck, Basle, Langres;

1914: Paris, Tournus, Carpentras.

death of his father in 1910 relieved him of financial cares, and enabled him to exchange the cramped situation of Longwall Cottage for a house in Merton Street (No. 23). The larger house, besides being nearer Merton, made possible for the first time what may be called the amenities of study, and also enabled him to enlarge his hospitalities: after books and travel the exercise of hospitality made the principal pleasure of his life. He had, as I have said, no teaching duties. But from time to time he gave voluntary lectures. As early as 1906 he had given a course of four lectures on the Transmission of the Classics; and this course he more than once repeated. In 1910 he lectured in Oxford and in 1914 in London on the 'Life and Times of Erasmus'; in 1914 he shaped these lectures into a book, published under the title *The Age of Erasmus*. From time to time he read papers to learned societies—mostly upon subjects connected with sixteenth-century learning. But in general his days offered little diversity. On 22 April 1913 he put the finishing touches to the third volume of his edition of Erasmus' Letters—his diary notes that he corrected the last sheaf of proofs on that day in the Merton Library. In November of the same year he was elected a Curator of the Bodleian Library.

The spring of 1914 saw him working in the libraries of Paris, Tournus, Carpentras. With the summer came War, and the burning of the Louvain Library. The destruction of this Library, peculiarly rich in the literature of sixteenth-century humanism, affected Allen deeply. His diary records that on 12 August he was drilling in the University Parks. Side by side with that entry I think it worth while to place a page from the notebook of another scholar, a fellow worker in the same field, M. Henry de Vocht. M. de Vocht was working on the correspondence of Francis of Craneveld.[1]

'The outbreak of the Great War', he writes, 'found me working strenuously in Louvain at the first fifty or sixty letters of the

[1] Containing several letters from, or to, Erasmus, and many which concern him.

collection which had fallen to my lot. The announcement of the ruthless destruction caused everywhere in the very neighbourhood of the University town by the invading army, awoke me to a crushing responsibility: for batches of officers and soldiers continually succeeded each other in our University institutes, and the rooms of my absent collaborator (M. Henry de Jongh) were going to be used for some military purpose. I at once secured the originals of the letters which he had in his keeping, and joining them to mine, made a parcel of them which in those uneasy days I hardly let go out of my sight. Thus I had that treasure with me during the dreadful night of August 25/6, when the approaching blaze drove me out of a friend's hospitable house into the firelit streets, where bullets whizzed past me until I found a shelter, and where at daybreak I was kept standing for a time beside a pile of burning corpses under the brazen look of the statue of Justus Lipsius; I had it, when two days later I was led away a prisoner by a regiment, and I was only separated from it for a few hours at Tervueren, where I was held up by a company of soldiers stationed on the roadside; being at last released from suspense and anxiety, I was sent onward to the regiment that had continued its way to Brussels. After some trouble and some palavering I found my parcel in the bucket of the ammunition wagon where I had left it, and I regained liberty. In my retreat at Jette, near Brussels, I had taken up again the study of the letters, when my friend and collaborator, Henry de Jongh, fell ill from war-time privation and annoyance, chiefly in consequence of his charitable exertions for his fellow-sufferers; he died on 6 April 1915, in the full maturity of his intellectual power; instead of turning to his books he had directed for several months both civilly and spiritually his native village, Gravenwezel, situated within the line of forts of besieged Antwerp, and had proved a Godsend to his brethren in the dreadful bewilderment of those direful days: *Sapientia . . . in medio populi sui gloriabitur*.'[1]

Of Wisdom glorying in the midst of her people that moving example may suffice. I note from Allen's diary that in August 1916 he was engaged in strawberry-picking at a farm in Salford Priors. But he was found 'too tall to stoop so far'; and was transferred to the work of weeding, threshing, haymaking, cutting thistles and docks, fodder-pooking. The foreman who directed his tasks was pleased

[1] H. de Vocht, *Literae ad Franciscum Craneveldium*, pp. viii–ix.

to say of him that 'for a man who had never done any work before he did very well'. The same diary recalls that on the night of 19 October 1917 he kept watch for three hours in the Bodleian Library, till the German Zeppelins decided to spare and pass by. But more congenial labours were not wanting. In the summer of 1915 he became Librarian of the Merton Library. The post was one for which he was ideally fitted; and for his interpretation of it he went back, characteristically, to the regulations drafted by the founder of the office, Griffin Higgs, nearly three centuries earlier. Higgs required his Librarian to be also the antiquary of the College, and to search its archives for any matters of interest in the history of the College and in the lives of former Fellows. It is not to disparage the labours of Bishop Hobhouse, the late B. W. Henderson, and Dr. H. J. White, the present Dean of Christ Church, to say that no previous Librarian had pursued Higgs's ideal in quite the same spirit as Allen, or brought to his task the same qualifications. No one before had known either the printed books or the manuscripts or the muniment rolls so familiarly or so intimately. Three books which illustrate the history of the College, and of Oxford studies generally, owe their origin to his initiative. In one of them, *Merton Muniments*, I was his collaborator, that is to say, his pupil. It may suffice to note that I never before knew what an exacting business scholarship is. Another was the *Registrum Annalium Collegii Mertonensis*, edited by Mr. Salter—Mr. Salter has acknowledged generously the help given by Allen, who compared every letter of the text with the original manuscript. The third is Mr. Powicke's *Medieval Books of Merton College*, which had its origin in some documents discovered by Allen; and the general lines of the book were, I think, sketched by Allen.

For the five years 1914–19 the great continental libraries were in effect closed to him. During this period he explored the principal English libraries; in particular the cathedral libraries of Gloucester, Hereford, Peterborough, Norwich, Lincoln, York, Westminster, Chichester, Wells. I recall that

on one of these tours of exploration he bicycled 440 miles. (Bicycling was a favourite recreation with him; perhaps his only recreation, except one which he indulged rarely, namely, the piano.[1]) The English libraries were in one respect a disappointment. Erasmus had a great affection for England, though he was not in all respects well treated here; and Allen lived in hopes of one day running to earth in one of the cathedral libraries some letter of Erasmus. This hope he never realized, though he made some minor Erasmian finds. These chapter libraries, however, kept his imagination at work, as did all his wayfarings in search of Erasmus. Among his papers I find some charming sketches (one or two of which he printed) of places which he visited and of which the associations made some special appeal to him. Among them are Peterborough and Durham; and, of continental towns, Alcala, Simancas, Coca, Provins, Mont Benoît, Thann. Especially notable is the Peterborough sketch; not for anything that it says of that city, but because it illustrates an imaginative gift in Allen which he kept too much concealed. In the Peterborough Library is a Spanish jest-book, full of unrepeatable stories, on the flyleaf of which an English mariner on the shores of Barbary in 1554 has jotted down, inappositely, his religious reflections, 'wishing helthe of soalle and boady to all of them that loue to here the worde of God and seekithe his glorie'. He has added some particulars of himself and his companions, British merchants in Tarudant, and a complaint of the ubiquity of friars. These scribblings tempted Allen to a finely imaginative sketch of the history of Tarudant and of the situation of these English merchants, Protestant enthusiasts in the first years of Queen Mary. A different writer might have made more, perhaps, of the contrast between the piety

[1] On the piano he was an excellent performer, with a fine natural touch. But he hid this gift, as he liked to hide most of his gifts; and very few of his friends ever heard him play. Perhaps I should add chess to his recreations. But he indulged it rarely (though he played well), from want of time.

of their thoughts and the impiety of their reading. But as an exercise of the historical imagination Allen's sketch is wholly delightful; it was, I think, read to a learned society, and it would not be Allen's if it were not full of learning. But it is learning used deftly and in a fashion wholly fascinating. The mention of it leads me to remark that Allen had a literary gift to which justice has not been done. He cultivated simplicity, and he disliked any pretension of style. But he *saw* what he said; and he had a real talent for description and characterization.

In June 1919 the first proofs of his fourth volume began to come in. In July of the same year he became Sub-Warden of Merton; and in the following year Dean. Both posts are offices rather of dignity than of emolument, and pleased him the better on that account. The duties of the Sub-Warden are in effect those duties of the Warden which the Warden is indisposed to perform. The duty of the Dean is to present candidates for degrees. As Dean, Allen introduced a custom which still survives: he invited all candidates for degrees to dine with him in the College Hall. Successive Deans have without exception followed his precedent.

In 1920 the conditions of Europe made foreign travel once more feasible; and he spent the spring in France and the summer in Belgium. In Antwerp he attended the celebrations in honour of the quatercentenary of Christopher Plantin, delivering an English oration—he had wished to speak in Latin, having a special fondness for Latin oratory and believing that English Latin was better than that of continental scholars. His speech was subsequently printed, both in English and in an abbreviated French version. At the same time *The Times* printed an article by him on Plantin. In the autumn he sent to press the fifth volume of his Erasmus. The spring of the year following found him in Italy; he spent two weeks in Rome, where he was the guest of Canon Cauchie in the Belgian School; and some days in Siena and Modena: but these last two places yielded

nothing of moment for Erasmus. On his way back he revisited Basle. In 1922 he was in Holland, and lectured in several of the Dutch towns, receiving an honorary Doctorate from the University of Leyden. The Doctorate gave him special pleasure—in the last fifteen years it had been conferred on six persons in all, three of whom had been Delegates at the Peace Conference; the last Englishman on whom it had been conferred was Lord Bryce. In the same year he visited Berlin, besides travelling in Poland and Hungary (among his papers is a sketch entitled 'Hungary Revisited').

The sixth volume of Erasmus went to press in March 1923. In July he was elected a Fellow of the British Academy—he was subsequently one of the Council of the Academy. In the same month he visited France. At Paris, in the library of the Baroness James de Rothschild, he collated an autograph letter of Erasmus to Mountjoy, and another to Georgius Agricola. He traversed the road from Calais to Paris in order to satisfy himself as to the route followed by Erasmus in 1500. He went to Brou to see the figure of Erasmus said to be carved in the sedilia of the church there. But neither in the church, nor in the museum, nor in the archives could he discover any trace of any such carving. With similar zeal he walked from Champagnole to Nozeroy, hunting traces of Gilbertus Cognatus, Erasmus' servant-pupil. In the summer of 1924 he was in France once more, and for a time in Basle and Zurich.

On 25 October he was elected President of Corpus, perhaps a little to the surprise of persons who did not know well both him and that College. He was not a man, I have hinted, who sought place or honour. But he had, I think, desired this elevation; and it had especial fitness. The beginnings of Corpus are intimately bound up with the beginnings of the Renaissance in England. The College was founded in the year in which Erasmus published the first Greek Testament. Erasmus had extolled its 'trilingual library', and had placed the College 'among the chief glories of Britain'. Allen was a man who observed sacred

days. One of these, I have said, was 5 March, when he was elected to a Fellowship at Merton. Another was 25 October, when he became Head of Corpus. Another, placed near to the second of these, 27 October, was Erasmus' birthday.

He was President of Corpus for nine years. It was appropriate that among the first acts of his new office it fell to him to preside at the commemoration of Louis Vives, one of Wolsey's Readers, who had lodged in Corpus, and driven from the schools Albertus Magnus and many 'pravae opiniones'. A tablet to Vives's memory was placed in the 'trilingual library', and unveiled by the Spanish Ambassador, the Marquis Alfonso Merry del Val; at a later date King Alfonso visited the College in order to view the tablet. With this recent ceremonial in his mind Allen gave the Summer Vacation of 1925 to travel in Spain. He worked for a fortnight in the Madrid Library. At Casa Alba he made a study of the manuscript of Diego Gratian; and he worked for two days in Simancas.

In 1925 he was elected to an honorary Fellowship at Merton. In April of the year following he published the sixth volume of his *Opus Epistolarum*, and began upon the proofs of the seventh. But the duties of his new office made heavy calls on his time, and this seventh volume (the last to appear during his life) was not completed till the end of 1928. In 1927 he attended the commemoration of the five-hundredth anniversary of the foundation of the University of Louvain, receiving there the honorary degree of Doctor of Letters. In the same year and the year following similar degrees were conferred on him by the Universities of Durham and Birmingham. Though I am sure that the reflection never crossed Allen's mind, it is not a little notable that it seems never to have occurred to any of the older British Universities to honour in this way one of the most learned scholars in Europe. In 1928 he was elected a member of the Dutch Academy—a congratulatory letter from Dr. J. Huizinga gave him very great pleasure. The quatercentenary of the death of Richard Fox, Founder of Corpus,

fell into this year, and was marked by two events, both of which made considerable demands on Allen's leisure. The one was the completion of the Corpus New Buildings, made possible by the bequest of Miss Emily Thomas (the building, designed by Mr. T. Harold Hughes, was opened on 5 October); the other was the preparation and publication of a volume of Fox's Letters edited by Allen himself. Somewhat later he bought and presented to the College a contemporary portrait of Fox, executed in oils upon wood. In the year following he sat for his own portrait to Mr. Herbert Olivier. The result was an admirable painting, which now hangs in the President's Lodgings; a replica by the artist belongs to Merton. He is painted sitting at his writing-table, holding in his hand the *Opus Epistolarum*. The open study-door shows a view of the Corpus Library: it is the good luck of every President of Corpus that his study opens into this beautiful room. In the same year he was elected to the Hebdomadal Council. In the year following he became a member of the Ghent Academy, and was appointed to represent the Chancellor on the Court of Bristol University. To this year (1930) date back the beginnings of the illness which brought about his death three years later. The doctors prescribed a complete rest; and he so far obeyed them as to try a cure at Royat, deriving considerable benefit from the baths there. Even so, he could not rest from Erasmus; but was at work in the same summer at Brussels, Lyons, and Basle.[1] In the spring of 1931, however, he took a genuine holiday at Bayeux. On 7 September he carried to the printers the eighth volume of his Erasmus.

[1] For convenience, I set out here a schedule of his travels abroad for 1926–30:

1926: Paris, Basle, Chur;
1927: Brussels, Louvain, Mariemont, Abbeville, Strasbourg, Sélestat, Basle, Solothurn, Geneva, Cambray;
[1928: a holiday: in various parts of France and Switzerland];
1929: Brussels, Cologne, Freiburg, Basle, Reichenau, Constance, Meersburg, Überlingen, Thann, Épinal;
1930: Chur, Le Puy, Lyon, Annecy, Leysin, Basle, Brussels.

He was not destined to see it published, though the first proofs came to him in October. In the spring of 1932 he was again in bad health; but he was happy with his proofs, and while he had them would not believe himself ill. Indeed, he was thinking far ahead; in May he took a lease of Barton House near Lower Guiting, a Corpus property, which he intended to use for week-ends and in vacation. In June he was full of interest over the return from Persia of his old friend Sir Aurel Stein, in whose honour he gave what was, I think, his last dinner-party. On 21 June he went to Winchester in order to be present at the enthronement of the Bishop (the Bishop of Winchester is Visitor of Corpus). He took a chill at the ceremony; and returned home ill and in great pain. An immediate operation was found to be necessary. It was followed by another operation ten days later. Between these two trials I found him, I recall, sitting up in bed reading proofs. On 2 August he was again reading proofs, and all seemed to be going well. But on the 12th it was found necessary to remove him to London for a further operation. For some days his condition was critical. But once again all seemed to be going well. He was back at his proofs on 3 September. On 11 October he was back home, and among his books and friends: 'hoc erat quod unum erat pro laboribus tantis'. He stayed a month in Corpus; and then set off to Devonshire, full of hope. He made an eleven-weeks' stay in Sidmouth. His diary records that on 1 December he was so far recovered that he *ran* up hill, and shouted and sang for joy. But continuous illness had weakened him seriously; and on 10 January he had a severe attack of influenza. He seemed, however, to get better, and returned to Oxford at the end of the month. On 2 February he dined in the Hall of Corpus, and entertained the Fellows to wine in the Common Room. The day following he attended a meeting of the Curators of the Bodleian. But on 4 February he had another attack of influenza. On the 20th the doctors diagnosed the presence of streptococci in the blood. There

followed a four-months' period of illness, during which every remedy was tried, but to no effect, and in the end without much hope. I think he never expected to get better. On 4 March he wrote a letter to the Fellows intimating his intention of resigning his office in May, unless his health improved; he was much cheered by a letter in which they begged him to put from him any thought of resignation. During the intervals of his sickness he was still at work on his proofs. Towards the end of April an Erasmian 'find' gave him immense pleasure. Mr. Falconer Madan had directed his attention to an item in a bookseller's catalogue, which proved to be a unique copy of Erasmus' translation of the *Longaevi* of Lucian. Years back Allen had hunted this book unavailingly. He was now able to secure it; and it lay at his bedside. To the end his interest was lively in anything that touched his favourite studies. The long season of his dying was divided between his bedroom and his garden. As often as the doctors would allow it, and the uncertain skies, Corpus undergraduates came and carried him in his bed to a corner of the garden, sheltered from the wind and visited by the sun. It pleased him, lying there under a green canvas awning, to look at the flowers, to follow the flight of the butterflies, to take in the scents of summer, to catch the small summer sounds. Often he was able to see and talk with his friends. On 27 May he had his proofs in his hand for the last time; but the weight of the quires troubled him. He died on 16 June just as day was dawning. His ashes lie in the Corpus Chapel, near the Altar.

In his person Allen was tall, thin, and erect, having the gait and mien of a man who respected himself. He was of a pale complexion, with dark hair, which in later years turned to grey; and he wore a small moustache. His eyes were of hazel colour, observant, kindly; he commonly used spectacles. He had finely formed hands, a characteristic not missed by Mr. Olivier. He was invariably neatly dressed. In his earlier period his clothes were often shabby,

for he spent little on himself; but they were always neat, and free from any speck of dust. In his later years he considered that it behoved him to dress well. In all societies he had the air of a man well-born and well-bred. He had no sort of shyness, nor did anything about him suggest the recluse. He had a clear voice, and spoke slowly—his tones had perhaps too much of deliberation. It was in fact his habit to think before he spoke. And in general he disliked hurry.

I set down these particulars because they easily fade from memory, and because posterity, while it can judge a good picture, can do so only for painting, and not for likeness. I shall not try to paint his character, nor even to sketch it in the rough. If I did it well I should not be believed; and I do not want to do it badly. If he had a fault I never found it, except it was to think too well of his friends. To them he seemed like some one who had strayed into the depravity of the times out of a nobler order; or as though in the hurry of the ages Antiquity had left him behind, sole witness to its fabled virtues. He made credible the lives of the saints.

H. W. Garrod.