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prayers, and alms do much to help forward the great religious movement set on foot by them. We can help to circulate those Scriptures which bring enlightenment to souls now sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death. We can give French Protestantism an impulse which shall quicken its stagnation. We can extend the right hand of fellowship with earnest grasp and hearty good wishes to all who, however they may differ from us in things not essential to salvation, yet love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Our motto may be—

> In things essential, unity ;
> In things indifferent, liberty ;
> In all things, charity.

FRANCIS PIGOU, D.D.

ART. II.—DEAN COLET.

THE name of John Colet is known scarcely to any, perhaps, but to men of extensive reading; and yet he was the first in this country and in Europe to give utterance to those primary ideas on the study of Holy Scripture which are now universally accepted. He was the eldest son of Sir Henry Colet, a wealthy city merchant, who had been twice Lord Mayor of London. He had been early sent to the University of Oxford, where he took his degree of Master of Arts. Having afterwards taken orders, he was presented to a living in Suffolk and a prebend in Yorkshire. When he was a young man, he diligently studied the scholastic philosophy, and the works of Plato, Plotinus, and Cicero. He had willingly sacrificed the wealth which he might have accumulated if he had followed his father's occupation, as well as the prospect of distinction in the service of the State, which, through his father's influence, presented itself to him; he had forsaken those temples in the great metropolis where Pleasure erected her throne, and assembled constantly crowds of her worshippers, that he might devote himself at Oxford to the study of the Scriptures and to the propagation of the results of that study among all who came within reach of his influence. In the year 1496 he began to deliver at Oxford a course of lectures on the Epistles of St. Paul. He was at this time the sole survivor of a family of twenty-two brothers and sisters. This great mortality must have produced in his mind serious impressions. He had just returned from Italy, to which country he had gone because he was anxious to cultivate the new learning.

Colet happily escaped the contaminating influence of those who, at this time of the revival of classical literature, professed belief in the philosophy of Plato, Aristotle, and Pliny, and treated Christianity as a cunningly devised fable; of those who, as Lord Macaulay observes, "regarded those Christian mysteries of which they were stewards, just as the augur Cicero and the high-pontiff Cæsar regarded the Sibylline books and the pecking of the sacred chickens; who, among themselves, spoke of the Incarnation, the Eucharist, and the Trinity in the same tone in which Cotta and Velleius talked of the oracle of Delphi or the voice of Faunus among the mountains." He had been led to quench his thirst in a purer fountain than any which sparkled amid the "consecrated bowers of Athens." When he was in Italy, he no longer devoted himself to the works of Plato, but, as his friend Erasmus informs us, "to the study of the Holy Scriptures. He studied the Fathers, and was especially delighted with Dionysius, Origen, Cyprian, Ambrose, Jerome, but he was not partial to Augustine. He had also read carefully every book having reference to the history and constitution of his country. Thus he hoped to polish his style and to prepare himself to preach the Gospel in England."[1]

At the time of Colet's visit, Alexander VI. wore the Papal tiara. The vice and profligacy which prevailed in his Court were enough to disenchant the most ardent admirer of the Papal system. His palace was the scene of bacchanalian orgies. Licentious songs, swelled by a chorus of revellers, echoed through its banqueting hall. The Pope himself quaffed large draughts of wine from the foaming goblet. The grossest venality prevailed in the Papal Court. The highest dignities in the Church were conferred without shame on the best bidder. We may suppose that thus an earnest desire was awakened in his mind for the reformation of the Church of Rome in its head and its members. We may imagine, also, that he had heard at Florence how Savonarola, the celebrated prior of San Marco, horror-stricken at the revival of Paganism in a Christian city, and at the vice and scepticism which very generally prevailed, had determined to confine himself almost entirely to prayerful meditation on the records of heavenly truth. We may fancy that Colet had often been a member of those crowded congregations in the Duomo of Florence which listened spell-bound to the burning words of this preacher of righteousness, as, carefully expounding the Scriptures, he denounced the Divine vengeance on the rulers of the Church and the inhabitants of Italy for their vices and crimes; and

[1] Eras. Op., tom. iii., p. 456, B., edit. Lugd.

that he had witnessed the wonderful effect produced by this oratory when the citizens, whose life had hitherto been one long holiday, read the word of God as they pursued their accustomed occupations, and banished from their walls that sensuality which lifted its unblushing front in the streets in the full light of day.

Thus, then, Colet had been led to expound the Scriptures at Oxford, hoping that, through the influence of his hearers, many of whom "would go everywhere preaching the Word,' he should promote the onward march of moral and spiritual improvement.

The Schoolmen had hitherto reigned supreme at Oxford. They fixed attention on single verses of Scripture, to which they attached different senses, and they employed them to carry on subtle and unprofitable disquisitions on such subjects as these: "Whether we shall eat and drink after the resurrection?"—"Whether angels can be in more than one place at the same time?"—"What was the physical condition of the human body in paradise?" Their appetite for this kind of strife was insatiable. They became heated by argument, and continued to dispute on these trifling questions as though their eternal destiny depended on the settlement of them. To their rash speculations the words of the poet may be applied:

"Fools rush in where angels fear to tread."

They dared even to pry into the secrets of Jehovah; to talk as if they had been admitted to His council-chamber, and knew for certain how he had caused chaos to disappear and had called the vast fabric of the heavens and the earth into existence; through what channels the pollution of Adam's sin had come down to all his posterity; in what manner, with what measure, in what time, Christ was formed in the Virgin's womb. They dared even to describe minutely the infernal regions, as though they had themselves been admitted to that dark prison-house of pain. The dust raised by these encounters—as the combatants met in the centre of their tilt-ground with the reverberation of two mighty thunderclouds which rush together in the firmament of heaven—obscured the view of those great and solemn truths, on the due reception and maintenance of which depended their eternity. The Bible had become in their hands a mere arsenal of texts, which they wrested from their connection with the preceding passage, and employed for the purpose of weaving their theological subtleties. It had ceased to be a record of real events, or to give a connected account of the lives of individuals. Practically the Schoolmen neglected its teaching altogether.

Against this system Colet entered his decided protest. He

looked upon Scripture as a whole, and not as a carefully prepared collection of texts. In this respect he was beyond his age. He endeavoured to ascertain the drift of the Apostle's argument; he compared St. Paul's statements of Divine truth with those of St. John, in order that he might show the harmony existing between them; he proved that the Epistles were a series of letters addressed to living men, and designed to be "profitable to them for correction and instruction in righteousness." But while he constantly evinced his love for St. Paul as an earnest teacher of Divine truth, he considered that to Christ was due his devoted and dutiful allegiance. "When I turn," he says, "from the Apostles to the wonderful majesty of Christ, their writings seem to become poor, as it were, when compared with the words of their Lord." His hearers were now told for the first time to look upon the Gospels as a vivid record of the life and teaching of Christ—a Being whom he could take as "his Leader on the heavenly road;" whom he could love with a love far greater than that which he gave to any earthly object of attachment, and to whom he could devote that body, soul, and spirit which are His.

"Here I stand amazed," he says, "and exclaim in those words of my Paul, 'Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!' O Wisdom! wonderfully good to men and merciful, how justly Thy loving kindness can be called the 'depth of riches!' Thou Who, commending Thy love towards us, hast chosen to be so bountiful to us that Thou givest Thyself for us, that we may return to Thee and to God! O holy, O kind, O beneficent Wisdom! O voice, word, and truth of God in man! truth-speaking and truth-acting! Who hast chosen to teach us humanly that we may know divinely; Who hast chosen to be in man that we may be in God; Who, lastly, hast chosen in man to be humbled even unto death—the death even of the Cross, that we may be exalted even unto life—the life even of God."

These expositions of Divine truth seem to have produced a wonderful impression at Oxford. Multitudes flocked to hear him. As Erasmus says,[1] "He had not taken any degree in theology (the qualification required by the statutes for lecturing on the Bible), yet there was no doctor of the law or divinity, no abbot or dignitary, who did not come to hear him." Some, no doubt, came to cavil at the lecturer, and to find matter of accusation against him, because he assailed the dominant school of theology at Oxford; but as we are informed that they "came again and again, and brought even their note-books," we may reasonably conclude that they came at last because they were convinced that he was bringing before them the fundamental truths of Christianity.

The celebrated Erasmus was one of his audience. He had

[1] Eras. Op., tom. iii., p. 456, C.

just come over to England in the train of the young Lord Mountjoy from Paris, and at once repaired to the University of Oxford, that he might join that little band of men north of the Alps who were applying themselves with ardour to the study of the Greek language and literature. Prior Charnock, with whom he had taken up his abode at the college of St. Mary the Virgin (the gateway of which, nearly opposite New Inn Hall, is the only part now remaining), introduced him to Colet. The latter at once saw that he was no ordinary man, and made him an offer of his friendship. He indulged the confident expectation that he should have with him that fellowship for which he yearned, and that he would aid him in carrying forward toward completion the work which he had commenced at Oxford.

Erasmus spent the greater part of 1499 at the University. During this time he often argued with Colet on the system of the Schoolmen. The study of their works had created in his mind a disgust for theology altogether; but he was not at first prepared to abandon his allegiance to them. The result, however, of their discussions was that he was at length brought to see the absurdity of the system in which he had been trained. But he was not yet prepared to do battle with the Schoolmen. He thought that he might sustain an ignominious defeat if he endeavoured to smite down these foes before his weapons were properly sharpened, or he was sufficiently skilled in the use of them. At the end of the year 1499, indeed, he told his friend that he must shortly leave Oxford. Colet was greatly disappointed. He had indulged the hope that, sustained by the sympathy and ready help of Erasmus, he should be able to do valiantly in the conflict with his formidable antagonists. But now these expectations were in vain. Erasmus, however, assured him that he would endeavour to further his studies. He made him a promise, indeed, that when he had obtained the requisite strength he would openly place himself on his side.

Colet, after the departure of Erasmus, continued his solitary work at Oxford. No kindred spirit had risen up to take a place by his side. He was, however, cheered by the assurance that the leaven was gradually pervading the mass. In the year 1505, Henry VII. conferred upon him the deanery of St. Paul's. He soon began to preach in his own cathedral, where he always had, as his friend Erasmus tells us, a crowded congregation, in which were often to be seen courtiers and the first men in the country. He did not preach, as we are informed, upon isolated texts, but continued his subject from Sunday to Sunday in a regular course till he had completed it. The citizens of London, who had hitherto been bewildered by dis-

courses on the metaphysical jargon of the Schools, listened with wrapt and eager attention to Colet, as, like one inspired, he spoke of the life and teaching of the man Christ Jesus as it is contained in the Gospels or embodied in the Apostles' Creed, or of the wonderful majesty of that invisible King, Who had an undoubted claim on the homage of all His intelligent creatures.

The Dean acted out in his life the lessons which he taught from the pulpit of his cathedral. After his elevation to this high dignity, he was as simple in his habits as he was during his residence at Oxford. Erasmus informs us that when other divines went clothed in purple, he always wore his plain black robe.[1] The late dean gave costly entertainments, and allowed boisterous revels in his house;[2] but Colet never passed the bounds of moderation, and provided only a frugal repast for his guests. "After grace, a boy read in a loud voice a chapter from the Epistles of St. Paul or the Proverbs of Solomon. He often selected a passage and began to converse upon it, asking the unlearned as well as the learned what was the meaning of this or that word. He showed so much tact in conversation, that though it had reference to weighty and important truths, it was not at all tedious.[3] Thus, then, he dismissed all his friends refreshed in mind and body, so that they left better than they came." When he was on a journey he was always full of gaiety, but he always had a book with him; and not only at his private table, but also at that time, he delighted in leading the conversation to the unparalleled love, the unsearchable riches, and the spotless example of his Divine and adorable Redeemer.

A short time after his elevation to the deanery, Colet acquired a large fortune by the death of his father. Animated by that spirit of Christian self-sacrifice for which he had always been distinguished, he determined to apply this property (amounting to about £30,000 of our money), to the foundation of a school in St. Paul's Churchyard for 153 boys.

His design was that they should be taught good literature, both Latin and Greek; 'specially Christian authors who wrote their wisdom in clean and chaste Latin, whether in prose or in verse; for," he said, "my intent is by this school specially to increase knowledge and worshipping of our God (and our Lord Jesus Christ), and good Christian life and manners in the children." An image of the child Jesus, to whom the school was dedicated, in the attitude of teaching, over the head

[1] Eras. Op., tom. iii., p. 456, E. & F.
[2] Ibid., p. 465, E.
[3] Ibid., E. & F.

Master's chair, with this motto, "Hear him," gave evident proof of his determination to bring the great Teacher himself prominently before the children. As he did not find the old books exactly adapted to his purpose, he asked his learned friends to provide him with others. As Linacre failed in producing a suitable grammar, he wrote one himself, which, having been corrected by Erasmus, Lilly, and others, afterwards became known as Lilly's Latin Grammar. His objection to the former was that it was too long and too learned for his "little beginners." Accordingly he provided "this little book, in which he left many things out on purpose, considering the tenderness and small capacity of little minds." Erasmus, who was now again in England, and who had renewed that friendship with Colet which continued to the end of his days, wrote a treatise *de copia verborum* for the use of the school, in which he pronounces the following eulogium upon his friend: "What is this work, I ask, but to act as a father to all your children and fellow-citizens? You rob yourself to make them rich. You wear yourself out with toil, that they may be quickened into life in Christ. In a word, you spend yourself away that you may gain them for Christ."

Shortly before his death, he framed statutes for his school, and committed them to the "most honest and substantial fellowship of the Mercers of London," with the distinct and wise understanding that they were not to consider his rules as of perpetual obligation, but that they were to alter them according as the circumstances of the times might seem to require. This is a singular instance of prophetic sagacity. The studies may be adapted to every period and stage of civilization.

Colet, soon after the foundation of his school, had a duty imposed upon him for the conscientious discharge of which no common courage was demanded. In his noble cathedral, unsurpassed by any in the world in the harmony of its proportions, its elaborate adornment, and the magnificence of its architecture, beneath its elegant spire, were assembled on February 6, 1512, members of both Houses of Convocation, summoned for the purpose of imposing a tax on the clergy to aid Henry VIII. in carrying on a war with France. Colet was appointed by Archbishop Warham to preach the sermon with which their proceedings were opened.

Never was a more faithful sermon heard within the walls of St. Paul's. His voice rang through the choir and along the nave in eloquent denunciation of the vices and crimes of many who were assembled before him. He saw sitting there those who had been elevated to the episcopal dignity, not because they had "fed the Church of God," but because they had rendered im-

portant political services; those who had sought promotion from one dignity to another that they might be the better enabled to gratify their carnal appetites and passions; the bloated epicure who ransacked sea and land in search of the choicest delicacies for his festal board; those who wallowed in the mire of sensuality; those whose walls often re-echoed to the rude laugh and boisterous mirth of the assembled revellers; those who rode out on their richly caparisoned horses, with their hawks and hounds, followed by a cavalcade as splendid as any which ever marched in the train of this world's potentates. Colet lifted up his voice like a trumpet in condemnation of their vices; he told them that their excessive worldliness led the multitude to dig deep into the bowels of the earth in search of perishing earthly treasure; that they ought not to lay hands on any rashly; that they ought to enforce the laws concerning the residence of bishops in their dioceses; that they ought to spend their worldly wealth in feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and in promoting the ingathering of the wandering sheep into the fold of the Redeemer. Thus, then, this faithful preacher of righteousness, acting in that spirit which the contemplation of the scandalous lives of the Popes caused him to exhibit at Oxford, preached against abounding iniquity, and, regardless of persecution, reminded his hearers of the account which they would have to give of their stewardship at the judgment-seat of Christ.

In 1513 we find Colet again fearlessly giving utterance to his conscientious convictions. Having been summoned to preach before Henry VIII. on Good Friday in that year, he administered a sharp rebuke to him for the warlike policy which, with his friend Erasmus, he felt had "interrupted that revival of philosophical studies which was designed to lead to an acquaintance with the simple and pure Christianity of the Bible." The same friend has given in a letter the substance of his discourse, and we shall admire his courage when we find him "preaching wonderfully before the King and Court on the victory of Christ, and exhorting all Christians to fight and conquer under the banner of their King. For those who engaged in war from hatred or ambition, and slew one another, are marching under the standard of the devil, and not under that of Christ. He showed also how difficult it was for a man to have that Christian charity without which we cannot see God face to face, and at the same time to sheathe his sword in the body of his brother." [1]

After this sermon all, including Fitzjames, the Bishop of London, who were opposed to him on account of his teaching,

[1] Eras. Op., tom. iii., p. 461.

especially because he declared that the lives of wicked priests are the worst heresy, rejoiced because they thought that the anger of the King would be inflamed against him. The King sent for him. He was afraid that his address would lessen the warlike ardour of his soldiers. Colet came in obedience to the royal command, and dined at the monastery of the Franciscans, near the palace at Greenwich. When the King knew that he was there, he went out into the garden to meet him, and dismissed his attendants. He thus addressed him: "Do not suppose, Dean, that I have sent for you to interrupt your holy labours, for the success of which I am very anxious, but that I may relieve my mind of certain scruples, and that I may be the better enabled, by your advice, to do my duty." The result of the conversation was that Colet, by his singular discretion, satisfied the King that he did not mean to say that no war was lawful for the Christian. An arrangement was then made that he should give this explanation to the soldiers. The King then took a most affectionate farewell of him. The courtiers were waiting in the palace for the termination of the conference. Then the King said in the hearing of all of them: "Let every man have his own doctor, and let every man favour his own; this man is the doctor for me." "From that day forth," says Erasmus, "no one dared to attack Colet."

History has again recorded that Colet addressed publicly words of warning and exhortation to one who very much needed them. In that great Abbey, over whose dim aisles many centuries cast an awful shadow, a vast crowd was assembled at the installation of the Cardinal who had just risen to the pinnacle of worldly greatness. As he sat, intoxicated with vain glory, the centre of a great assemblage of dukes, earls, and prelates, the mightiest in the land, the following words fell on his ear: "Let not one in so proud a position, made most illustrious by the dignity of such an honour, be puffed up by its greatness. But remember that our Saviour in His own person said to His disciples, 'I came not to be ministered unto, but minister;' and again, 'He who exalts himself shall be humbled, and he who humbles himself shall be exalted.'" We know from history that the words of Colet were disregarded, and that Wolsey retired from the Abbey to heap up around him piles of wealth, and to prosecute his schemes of worldly aggrandizement. But when, at the end of his life, he bade "farewell, a long farewell, to all his greatness," the form of the preacher may have come back to him; he may have remembered the lesson on humility, and the instability of worldly glory, which the voice ascending from the tombs of the monarchs and warriors around him should, he might have

felt, have aided in fixing in his mind; and he may have grieved deeply that he did not profit by the exhortation then addressed to him, and may thus have been led to utter those well-known words: "If I had but served my God as faithfully as I served my king, He would not have forsaken me in my old age."

Colet exhibited the same honest boldness when standing before the shrine of Thomas-à-Becket, in Canterbury Cathedral. His friend, Erasmus, who accompanied him, has left us a vivid picture of the visit in his colloquy entitled "Peregrinatio Religionis Ergo." He has described the wondering stare of the verger at the visitors out of his gorgon eyes, when Colet uttered the sacrilegious remark that the glittering heap of gold and jewels around them, instead of being hoarded up, should be applied to the relief of the poor. He has told us of the disgust which appeared on Colet's countenance when the Prior offered him, as a present of great value, one of the rags on which the saint wiped his nose and the sweat from his face or neck, and the disdainful chuckle with which he touched it with the tips of his fingers, and then laid it down again; and the passionate words which he addressed to Erasmus when the old mendicant from Harbledown offered him the upper leather of St. Thomas's shoe to kiss: "What! do these idiots want us to kiss the shoes of every good man? They select the filthiest things, and ask us to kiss them!" At the close of this narration Colet stands in remarkable contrast to his timid and prudent friend Erasmus, who, while the former could not restrain his indignation, coldly argues that these evils should be tolerated, until they can be corrected without disturbing the peace of Christendom.

We have now little to add to the life of Colet. Harassed by his great enemy, the Bishop of London, he was preparing to resign his preferments, and had built a house at Sheene, near Richmond, as "the home of his old age"—which we do not know whether he lived to occupy—when the angel of death came to him. He died, "to the great grief of the whole people," from the sweating sickness, on the 16th of September, 1519, and was buried in St. Paul's Cathedral in a tomb prepared by himself.

How deep was the sorrow of Erasmus when he heard of his death, the following extracts from letters to his friends bear full testimony:

"O true theologian! O wonderful preacher of evangelical doctrine! with what earnest zeal did he drink in the philosophy of Christ! How eagerly did he imbibe the spirit and feelings of St. Paul! How did the purity of his whole life correspond to his heavenly doctrine!"

Again, writing to Bishop Fisher:

"I have written this weeping for Colet's death. I know that it is all right with him, who, escaped from this evil and wretched world, is in present enjoyment of that Christ Whom he loved so well when alive. I cannot help mourning in the public name the loss of so rare an example of Christian piety, so remarkable a preacher of Christian truth!"

Erasmus had reason to speak thus of Colet, for he was greatly indebted to him. The poet has indeed said:

> "At length Erasmus, that great injured name,
> The glory of the priesthood and their shame,
> Stemmed the wild torrent of a barbarous age,
> And drove those holy vandals from the stage."

But the truth is, that Erasmus would not have opposed the Schoolmen if Colet had not taught him to do so. They were at the time of his death one in spirit. Colet had taught him a principle of interpretation not textarian. They both looked on Scripture as a connected whole. Their constraining and animating motive was love to their Divine Redeemer. They valued the Bible because they found in it, to use the words of Erasmus, "His living and breathing image;" because "it places Christ vividly before us;" because "it brings Him back to us, healing, speaking, dying, rising again," so that "we could not see Him better if we were to see Him with our bodily eyes." They wished thus to be enabled to approach as near as possible to Christ, that they might catch the reflection of the brightness of His character. Above all, they wished to be conformed to Christ in the inner man—to drink deep into His spirit, to be in truth so one with Christ as to estimate at the same value every object in earth and heaven, every interest both in time and eternity. They were anxious also that Christ should be brought near to the world around them. "I wish," says Erasmus, who here expresses the feelings of Colet, "that these books were translated into all languages, so that they might be read and understood, not only by Scots and Irishmen, but also by Turks and Saracens. I long that the husbandman should sing portions of them to himself as he follows the plough, that the weaver should hum them to the tune of his shuttle, that the traveller should beguile with their stories the tedium of his journey." Thus studying the Saviour's character, they hoped that a surpassing loveliness would appear investing their own, and that they would be surrounded by an atmosphere breathing all the sanctity and sweetness, all the purity and peace of heaven.

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