



ERASMUS OF ROTTERDAM TO
HIS DEAR GOSSIP, JOHN FROBEN,
GREETINGS

I HAVE HITHERTO been please beyond measure with all that my friend More has written, but felt some distrust of my own judgment, by reason of the close friendship between us. But now that I see learned men to be all unanimously of my opinion, even outdoing me in the warmth of their admiration for his transcendent genius—a proof of their greater discernment, thou not of their greater affection; I am quite satisfied that I am in the right, and shall not shrink in future from openly expressing what I think. What would not such marvelous natural gifts have accomplished, if his intellect had been trained in Italy;* if it were wholly devoted to literature; if it had time to ripen for its proper harvest, its own autumn? While quite young, he amused himself

This commendation letter appeared in the third edition of Utopia. Johann Froben (1460–1527) was a prominent Swiss printer and publisher of the third and fourth editions of Utopia in Basel in 1518. The appellation “gossip” is used in its original sense here to refer to a godparent—although its use here is a bit confusing, as Erasmus is the godfather to Froben’s son, who is also named Erasmus.

* Italy was widely known to be the heart of Renaissance Humanist learning.

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with composing epigrams, may of them written when he was a mere boy. He has never gone out of his native Britain, save once or twice, when acting as ambassador for his sovereign in the Netherlands.* He is married, and has the cares of a family; he has the duties of a public office to discharge, and is immersed in the business of the law-courts; with so many important affairs of state distracting him besides that you wonder at his having leisure even to think of books.

So I have sent you his *Prolusions*† and *Utopia*. If you think fit, let them go forth to the world and to posterity with the recommendation of being printed by you. For such is the reputation of your press, that for a book to be known to have been published by Froben, is a passport to the approbation of the learned.

Farewell, and greet for me your good father-in-law, your charming wife, and the darling children. Mind you bring up in good learning my little godson Erasmus, in whom I have a claim as well as you; for learning has rocked his cradle.

Louvain—August 25th, 1517

* Erasmus is mistaken. More had traveled to the Universities of Paris and Louvain ten years before.

† More's *Prolusions*, or Exercises, consisted of translations of Greek epigrams, and was included with the two 1518 editions of *Utopia*.