

# JOHN COLET OF OXFORD

KATHLEEN MACKENZIE

City of weather'd cloister and worn court,  
Grey city of strong towers and clustering spires,  
Where Art's fresh loveliness would first resort,  
Where lingering Art kindled her latent fires;

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Where at each coign of every antique street  
A memory hath taken root in stone . . .

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There Shelley dreamed his white Platonic dreams;  
There classic Landor throve on Roman thought;  
There Addison pursued his quiet themes;  
There smiled Erasmus, and there Colet taught.

—*Lionel Johnson*

THE Oxford where Colet taught is not the Oxford of to-day. In Colet's time it was a walled and mediaeval town, more like a fortress than a place of learning. Many of the colleges of to-day were not in existence, but even so it was a city of towers and spires. When Colet walked along the roadway now known as High Street, he saw on his left University College with Merton not far away, both dating from the 13th century. Queen's College, built in the 14th century, stood on his right, Balliol, Exeter and Oriel were known to him. New College, Lincoln and All Souls were already growing old before the first stone of Magdalen, Colet's College, was laid. In 1483, when he went up to Oxford as an undergraduate, Magdalen was still in its infancy. His eyes did not rest on "Maudlin's learned court" nor on the stately tower "whose sweet bells were wont to usher in delightful May". But with each succeeding generation some new beauty was added, until Anthony Wood described it as "the most noble and richest structure in the learned world".

John Colet was the first and only surviving child of twenty-two children born to Christian Knevet and Sir Henry Colet, a rich merchant three times Lord Mayor of London. On his mother's side the future Dean of St. Paul's was connected with two great Tudor families, Lord Grey of Ruthyn and Humphrey Stafford, Duke of Buckingham. From his boyhood to the end of his life, he was devoted to his mother who, according to his friends, was a woman of notable character. The terrible record

of her married life, during which twenty-one children were born to her only to be snatched away by swift death, is thought to have been the reason of her son's early distaste to marriage. But like St. Paul, he saw that a life of celibacy was not suited to most men; so when Thomas More was thinking of becoming a monk, he advised him to remain in the world, marry and settle down.

During Colet's student days at Oxford, Erasmus relates that he applied himself with great ardour to the study of the Philosophies, Natural, Moral and Metaphysical, and that there was no branch of Mathematics he left untouched. He also read deeply in the works of Cicero, Plato and Plotinus, thus making ready for the lectures already taking form in his mind. When he had taken his degree of Master of Arts, he decided to follow the example of Linacre and Grocyn, who had just returned to Oxford, and go to Italy for further study. A new love of learning had blossomed in Italy owing to the exiled scholars from the East having taken refuge there. "Greece has crossed the Alps", cried out an exile from Constantinople. But although Greek had long been a dead language in Europe except for a few wandering Irish monks, it was not the first time Greece had crossed the Alps, or that the culture of the East had been brought to the West.

In the days, when all power of the Church was directed against the spread of any learning that would broaden man's mind, grown stagnant under mediaeval thought, a new culture was taught at the Sicilian Court of Frederick Hohenstaufen. In that "Republic of Learning", Greek, Saracen, Jewish, Irish and Scotch scholars met and were made welcome. There Science, Art and Literature blossomed as it blossomed in the later Renaissance which produced the stupendous brain of Leonardo, who took all knowledge as his province. Although the great Emperor went down in his struggle with three Popes, he had done much to make men think, and can justly be called the forerunner of the new learning known in Colet's day.

Little is known of Colet's travels, but it is very likely that he followed in the footsteps of other English scholars, of Linacre and Grocyn. It is certain he went to France, where he studied Philosophy and Theology for a time. He next is found studying Civil and Canon Law at the famous University of Bologna. But the call of Florence as the fountain-head of the new learning was strong, and soon he is one of the many foreign students who gathered there in search of knowledge.

Among the famous galaxy of Italian scholars, three unquestionably influenced his future life—Ficino, head of the Platonic Academy, Pico della Mirandola of prodigious learning and memory, and Savonarola, the fiery Prior of San Marco, then preaching from the pulpit of Santa Maria del Fiore. If it is true that Ficino burnt a lamp before the image of Plato, the Platonism he taught held much of the spirit of Christ. "The result of the coming of Christ", he said, "was that all men were drawn to love God with their whole heart, a God Who in His immense love had become a man."

The beautiful mysticism which belonged to Ficino's teaching entered into Colet's thought, but he never felt as the great Platonic teacher felt—that the spirit of Christ and much that He taught was found in pagan life. "If we feed ourselves on the wisdom of the heathen which is devilish, not Christian, we lose the principles of our Lord", he wrote, in the burning belief that Christ's spirit was found only in the teaching of the Nazarene as expounded in the Gospels and in the Epistles of St. Paul.

But the teaching of Ficino's Platonism did not satisfy the heart of man. So Pico found when, having grown weary of much learning and of vainglorious disputations, he left Plato and turned to Christ. A great remorse filled him at what he thought was his mis-spent youth. He cried out to God for forgiveness: "The offences of my youth, and mine ignorance, remember not, good Lord, but after thy goodness remember me". But before his short life was over, as short as a "dream or a shadow on the wall", Pico had found God "not as a Lord but as a very tender and loving Father". Ficino and Pico helped to strengthen Colet in the thorny path he was to tread. But the fiery words that fell from Savonarola's lips woke a flame of desire in his heart to return to Oxford and open the Bible so long closed, and turning back its pages bring men face to face with the life and teaching of their Redeemer.

On his return to England he hurried to Oxford, and, without waiting to be ordained, began a free course of lectures on St. Paul and his Epistles. He might have chosen the life to which the advantages of his birth and wealth entitled him, the luxurious life of a rich merchant's son, but instead he chose a life in which he tried to reform the Church, thus taking up the burden that Wycliffe had relinquished only with death. In his lectures he flung aside the dogma of the Middle Ages, and put in its place a rational religion founded on the Gospels. The Bible had long been looked upon as a text book wherein the Schoolman could

find a text by which he hoped to confound his rival in argument. Colet began his lectures by ignoring the sophistry of his Schoolmen which had hidden the face of Christ. In his lectures on the Epistles of St. Paul, he spoke, we read, "as one inspired, raised in voice and eye, his whole countenance and mien out of himself". Soon many who had come to scoff or accuse him of heresy came back to listen, convinced of the inner truth that lay in his words. "You say", remarked one of his listeners, "what you mean, and you mean what you say. Your words have birth in your heart and not on your lips, they follow your thoughts instead of your thoughts being shaped by them."

At first Colet's lectures were entirely on the Epistles of St. Paul, that Paul whom he loved as a brother, "my Paul" he used to say in speaking of him. But as Plato had been a bridge over which Pico crossed to find Christ, so Paul and his Epistles led Colet to the Gospels and Christ, and in time the majestic figure of Paul began to fade and the face of Christ, once so dim, to shine forth in full heavenly splendour.

In 1498 his lonely life was warmed and fed by the coming of Erasmus to Oxford. In those days Oxford was truly democratic, riches or high birth were not an open sesame to its colleges, so the poor and needy scholar was welcomed and received into the College of St. Mary the Virgin by its Prior, Richard Charnoch. Colet's sermons were then the theme on which all men spoke, and Erasmus, on the advice of Charnoch, hurried to hear him. Erasmus, enamoured of the learning of St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Jerome, heard with astonishment the Scriptures explained without one quotation from the Fathers or the Schoolmen. He felt he must see more of this man who ignored the teaching he had fed upon. He did not have to wait long, for Colet, hearing of his arrival, wrote at once extending to him his hospitality.

If there only existed this one letter of Colet's, it would serve to show us the real character of its writer. "My friend Brumus", he writes, "commends you highly, Erasmus... But you have already been commended to me both by the reputation in which your name is held and by the testimony of your own writings... That others should commend you to me is most unbecoming, for the less ought to be commended to the greater, the more unlearned to the more highly cultured. However, if there is aught within my small means in which I can be useful to you, I am at your service. Farewell.

"From my chambers at Oxford."

The reply of Erasmus is worthy of notice inasmuch as it helps to show us the man. "If", he writes, "I recognised anything at all in myself, most courteous Sir, deserving of even slender praise, I should certainly rejoice at being praised by you, the object of all praise. . . . In truth, my dear Colet, so far from your praise having made me conceited, I am even more dissatisfied with myself. . . . You will find in me a man of slender fortune, or rather of none. A stranger to ambition, but for friendship most ready, one whose acquaintance with literature is most scanty but his admiration of it most ardent, one who worships integrity in others but counts his own as none. . . . If you, Colet, can love such a man, and deem him worthy of your acquaintance, then set Erasmus down as your own, completely your own. Farewell. Oxford, 1498."

Thus began the friendship which links the names of Colet and Erasmus for all time. To Colet it brought the fellowship he needed in the lonely path he had chosen to tread. And from that meeting with one who held a larger vision, the future life of Erasmus was broadened and changed.

For seven years or more, Colet continued his free lectures in Oxford in the service of God and Man. In 1505 he was called to the deanery of St. Paul's by Henry VII. His appointment was not received with any warmth by Fitzjames, Bishop of London. What he had heard of Colet's lectures in Oxford confirmed him in his belief that the new Dean would prove radical and unsettling. The life that Colet led in Oxford, so austere and simple in its setting, was not such as would be approved in a Dean of St. Paul's. His indifference to the good cheer of the table was not to Fitzjames's liking; even Erasmus, who loved good eating and drinking, remarks somewhat ruefully that the lavish hospitality of former Deans was brought within bounds of moderation. With great resentment Fitzjames saw another radical change as Colet, discarding his purple vestments, wore instead a plain black robe of woollen cloth.

The Cathedral of St. Paul's, as Colet knew it, was not Wren's copy of St. Peter's at Rome, but a beautiful blending of Gothic and Norman architecture, with towers and spires soaring high into the air. There Colet preached until the end of his life, and the theme on which he dwelt was the life of Christ as he found it in the Gospels. Day by day the crowd grew larger to hear the story of the Son of Man preached in the English tongue. But as he looked down on the upturned faces, he longed to free the Church from the lies and superstitions that had



gathered about it. In a vision of mystical beauty he saw the Church set on a hill: "High above the vale of the world's misery it stands forth in Christ on a hill that cannot be hidden. . . . Meantime between earth and heaven, on the height of Christ's lofty mountains, stands the Church breathing the pure and vital air of the Spirit of God, and seeing men daily journeying towards it, in the strength of the same Christ, and in the purification of themselves by the divine fire, men who, when they have at length become simple and pure and one in it, are then made clear and luminous by the light of His divine Son, and are perfected by the crowning love of God in Christ in Heaven."

Thus Colet dreamed of the future Church. Reform, he knew, must come from within the Church, and he longed for the hour when he could face all those who stood high in ecclesiastical life and show them the evil that had fallen over Christianity. His opportunity came when the new King, Henry VIII, was making ready for his first campaign against the French. Much had been hoped by the Reformers when Henry had ascended the throne, because he favoured the new learning. But Wolsey, who was just growing into power, stood beside him ready to fan into flame his longing for military glory. Money was needed to equip an army. A heavy tax was placed on the people, who were told that the kingdom lay in danger from an invasion by the French. No one escaped the vigilance of Wolsey, not even the clergy, and on his suggestion a royal mandate was sent to the Archbishop of Canterbury to summon a convocation of both Houses, which had two purposes, to collect money for the war, and speak of the increase of heresy. Warham, who was one with Colet in his desire for reform in the Church, showed the largeness of his vision by choosing the man who was then being accused of heresy to preach the convocation sermon. The subject on which he was to preach was "The Extirpation of Heresy". Few Deans of St. Paul's have preached before a more august assembly, and few Deans have preached a nobler or more fearless sermon, one so momentous in the history of the Church that it has been called the "overture to the great drama of the English Reformation". No nervousness marked the manner of the tall, slender man who rose in the pulpit and began his address. The translation in his own Tudor English can be read by every student of Colet's life.

"Ye are come together to-daye Fathers and by the wyse men, to entre counsell, in the whyche what ye wyll do, and what

matters ye wyll handell, yet we understande nat, but we wysse that ones rememberynge your names and profession, ye wolde mynde the Reformation of the Churches matter. For hit was neuer more nede, and the state of the churche dyd neuer desyre more your endeours. For the Spouse of Christe, the Churche, whom ye wolde shulde be without spotte is made foule and euyl fauored. . . . As sayth Hieremis, 'She hath done lechery among with many louers, whereby she hath conceived many sedes of wyckedness and dayly bryngth forthe foule fruit'. . . ."

With these daring words Colet opened his address, but before he passed on to his text, with that humility which lay so deep in his stern austere character, he asked forgiveness for his coming. "But for sothe I came not wyllingly for I knowe myne unworthynes. For I juged it utterly unworthy and unmete, and almost malepert that I, a servant, shuld counsaile my Lordes, that I a sonne shulde teache you, my fathers, wherefore fathers and rythe-worthy men I praye and beseche you that this daye ye wolde susteyne my weakness with your goodness and pacience, furthermore to help me at the begynnyng with your good prayers. . . . Let us all saye Pater Noster."

When the prayer was finished, Colet took for his text Paul's advice to the Romans, "Be ye not conformed to the worlde, but be ye reformed in the newnes of your understandyng that ye may prove what is the wyll of God well pleasing and perfecte". Dividing his text into two parts, he begins with the words "Be ye not conformed to the world"; then, lashing out, he tells the startled assembly that priests and bishops had brought the church low by being conformed to the world, "running a breathless haste from one benefice to another from the less to the higher one, and as their worldly honours grew they carried themselfe with so hygh lokes that they seem not to be in the humble bishopric of Christe but in the hygh lordship and power of the worlde". Many were there who must have been conscious these words applied to them and, chief among them, Wolsey, who was then running a breathless haste from one benefice to another, until soon he was to vie with his King in temporal splendour. One by one Colet dealt with the vices that corrupted ecclesiastical life. "They gyve them selfe to bankettyng, they spende them selfe in vain bablyng, they give them selfe to sportes and playes, they apply them selfe to huntyng and hawkyng, they drown them selfe in the delytes of the world, they run after secular occupations instead of keeping to their spiritual duties as seruantes rather of the worlde than of Christe. . . ." "Many

other euils," he went on, "there be that follow the secularities of Pristes. . . . by whiche the face of the Churche is made euil faured. . . ."

The first part of this overwhelming indictment against the rulers of the Church was almost over when the Dean referred to the increase of heresy. The Bishop of London must have squirmed when he heard the man whom he had accused of heresy, and thought to bring to the stake, deal with its evils. "We are nowe adayes greud of heretics, men mad with folysshanes, but", he thundered, "the heresies of them are nat as pestilent and pernicious unto us and the people as the euyle and wicked lyfe of Pristss, the whyche if we beleue saynt Barnard is a certyn kynde of heresys, chiefe of all and most perillous. . . ."

He ended the first part of his sermon with the plea "Wherefore ye fathers and ye pristes, here Paule crienge unto you 'Be ye not conformed to the worlde but be ye reformed in the newness of your understandynge'."

The first part of the sermon was a cry from Colet's heart to the Assembly. In the second part, where he deals with the laws of the Church and shows how they can be improved, he shows himself as a statesman who builds upon the old order but knows true renewal must begin in themselves. "This reforming and restoring of the Church's estate must nede begyne with you, our fathers, and so followe in us your pristes and in all the clergy. . . . In you and your lyfe we desyre to rede as in lyuely bookes how and after what facion we may lyve. Hit is an olde proverbe, Phisition heale thy selfe, you spirituall Phisitions, fyrste taste ye this medicine of purgation of maners and then offer us the same to taste." Passing on to the reform of the laws, he shows his great knowledge of Canon law. He did not seek to make new laws, only that the old laws should be kept. "For the euils that are now in the church were before in tyme paste, and there is no faute but that fathers haue provyded very good remedies for hit. . . . For sothe if ye kepe the lawes and if ye reforme fyrste your lyfe to the rules of the Canon lawes, then shall ye gyve us lyght in the whiche we may se what is to be done of our parte. . . . And we seyng our fathers so keeping the lawes, wyl gladly follow the steppes of our fathers."

One by one he takes up the laws and points out where reform can take place, and having thus completed the last part of his sermon he prays his hearers to "come agayne to Christe in whom is the very true peace of the Goste, the which passeth all wythe, come agayne to your selfe and to your pristly lyuinge",



and to make an end, "as Saynt Paule saythe, 'Be ye reformed in the newnes of your understandyng that ye sauoure those thynges that are of God, and so the peace of God shall be with you.'"

There is no record left as to whether this noble and stirring call for reform in the church made a lasting appeal to those who listened to it; but as we read it today, the words burn with the sincerity of the man who dared to show his superiors the evil of their ways. No Life of Colet brings him so vividly before us as the sermons he was forced to preach on great occasions whether before Priest or King. There we find the soaring spirit of the man forgetful of self and the dangers which beset him. A little more than a year was to pass before his spiritual courage was again put to the test when he was commanded to preach the Lenten sermon before the King. His hatred of war was such that in one of his sermons he had quoted Cicero's famous saying "Better an unjust peace than the justest war". This had been repeated to the King who, it is said, replied, "Let the man say what he will, that is his business".

But when Henry began to prepare for his second campaign against the French, Colet's sermons took on a stronger tone which made Wolsey and the King fear that his outspoken words against war would lessen the zeal of the new army. The Chapel Royal was thronged on Good Friday to hear what Colet had to say, and how he would conduct himself before the King. But Colet, who feared no King but Christ, bore himself with his usual quiet dignity. He spoke, as Erasmus tells us, on the Victory of Christ; he exhorted his hearers to war and conquest under the banner of the Prince of Peace, their proper King. "For they," he said, "who through hatred and ambition slaughter one another fight not under the banner of Christ but that of the devil."

Henry, who was still unspoiled by the flattery of his courtiers, wishing to stand well with such an upright and fearless man, summoned the Dean to his Court. The meeting took place in the gardens of the Franciscan convent adjoining Greenwich Palace. Sitting under the quiet trees, the King and Colet talked for an hour and a half. Scanning the fine austere face of his subject, Henry felt with his feminine instinct that this man who sat beside him could not be won by flattery nor by the offer to fill a larger place either in the temporal or spiritual world. For the moment, sincerity was met by sincerity, and Henry's quiet and simple words deserve to live. "We did not call you here, Mr. Dean, to disturb your sacred labours which

have our entire approval, but that we may unburden our conscience of some scruples and with the help of your counsell may better discharge the duties of our office." Whatever counsel Colet gave to his King has not been recorded, but one can guess its wisdom. When the interview was over, he had won the admiration of his King. "Let every man", Henry said to his curious courtiers, "have his own Doctor and let every man follow his own liking, this man is the Doctor for me."

Nevertheless, Henry went to war with the French, his second campaign bringing little glory to himself and only misery and want to his subjects.

The outline of one more public sermon given by Colet must find a place here. Two years after he preached his Lenten sermon, he gave the last public sermon of which we have a record. This time his sermon was given in the Abbey on the occasion when Wolsey received his Cardinal's hat, from Leo X. The Abbey had not then lost its early beauty of line, as it was not cluttered with the ornate statues that vex the eye today. The beautiful rose window has never cast its rays on a more magnificent spectacle. All the great in the temporal and spiritual worlds had gathered to see the fulfilment of Wolsey's ambition. But when Colet rose in the pulpit and began to speak, it was he who dominated the scene. Briefly he explained to the gathering the meaning of the word "Cardinal," the high honour and dignity of the office, its spiritual meaning and the great temporal power it bore, that of a prince and judge. Then what followed was a message from one who had never conformed to the world to one whose life was centred in worldly ambition. Turning his quiet grave eyes on Wolsey, he said: "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 to minister. . . . He who exalts himself shall be humbled and he who humbles himself shall be exalted.'" These words of wisdom and caution fell on the deaf ears of the new Cardinal, and only when all earthly splendour was taken from him did Wolsey recall Colet's warning.

In his passion for reform in the Church, Colet had not forgotten the need for reform in secular education. To help meet this need, he decided to found St. Paul's Grammar School, the work perhaps by which he is best remembered. He has been accused of love of money by some writers, owing to garrulous remarks made by Erasmus, who unquestionably often thought

Colet should supply him assistance in his poverty. In one letter Colet rebukes him for deploring his fortune, telling him he does not act bravely. "That you should call me happy, I marvel, if you speak of fortune; although I am not wholly without any, yet I have not much, hardly sufficient for my expenses." This letter makes it clear that Colet was often harried by need of money when building his school, yet he went on until, before he died, the school was finished, whose teaching helped to carry on the new learning, as embraced in his lectures and sermons. The building of the school and its wide curriculum roused a fury among his enemies. He was again a man marked for burning as a heretic. All those, however, who cared for reform stood beside him in his work for future generations. "Your school", laughingly writes More, "has roused such a storm, for it is like the wooden horse in which armed Greeks were hidden for the ruin of barbarous Troy." An apt remark, when it is remembered that Colet's school was the first public school in England to teach the Greek language. The tender, gentle heart which lay behind his outward austerity, his deep love for children, is seen in the beautiful preface to the short elementary grammar he had written. "I praye God all may be to his honour and the eurdyicion and profyt of chyl dren, my countre men, Londoners specially, whom dygestynge this lytell work which I had always before myne eyen; consyderynge more what was for them than to shew ony grete counynge, wyllynge to speke the thynges often before spoken in suche maner as gladli yonge begynnners and tender wyttes myght take and conceive. Wherefore, I praye you, al lytel babys, al lytel chyl dren, lerne gladly this lytel treatyse, and commende it dylygently unto your memoryes. . . . And lyfte up your lytel whyte handes for me, whiche prayeth for you to God, to whom be al honour and imperyal mageste and glory, Amen."

When all was done to guard the future of the School, Colet dedicated it to the Child Jesus, placing His statue behind the head-master's chair with the motto "Hear ye Him".

Even though the favour of Henry and Warham, Archbishop of Canterbury, had been extended to Colet, he is found writing to Erasmus, "The Bishop of London continues to haras me. . . . Every day I look forward to my retirement and retreat with the Carthusians." That he ever retired to his "nest" at Sheene is doubtful, for in 1516 he is living with his mother at his boyhood's home at Stepney. His own work on earth was nearly over, but he rejoiced in the knowledge that Erasmus was following in

his footsteps, and was putting into writing all that he had taught both in Oxford and from the pulpit of St. Paul's. It is possible Colet himself had forgotten that in those early days he had tried to persuade Erasmus to work on the Gospels and bring Christ's teaching back to its first purity. Erasmus had then recoiled from taking up what he said was a work of great difficulty and one to excite great ill-will. "I do not wonder", he writes to Colet, whom he regarded as his teacher, "that you should put your shoulder under so great a burden. . . . but I do wonder that you should call me who am nothing of a man unto the fellowship of so glorious a work. . . . For the rest, whenever I feel I have the requisite strength and firmness I will join you, and by your side, and in theological teaching, zealously engage if not in successful at least in earnest labour. Vale me Colete. Oxford."

But just as Colet's life was drawing to a close he found that Erasmus had not forgotten, when he received a copy of the first edition of the New Testament—"the first published edition of the Greek text which the world had seen." His cup was full when he received the second edition of the *Novum Testamentum* translated into pure Latin. No more beautiful letter is found in the English language than Colet's letter to Erasmus. With his usual humility he forgot that Erasmus's work had sprung from the seed he had sown. After commenting on the way the book had been received by those who were anxious for reform, he chides the author for minding the disapproval of those "whose praise is blame and by whom it is an honour to be censured." "For myself I so love your work that I clasp it to my heart. . . . Indeed, Erasmus, I marvel at the fruitfulness of your mind. . . . Go on, Erasmus, and so doing your name will be immortal. Immortal did I say, the name of Erasmus can never perish, but you will confer eternal glory on your name, and toiling on in the name of Jesus, partake of his eternal life. Love me as ever, and if you should return to us count upon my devotion to your service. Farewell. . . . From the country at Stepney with my mother who still lives and wears her advancing age beautifully."

But Colet and Erasmus were never to meet again. In 1517 the plague known as the sweating sickness swept over England attacking him; a second attack left him very weak; a third attack coming in 1519 carried him away. He died on the 17th of September, and so was spared the pain of preaching a sermon on the Proclamation of Peace, Eternal Peace, when peace was far from the wish of the Kings of England, France, Spain—

Emperor or Pope. But in Sir Richard Pace, soon to be Dean of St. Paul's, a sycophant was found who could preach on war or peace as desired. Did Henry think of the man who had once stood before him in his noble simplicity, and contrast the sincerity of his words with the fulsome vulgarity of the man he then listened to? Nature, Pace tells Henry, had fashioned him as a consummate leader, alike for the sagacious undertaking of wars and for their prosperous completion. "For as the beholder gazes steadfastly upon you, he sees war breathing from all the aspects of your most courtly person." So ended the proclamation for "Peace, Eternal Peace".

A bitter cry broke from Erasmus when he heard of Colet's death. His grief found vent in his letters to his English friends. "For thirty years I have not felt the death of one so bitterly". And again he says, "I feel as if only half of me were alive, Colet being dead, what a man England has lost. . . . I know it is all right with him in his present enjoyment of that Christ he loved so when alive. . . . How did the purity of his life correspond to his heavenly doctrine." Thomas More writes to Erasmus: "For generations we have not had amongst us any man more learned or holy." The names of the three Reformers will always be linked together, but Colet was the greatest of the three. He stood to all who wished for truth as a beacon of light, a light luminous and steady by which he drew them up to better deeds. What he was to Erasmus is known to all. What he was to More is seen in his letter written when Colet for a time was absent from London. "What can be more distressing to me than to be deprived of your dear society, after being guided by your wise counsels, cheered by your charming familiarity, assured by your earnest sermons, and helped forward by your example so that I used to obey your very beck and nod."

We hear the voice of Colet sounding through More's *Utopia* with its Christian communism and hatred of war. He stood behind all that the genius of Erasmus put into writing. But, unlike most reformers, he never sought to give perpetuity to his own views. Unlike Wycliffe, he did not found a sect, and unlike Luther, he did not seek reform in a revolutionary way. His sane mind saw the futility of war and revolution in redressing wrongs, chaos following both instead of healing, both pushing further away the brotherhood of man. He felt that only the golden rule of the Nazarene could bridge the seas and bring men together. "O Erasmus", he writes shortly before his death . . . . "there is no thing better than to live holily and purely,



there is no other way to attain this but by the earnest love and imitation of Jesus. Wherefore, leaving all wandering paths, let us go the short way to work. I long to do so. Farewell. London, 1517."

And reading the words of this great man and Christian, it is easy to feel the truth of the verdict passed upon him, "This man seems the best and the wisest of his age." He had not conformed to the world, but was reformed by the newness of his understanding.

## SEA-HAUNTING GULLS

NANITA MACDONELL BALCOM

Sea-haunting gulls, what are you crying,  
    Endlessly flying over the shore  
Where hoar-headed Fundy thunders, defying  
    The stone and the sky with his roar?

Do you lament the summer's dying?  
    Echo the sighing wind in the tree?  
Over the island shadows are lying.  
    The net from the weir blows free.