



THE PRAISE OF FOLLY

BY **Desiderius Erasmus**
OF ROTTERDAM



WITH A SHORT LIFE OF THE AUTHOR BY

Hendrik Willem van Loon

OF ROTTERDAM

WHO ALSO ILLUSTRATED THE BOOK

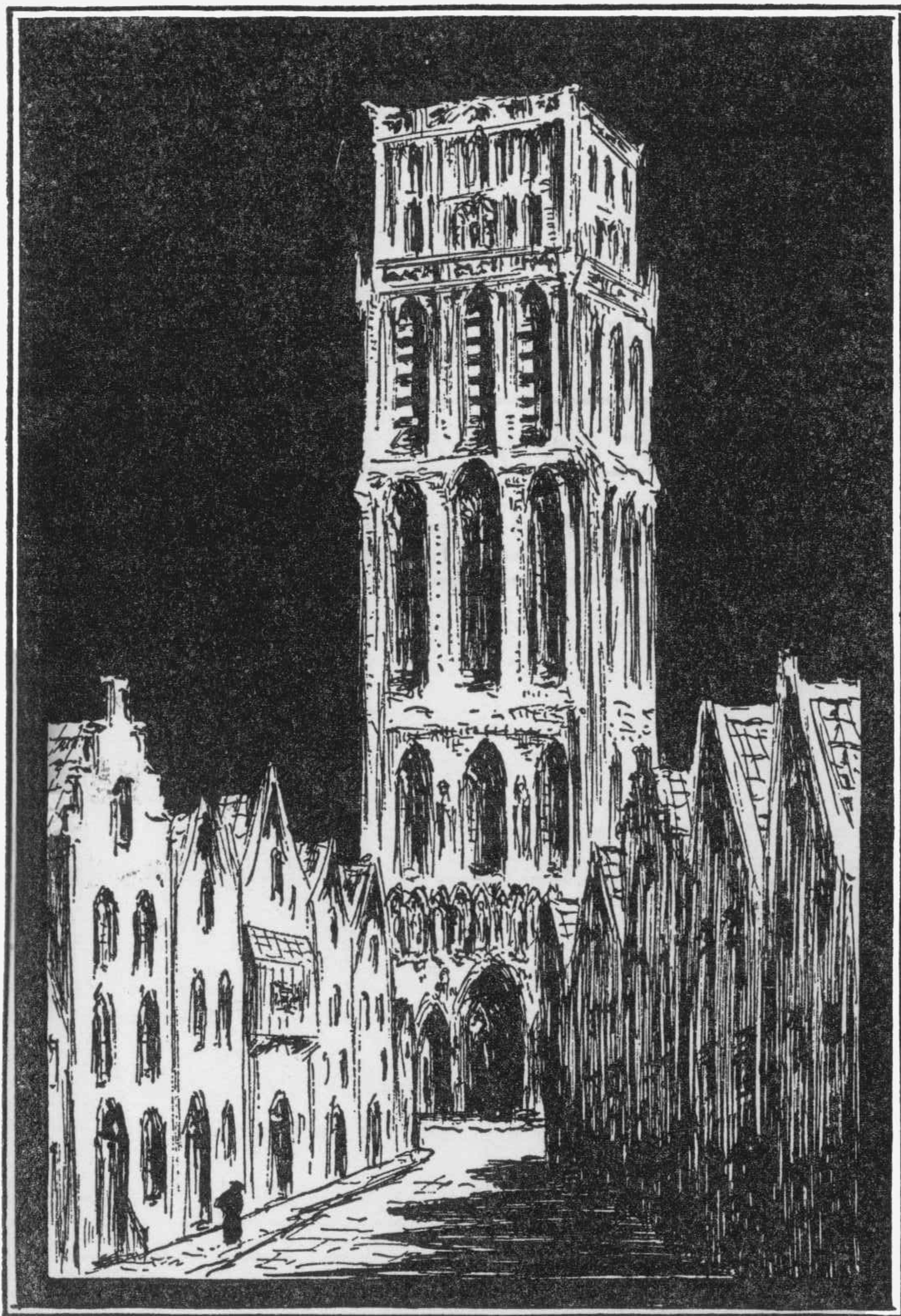
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THE PRAISE OF FOLLY



*The spirit of Erasmus wanders through what was
Rotterdam*

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*Concerning the background and personality of the famous scholar and author
of The Praise of Folly,
Dr. Desiderius Erasmus
of Rotterdam*

GOOD READER, I envy you in case this is the first time this charming booklet has been brought to your attention.

Now that I have passed three score, I am beginning to discover that much that had been told me in Reproach of Old Age was not so. It is true that for quite a long time the mirror has revealed a steady diminution of the hirsute pride of my younger days. The dentist's bills too increase rapidly but they are what one might call "final bills," for the upkeep of my new and artificial ivories is insignificant compared to the maintenance of the genuine article in the

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days when I still was in full possession of all my molars and bicuspid.

I have also become aware of a gradual decline in the violence of those devastating emotions which caused an otherwise sensible citizen to waste so much time upon the pursuit of certain ideals of female pulchritude which were apparently unattainable on this faulty planet of ours. But these disturbing passions are now being replaced by certain far more satisfying sentiments of true comradeship and sincere affection which are the reward of that rather bizarre quest for the One Perfect Individual.

There also came a very noticeable indifference about such silly trivialities as catching trains, attending opening nights of new plays, or being among those present at what were supposed to be "important social gatherings." And that comfortable and familiar chair by the fire, watching the antics of Noodle, the dachshund, and Patent Leather, the black kitten, proved to be infinitely more comfortable than seat A-2, provided for his honored guest by Maestro Edward Johnson of the Metropolitan Opera Company or the manager of the latest popular play. Besides, I had already heard all of Johnson's little operas until I had come to know them by heart, and as for an evening at the playhouse, it meant putting on a rather uncomfortable shirt

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and eating a hasty meal at an unreasonable hour and in the end, would the mummers show me anything I had not seen long before or would ever care to see again?

No, I am here to state, and as emphatically as I can, that all the usual bugaboos about the Horrors of Advancing Years have proved to be mere chimerae and that I do not want to go back by one single year along the road which has carried me to my present state of incipient old age.

But I have one sincere complaint against the Great Arranger of our Fate in regard to the state of senectitude. I have spent more than half a century reading books. I have read them in half a dozen languages and in translations of those originally published in Finnish, Hungarian, Chinese or in Gertrude Stein's quaint vernacular, and their contents have been duly noted if not always overmuch enjoyed.

And now I find myself face to face with the terrible problem of "What in Heaven's name can I read that I have not already read a dozen times before?" The modern output is like a mighty river. At certain spots it is a veritable Rio de la Plata, almost fifty miles wide but so shallow that even crossing it in a rowboat throws up such quantities of mud that it begins to resemble the mighty Missouri in spring.