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Review: Sebastian Münster

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Source: *The Geographical Journal*, Vol. 17, No. 4 (Apr., 1901), pp. 423-425

Published by: geographicalj

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1775554>

Accessed: 27-06-2016 05:19 UTC

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trend of the land on the north coast of the islands was fairly well known. He may even have conversed with Davis or members of his crew.

It is hardly likely that many papers were brought to England by Sir Richard after his long captivity, and one can well imagine the aged seaman looking at a modern sea-card as he wrote his observations, and concluding that for once his memory must have played him false, as he substitutes the word "larborde" for "starborde," and "east and by northe" for north and by east, since, as he would no doubt say, "how could it be otherwise, seeing with a north-westerly wind we ran along this coast?"

I do not think that any one who knows the strange tricks which memory plays will disallow the possibility of this theory, which at least has the advantage of fitting all the curious corners of this otherwise inexplicable account.

SEBASTIAN MÜNSTER.*

By C. RAYMOND BEAZLEY.

THIS claims, apparently with justice, to be the first thorough examination, from original sources, of the life and works of one of the greatest among the scientific humanists; and special attention has been paid to the bibliography of the subject. Besides a life of Münster (pp. 15-33), we have a detailed examination of his work as cosmographer and cartographer (pp. 33-69, 69-125); and herewith special sections are devoted (among the eight chief works of the author) to the *Germaniæ descriptio* of 1530, the *Novus Orbis* of 1532, the *Mappa Europæ* of 1536, the *Rhætia* of 1538, the editions of Solinus, Mela, and Ptolemy of 1538-1540, and the great *Cosmographia* of 1544. As a cartographer, Münster is here especially studied in his relation to German lands; but a full account is given of the title, scale, size, orientation, contents, sources, and mistakes of every one of Münster's maps, in relation to all the chief parts of the world. Lastly, the labours of this many-sided scholar, in the more purely mathematical and astronomical side of his subject (pp. 125-130), are dealt with, and even his Hebrew studies are not forgotten. Münster's geographical knowledge was based on what he learnt from Pellikan and Stöffler. From the former he acquired his first instalment of map-science, from the latter a thorough familiarity with the works of ancient geography, and in particular of Ptolemy. At Heidelberg he pursued his cosmographical studies with

* 'Sebastian Münster: Leben, Werk, wissenschaftliche Bedeutung.' Von Viktor Hantzsch. Leipzig: Teubner, 1898 (in the eighteenth vol. of the Publications of the Royal Society of Sciences of Saxony, Historico-philological section).

great zeal, and in 1528 brought out a brief *Erklärung des neuen Instruments der Sonnen nach allen Seinen Scheyben und Circkeln*. With this went *Eyn vermanung an alle liebhaber der Künsten, in hilff zu thun zu warer und rechter beschreybung Teütscher Nation*. In the latter, where the plan of much of his most important work is foreshadowed, he complains of old-standing inaccuracies, refers to the previous efforts of Conrad Peutinger to obtain a reliable topography of the Augsburg district, and supplies directions for the detailed observation and surveying of a given district. In spite of slender encouragement, Münster began to fulfil his promise of encyclopædic work (in August, 1530) with the little *Germaniæ descriptio*; and a year after the appearance of this book, towards the end of 1531, he began to take part in the *Novus Orbis* published by J. Herwagen of Basel in 1532. This contained many of the best ancient and modern travel-descriptions, and was accompanied by a *mappe-monde* designed by Münster, of elliptical shape, and illustrated by a short commentary. Here the roundness of the world and its division in zones and continents, including the new (but unnamed) regions of the west, is assumed; the 'uninhabitable' tropics are noticed as an exploded fallacy of the ancients. Brief summaries are given of the discoveries of Columbus, Vespucci, Varthema, and the Portuguese, and a curiously pessimistic description of Germany occurs. Münster's editions of Solinus and Pomponius Mela in 1538, and of Ptolemy in 1540, showed not only a good deal of philological study, but a keen insight into mathematical geography. The difficult passages of Ptolemy's first book on cartographical representation, and especially on the two most favoured projections of the Alexandrian geographer, are well explained with the aid of plates; but no reference is made by the editor in his additional remarks to the new discoveries, except in the case of Varthema's travels. The continents are defined in a strictly antique manner (as separated by the Nile, Tanais, etc.); and absurd etymologies, useless digressions, and occasional trivialities disfigure an otherwise excellent piece of work.

The *Cosmographia (Beschreibung aller Lender)* of 1544, for which Münster had been preparing during the last eighteen years, was the first detailed, scientific, and at the same time popular, description of the world which had yet appeared in German. In it more than 120 persons—writers and scholars, artists and men of affairs—had taken part, and the result was a crowning effort of the geographical literature of the Reformation period. In the preface the end in view is defined as a 'description of the whole world with all that therein is;' but this includes a very complete treatment of mathematical geography, and of astronomy, history, and all other kindred or illustrative sciences or studies. Even the story of human culture is recounted from the Creation to the date of writing. Among the sections of this great treatise, the third book, on Germany, is the most important; the fourth and fifth, on

Northern and Eastern Europe, and on Asia and the new-found islands, are perhaps the least valuable; for here, *e.g.*, Greenland is treated as a peninsula running off from the country of the Lapps, and no attempt is made to bring Asiatic and American 'Earth-knowledge' up to date. The old stories from Pliny and Solinus are repeated; the contemporary colonial enterprises of the Fuggers of Augsburg in Chili and the Pacific, the flourishing trade of German merchants in Brazil, and the enterprises of German fortune-hunters in Venezuela, are not even glanced at in a treatise whose special object was the instruction of Germans. On the other hand, Western Europe is excellently treated, and the popular and even brilliant style of the writer attracted all the educated world; his impartial tone secured as warm a welcome among Catholics as among Protestants; forty editions appeared in Germany alone; and for more than a century the book was prized as one of the chief treasures of German literature and science. In many families it was handed down from father to son as a kind of secular bible, and its extremely rich assortment of quotations from, and references to, ancient sources, uncritical as these often were, gave no little satisfaction to sixteenth-century readers. Scarcely any prominent historical or geographical author of Münster's own period is unnoticed in the *Cosmographia*, and among the rest may be instanced Waldseemüller, Schöner, J. Honter, P. Appianus, Seb. Franck, Paulus Jovius, Damian de Goes, J. Ziegler, and Ægidius Tschudi. The city- and costume-pictures and the portraits, especially of the 1550 edition, are still valued by artists and antiquarians, and have been often reproduced; immense additions were made in the author's lifetime, especially as to Western Europe (England, France, Spain, and Italy); and the original six books gradually swelled to eight. But just as the final form of the *Beschreibung* shows a steady improvement in the consultation and intelligent use of all material available for the Latin and Teutonic world, so the neglect of literature relating to Asia, Africa, and America continues, like the old faults of uncritical scholarship and excessive attention to the anecdotal and adventurous elements in history and geography.

Lastly, in cartography Münster was not, as he has sometimes been called, the earliest German atlas-maker, but he was the first who popularized a field where his chief predecessors, Waldseemüller and J. Ruysch, M. Behaim and Schöner, had done such admirable pioneer work. In twenty-six years his untiring and versatile successor published one hundred and forty-two maps, of which the value was by no means uniform, but which together formed a material addition to earlier studies. In the present monograph no pains have been spared, and the result is eminently satisfactory; if anything further could have been desired, it would have been, perhaps, the reproduction of some typical sections of Münster's *tabulæ* and *chartæ*.