ART. II.—THE THREE OXFORD REFORMERS.

THE vigorous concentrated life of the Universities has placed them in the van of every great religious movement in England: evangelical or rationalistic, tractarian or methodist. It was so with the greatest movement of all—the Reformation.

The Reformation, like all great events, sprang from many causes, remote or immediate, superficial or fundamental. Its origin was at once political, in the passions of Henry VIII. and the schemes of Wolsey and Cromwell; national, in the growing dissatisfaction caused by the usurped authority of the "Bishop of Rome"; doctrinal, in the results of Luther's struggle with the papacy; and literary, in the renaissance or revival of classical learning. The literary side of the movement was the earliest in point of time, and it is under a literary aspect that the origin of the Reformation in England must be sought at Oxford, embodied in the three Oxford Reformers — Colet, Erasmus, and More.[1]

At first sight both the adjective Oxford and the noun Reformer may appear inappropriate. Though the three friends met first at Oxford, yet they were there together for little more than a year (1498), and when they separated, they were still far from being united in thought and action. Nor was their future career the same; as the preacher, the scholar, and the statesman, they represent three widely different types of workers. Oxford witnessed only the commencement of Colet's work, while the small portion of Erasmus' work, which was done in England, was done in London or Cambridge. It might be thought that the three men had little in common, and that, even for that little, Oxford was not responsible.

Again, even the name "Reformer" will appear to some misplaced as applied to men who remained to the end in communion with the unreformed Church, and whose work differed so widely in aim and scope, and in want of definite dogmatic teaching, from the later Protestantism. Even if the name is grudgingly conceded to Colet, it will be withheld by many from the two who lived long enough to find themselves in collision with the later movement. But the history of the period clearly shows that the original impulse came from Colet; that this impulse was first imparted to the others during their intercourse with Colet at Oxford; that the others did come to share in Colet's convictions; and that their common work constituted a real and important

[1] The best modern works on the subject are Mr. Seebohm's "Oxford Reformers of 1498," published in 1867, and the Rev. J. H. Lupton's "Life of Dean Colet," published in 1887, to both of which this article is largely indebted.

factor in the progress of the Reformation. Others besides these three are entitled to rank as merely literary reformers. Grocyn and Linacre were before Colet in the work; Lilly gave effect to Colet's views; Wolsey and Henry VIII. carried on the work on a far larger scale; but the three Oxford friends occupy a position between the old and the new peculiar to themselves.

The revival of letters was due to the diffusion of the newly-discovered wealth of classical writings, brought into Italy by Greek exiles from Constantinople, and multiplied by the printing-press. But while in Italy the movement took a purely literary and speculative turn, tinged with semi-paganism, in England (as also, to some extent, in Germany) its aspect was, from the first, distinctly practical and religious. We may fancy we see the broad foundation of this fact in the practical and serious character of the Teutonic race; we are on narrower but surer ground if we attribute it to the deep religious earnestness of the man who formed the centre and soul of the movement—John Colet.

Colet had travelled in France and Italy to acquire the new learning, "like a merchantman seeking goodly wares." In Italy he soon abandoned the classics, and devoted himself to the study, partly of the Fathers, but far more of the Scriptures, "preparing himself even then for the preaching of the Gospel." It is uncertain whether he visited Florence, and came under the spell of Savonarola's life and preaching. It is certain that in Italy his eyes were opened to the mournful contrast between the ideal Church and the actual state of the papacy. His earnestness, while it led him to break with the old scholasticism, preserved him from the snares of the new infidelity, then fashionable at Rome, and from the worldliness and immorality by which either extreme was equally accompanied. His return to Oxford, and the announcement of his intention to lecture on St. Paul's Epistles, mark the dawn of that light which culminated in the Reformation. He had renounced the prospects of commercial success, which were doubtless open to him as the son of a former Lord Mayor of London. But as yet he had not taken deacon's orders, or obtained a doctor's degree, so that his lectures formed a startling innovation, the more so as they were given gratuitously.[1] The lectures were no less an innovation in style, method, and matter. The style was the outcome of the earnestness and reality of the man—telling and plain—resulting from genuine conviction, and producing conviction in the hearer. Erasmus truly describes it in his reply to Colet's introductory

[1] The question whether Colet was acting irregularly is discussed in Lupton, pp. 59, 60. The Bible was regarded as a dangerous weapon, to be trusted only in veteran and practised hands.

letter, which formed the opening of their friendship: "You say what you mean; you mean what you say." The method, too, was his own. Instead of taking detached texts, and using them as a basis to establish abstruse propositions (which was the method of his day), he sought to penetrate to the mind of the Apostle, and seize the "continuous sense" of his writings. Discarding the mystical and allegorical interpretations of the schoolmen, Colet starts from the literal and grammatical meaning of the text of Scripture, and exhibits it in its practical bearing.[1]

His method is rational, in the best sense of the term; free and fearless, and yet consistent with a reverence unknown to the schoolmen, who, while contending for the verbal inspiration of Scripture, had thrust Scripture itself into the background. Some instances may be taken from his general teaching. In his letters to Radulphus on the Mosaic account of the Creation, he treats it as a "summary," written with a special view to the *moral* instruction of the children of Israel—in other words, "accommodated" to their limited understanding. In a conversation at table, he attributes the rejection of Cain's sacrifice to the character of the offerer, as shown in the self-confidence which led him to till the ground that God had cursed. In discussing with Erasmus the "Agony in the Garden," he rejects the lower view which attributed it to fear of death, and follows Jerome in ascribing it to an overpowering sense in the Redeemer's mind of the awful guilt of His murderers. Thus he invests sacred subjects with a personal reality and interest entirely new. In his hands Scripture becomes a thing of life.

In this way Colet soon found himself a centre of influence at Oxford. Men were drawn to one who argued for truth, not for victory. Among his hearers were Grocyn, Linacre, and Prior Charnock, possibly, also, two men destined to widely different fortunes—Tyndale and Wolsey. Earnest inquirers visited him in private. He directed them to the fundamental truths of Christianity, to the teaching of the Apostles, to Christ Himself. His advice to young men was, "Keep to the Bible and the Apostles' Creed, and let divines, if they like, dispute about the rest."[2] When, in 1505, he was appointed Dean of St. Paul's, he did but carry to his new sphere the spirit and method which had already done so much to promote a more earnest study of the Scriptures, and a more enlightened faith in the halls and students' rooms of Oxford.

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[1] Sometimes, however, he is betrayed into a mystical interpretation by his admiration for the spurious "Celestial Hierarchy," attributed to Dionysius the Areopagite. See Lupton, pp. 79-83.

[2] Seebohm, p. 53 (edit. 1867). On Colet's influence over the young see the Colloquy of Erasmus on "The Youth's Piety," in Bailey's Translation, pp. 48-55, edit. 1877.

Colet's life as Dean of St. Paul's was not a happy one; he accepted the office (says Erasmus) more as a burden than as an honour; he had to encounter the opposition and dislike of the Bishop on the one hand, the cathedral body on the other. He was engaged in a ceaseless struggle with the worldliness of the clergy, caused by the number of rich sinecures connected with the cathedral, and the immense wealth poured into its shrines. But contact with the world only deepened his loyalty to Christ, and brought into stronger relief the simplicity of his life. He still retained his plain black robe in place of the customary purple vestments; he still preferred a small circle of like-minded friends, and the quiet table-talk at the one meal of the day. Indeed, it was partly his simpler and more restricted hospitality which rendered him unpopular with guests, not only lay but clerical, who would have preferred a more luxurious board and less Scripture-reading.

His preaching now took the place of his lectures at Oxford. Not only the wealthy citizens, but the common people, heard him gladly. The Lollard came to hear the one man who had read Wycliffite books, and whose earnestness seemed to give him so much in common with himself. All saw in him one who lived up to the truth he taught. More writes that he was like a physician in whom the patient had confidence.

His most celebrated sermon was that preached, by Archbishop Warham's appointment, at the meeting of Convocation in 1512. This sermon "marks an epoch in the history of the English Church;" it is "the overture in the great drama of the English Reformation."[1] The text was from his favourite St. Paul, in whose cathedral he was preaching: "Be ye not conformed to this world, but be ye reformed in the newness of your minds" (Rom. xii. 2). Following the clauses of the text, he divided his sermon into two heads: Conformation and Reformation. Under the first head he depicts, in dark colours, the lives of the clergy, the pride, lust, covetousness, and worldliness in the Church. Adapting St. John's description of the world, he remarks, "We can truly say, 'all that is in the *Church* is either the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, or the pride of life.'" He quotes, from a sermon of St. Bernard's, a remark to the effect that the heresy of a depraved life is so much more pernicious than that of false teaching, as actions are stronger than words. Coming

[1] Lupton, p. 178. Mr. Lupton notes that Blunt (J. H.), in his "History of the Reformation," takes this sermon as his starting-point, and that Bishop Burnet intended to give it the same position "as a piece that might serve to open the scene." The sermon is given *in extenso* in Seebohm, pp. 162-178; Lupton, Appendix C, pp. 293-304, the latter from a translation made possibly by Colet himself, and preserved in the library at Lambeth Palace.

to the second head, "Reformation," he enforces the old proverb, "Physician, heal thyself;" urging that reform should begin with the bishops, and descend from them, first to the clergy, and then to the laity; that the existing laws as to the ordination of fit persons, and as to clerical residence and morals, should be "rehearsed" and observed; in short, that the Convocation should not break up without some practical result. No words could more forcibly describe the contrast between the true Christian ideal and the actual lives of the clergy. When we remember that the Convocation was called for the suppression of heresy, and that all the great ecclesiastics of England were present, especially Colet's own bishop, Fitzjames, who was anxiously watching for some occasion against him, we can feel that to speak in such words as these needed the courage of a true Christian reformer. Even Latimer, in a sermon, on a similar occasion, twenty-five years later, speaks in no clearer tones.[1]

It is, however, his educational work which has left most tangible results, and by which Colet is most widely known. Yet even this was distinctly religious in its character, and bore the impress of the deep earnestness of the man. His object in founding St. Paul's School was, as he declares in the "Statutes," "to increase knowledge and worshipping of God and our Lord Jesus Christ, and good Christian life and manners in the children."[2] His religious convictions even led him to condemn the classical authors as unfit to form part of a Christian education, and to prescribe, in his course of study, Christian authors who followed most closely the classical style.[3] The chaplain was ordered to instruct the children in the "Articles of the Faith" and the Ten Commandments in English. The scholars, on entering and leaving the school, "salute Christ with an hymn." The school was dedicated to the Child Jesus, whose image was placed over the master's chair, standing and in the attitude of teaching, with the motto (suggested by Erasmus), "Hear ye Him." The "Precepts of Living," for the use of his scholars, contained in the "Cathechyzon" prefixed to his "Accidence," show his care for their moral and religious welfare; while the preface rises to a level far above that of

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[1] When, however, Mr. Lupton says (p. 189), "Had he been willing to play the part of a *Chenaanah* instead of a Micaiah, his course would have been smooth enough," he is unconsciously visiting the sins of the son on the father!

[2] Quoted by Seebohm, from Knight's "Life of Colet," p. 364.

[3] He even, in his Lectures on First Corinthians, applies to this question St. Paul's words in 1 Cor. x. 21, "Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils." As might be expected, Erasmus took quite a different view.

mere classical education in the closing words, so often quoted in illustration at once of the gentleness and the piety of the founder: "And lift up your little white hands. for me, which prayeth for you to God, to Whom be all honour and imperial majesty and glory. Amen."[1]

We know not what qualities to praise most highly in Colet: the earnestness which made him the unwavering champion of the cause of truth; the fearlessness which led him to strike at the besetting sins of clergy, cardinal, and king; the liberality with which he devoted his fortune to the cause of Christian education; the common-sense which prompted his indignation at the superstitious veneration of relics; the unworldliness which kept him humble in a position of dignity and power, simple in the midst of pomp and luxury—or the spirit of genuine piety which marked his whole life, urging him, as Erasmus says, to "spend himself that he might gain men to Christ."

There are two full-length figures of Colet in stained glass—one in the hall of Christ Church, Oxford, the other in the Chapel of Emmanuel College, Cambridge. In the former he is placed with Linacre, More, etc., as one of the seven restorers of learning in England; in the latter he is placed in the same window with Tyndale, and opposite to Fisher and Cranmer. The positions of the two figures are significant of his twofold work—as a promoter of reformed learning, but still more as a champion of reformed religion.

Next to Colet in the group of Reformers stands Erasmus. The relative position of the two men may be expressed by the statement that, while Erasmus represents the scholarship of the movement, the devotion of that scholarship to the cause of Reform was due to the influence of Colet. Arriving at Oxford in 1497, the poor scholar was welcomed to the generous friendship of the ex-Lord Mayor's son. The appreciation was mutual; Colet admired Erasmus' wide and accurate scholarship, Erasmus admired Colet's high moral qualities. Colet seemed to him "as one inspired." Colet, however, sought in Erasmus not only a friend but a fellow-worker: he longed to see him devote his intellect to the highest cause; and he was keenly disappointed when, in spite of his entreaties, Erasmus, in 1499, left Oxford, without feeling his own views sufficiently matured to justify him in following Colet in the path on which he had entered.

But the constant intercourse of the friends, and their frequent discussions on Scriptural topics, had not been in vain; and

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[1] The Catechism is given in Lupton, Appendix B, pp. 285-292. (See Wordsworth's *Eccl. Biogr.*, vol. i., p. 442.)

though, for a time, Erasmus was condemned by his necessities to confine himself to secular studies, yet when, in 1503, he published his "Enchiridion;" or, The Christian Soldier's Dagger, the tone of the book showed that he had resolved to yield to Colet's entreaties, and to devote his abilities to the cause of true religion. From that time he was the unsparing opponent of the old system. In his "Praise of Folly," written in 1510, while staying at More's house, shortly after a visit to Rome, he ridicules the schoolmen for their subtleties, which left them no leisure for the study of the Scriptures; he pictures the rejection of the monks at the Day of Judgment; he even lashes (not too obscurely) the pope himself, the ambitious and warlike Julius II. His "Jerome," published in 1516, was dedicated to Archbishop Warham, the common friend of the three Reformers. His great work was his "Novum Instrumentum," the first printed Greek Testament. In the "Paraclesis," or "exhortation," prefixed to this work, he gives an exposition of his views. He longs to see Christians more in earnest in the cause of their Prince: he would have Christianity open to all. "The sun itself is not more common and open to all than the religion of Christ." He would have the Scriptures in the vulgar tongue. He longs that even the weakest woman should read them; "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." What, he asks, are the writings of the schoolmen in comparison with the Gospels, which give us the living image of the mind of Christ? "Were we to have seen Him with our own eyes, we should not have so intimate a knowledge as they give, of Christ speaking, healing, dying, rising again, as it were, in our own actual presence."[1]

The "Paraclesis" was followed by some remarks on the "Right Method of Theological Study," which, in the second edition of the New Testament, were greatly extended, and subsequently published by themselves. His method is that derived from Colet. He urges, first and foremost, the need of reverence for the New Testament as the "food of the soul;" then a knowledge of the original languages, and of the writer's surroundings; the necessity of regarding the context, and not distorting the sense of individual passages; the desirability of using the best commentators—or none.

This method would impart to the study of the Scriptures not only light, but life. His method of interpretation, as seen

[1] See the condensed translation in Seebohm, pp. 255-258, or the extract in Green's "Short History of the English People," pp. 307, 308 (edit. 1875).

in his "Annotations," exhibits the same freedom as Colet's. He admits the possibility of mistake on the part of the New Testament writers, and holds that the Apostles quoted the Old Testament from memory. He draws his arguments for the truth of Scripture, not from external authority, but from the internal evidence of their general consistency and harmony.

Thus Erasmus consistently pursues the reactionary path in which Colet had led the way, and, as Colet's letters show, with his entire approval and admiration. Reference will be made later on to the preparatory character of Erasmus' work. One special feature of his teaching may be noticed here—his wide view of Christianity as embracing the whole of life. "The Christian," he writes in his "Christian Prince," "is not he who is baptized, or he who is consecrated, or he who is present at holy rites; but he who is united to Christ in closest affection, and who shows it by his holy actions." "Why" (he urges in the preface to a new edition of his "Enchiridion," published in 1518) "should we thus narrow the Christian profession, when Christ wished it to be as broad as possible? In *every* path let all strive to attain to the mind of Christ."[1]

Erasmus, then, represents the movement in its new features of breadth and toleration.

The third member of the group—More—may be dismissed with fewer words. At Oxford Colet and Erasmus were charmed with the ready wit and loving disposition of More; More, at the susceptible age of seventeen, was impressed with the earnestness and piety of Colet. But his father destined him for the bar, and soon removed him from Oxford. In London we catch occasional glimpses of him as the admirer of Colet, the host of Erasmus, the defender of the movement before Henry VIII. His political and official life lies outside the scope of our inquiry. It shows him as one who possessed the courage of his convictions, who "looked first to God, and after God to the king." It is in his "Utopia" that we see his sympathy with the new movement. While the satire of the "Utopia" resembles that of the "Praise of Folly," its earnestness is that of Colet's sermon on Reform. The moral philosophy of the Utopians is an attempt at reconciling Utilitarianism and Christianity — science and religion. Virtue is based on the Law of Nature, and consists in living according to Nature, from a motive of gratitude to Him who is the Father of Nature. Hence no man is to be punished for his religion; even atheists are not punished, but they are looked on as unfit for public trust. Confession was made to the heads of families, not to the priests; public worship was such

[1] Seebohm, pp. 298 and 365, 366.

that all could unite in it, the rites peculiar to each sect being practised in private.

In his dealing with social and political questions, such as labour, education, crime, and public health, More anticipates, in a remarkable way, the direction taken by modern reforms. Thus the "Utopia" represents the common views of the three friends on such subjects as the love of peace, the duty of toleration, the claims of the poor—in a word, the religious movement carried out in the realm of politics.

There is no need to dwell on the contrast between More's earlier and later life; between his advocacy of toleration in the "Utopia," and his official sanction of the persecution of Bainham, Fryth, etc.; between his youthful gentleness and courtesy, and his virulent attacks on Luther and Tyndale. He is not the first, and will not be the last, who has become alarmed at the power of the spirit he has himself conjured up, or whose official position has committed him to acts opposed to his personal convictions and character.

We are now in a position to recognise the common features of the movement, which had its starting-point in Oxford. It was an earnest effort to bring back men to the central and fundamental truths of Christianity; to make learning the handmaid of religion, and, by a deeper and more accurate knowledge of the Scriptures, to lead the way to an enlightened faith, before which the superstitions of the age should silently disappear. It was an effort to carry out Christianity in political life, in the relations of princes and peoples, in religious equality, in fair and moderate taxation, in the pursuit of peace. It taught men the true meaning of the much-abused phrase, a "religious" life—a life passed, not in the narrow limits of the cloister, but in the broad field of daily duty. We may estimate the value of the movement by regarding it from two separate points of view: as a reaction from the past, and as a preparation for the future.

The reality of the break with the past is seen in the hatred and opposition which the movement excited. Colet lived in an atmosphere of persecution. He writes to Erasmus that the Bishop of London "never ceases to harass" him. The articles of heresy, exhibited against him by the Bishop before Archbishop Warham, included such charges as that he had taught that images were not to be worshipped, and, according to Tyndale, that he had translated the Paternoster into English. Colet's danger was no imaginary one. The Bishop had condemned at least two heretics to the stake in 1511. Latimer, in a sermon forty years after, says that "Dr. Colet was in trouble, and should have been burnt if God had not turned the king's heart to the contrary."[1] Others scented heresy in the teaching of Greek

[1] Latimer's Sermons, p. 440; quoted in Lupton, p. 204.

at St. Paul's School. Colet wrote to Erasmus that one bishop had publicly spoken of the school as "a useless, nay, a mischievous institution; nay, a very home of idolatry." Erasmus came in for an equal share of execration. His New Testament was reviled, he says, by obscure men who had never seen even the covers. At one of the colleges at Cambridge it was forbidden to introduce it, "by horse or by boat, on wheels or on foot." The Dominicans, who found themselves unable to force him to re-enter their order, branded him as a renegade and a heretic. When he lay ill at Louvain, a false rumour of his death caused great exultation among his enemies. "He had died," said one of them, "like a heretic as he was: died," he added, in true monkish Latin, "sine lux, sine crux, sine Deus!" Erasmus himself could write of this illness: "When the disease was at its height, I neither felt distressed with the desire of life, nor did I tremble at the fear of death. All my hope was in Christ alone."[1] It is clear, then, that between the "orthodox" party and the Oxford Reformers there was a great gulf fixed.

A second proof of the value of the movement is found in the use made of its literature by the later Reformers. Erasmus, as has been said, represents the literary side of the movement. It was his writings which gave it extension and notoriety. His works passed through edition after edition, and were read all over Europe. Moreover, he was in correspondence with the greatest ecclesiastics of the day. Bishops and archbishops, even the pope himself, allowed him to speak his mind to them with the greatest freedom. No man exercised a greater influence on public opinion. At first, perhaps, we are tempted to think of him as merely a satirist. As we read his "Praise of Folly," or his "Colloquies," their sprightliness of style and range of subject hide from us the unity and seriousness of purpose which underlie them. The versatility of Erasmus' genius, and the keenness of his wit, obscure his earnestness. The first readers of the "Praise of Folly" did not discern its true drift. They dismissed it with a smile; and it was not till the subsequent publication of his more serious works had made Erasmus famous throughout Europe that men awoke to discover the taint of heresy in his earlier productions.

His satire, however, gradually opened men's eyes to the corruptions of the Church, to the empty pretensions of the schoolmen, the immoral lives of the monks. It paved the way for the broader satire of the "Letters of Obscure Men," and "Pope Julius shut out of Heaven." But Erasmus' works did far more than this. They prepared the way for more serious

[1] Seebohm, pp. 380, 381, from Erasmus' works.

effort: they furnished ammunition for the coming conflict; they brought the Bible to the front, and left it to do its own work. They won the approval of the later Reformers:[1] they were even more widely circulated after the rise of Protestantism than before. The "Enchiridion" was translated into English by Tyndale. The New Testament commended itself to Warham, who introduced it to the notice of "bishop after bishop." Fox, Bishop of Winchester, declared that it was worth more than ten commentaries; Latimer, then Professor of Greek at Cambridge, highly approved of it; Fisher, Bishop of Rochester, received the author as his guest. A copy of the "Paraphrases" was placed by Cranmer in every parish church in England. Some traces of his teaching may be found in the formularies of the English Church.

Thus, even if the Oxford friends stood only on the threshold of the Reformed Church, they threw open the door by which others might enter. They bequeathed their work to others. Tyndale followed Erasmus in his labours on the New Testament; Latimer and Fisher handed on the study of Greek; Latimer was Colet's worthy successor in the pulpit.

What, then, to come to the general question, is the relationship between the Oxford Reformers and the later Protestantism? We have already seen many points of resemblance. Luther himself could not surpass Erasmus in his contempt for the monks; in his estimate of the worthlessness of indulgences and pilgrimages, worship of images and adoration of relics; in his desire to substitute spiritual for ceremonial religion; in his longing to see the Scriptures brought within the reach and the understanding of every plain man; in his anxiety to thrust aside mediæval abuses, and to return to the Christianity of St. Paul. Neither Colet nor Erasmus left any provision for the saying of masses on their behalf, or for the support of religious houses. To a certain point the earlier and later Reformers trod in the same path.

But when we leave the negative aspect of their teaching, and come to its positive side, the divergence quickly appears. The Reformation for which Colet and Erasmus laboured was one in life rather than in doctrine. "The worst heresy is a bad life," taught Colet. "The great question," says Erasmus, "is not whether a man understands the doctrine of the procession of the Spirit, but whether he has the fruits of the Spirit." Though they combated the views of the schoolmen, they looked on them rather as useless subtleties than as doctrinal errors.

The Oxford Reformers were impatient of dogma. They looked

[1] Melanchthon speaks of Erasmus as "the first to call back Theology to her fountain-head."

on the exact and formal definition of doctrines as a thing mischievous to attempt, and impossible to realize. Every definition was a misfortune, as leading to difference and division. Division was the very thing they dreaded. They would never have dreamt of casting off the papal yoke. It could not be otherwise. Erasmus was the personal friend of Leo X., to whom he dedicated his New Testament. He had been the schoolfellow of Adrian VI. Their battle was with the abuses of the papal system, not with the system itself. Colet, after careful search, prepared for himself a retreat among the Carthusians at Sheen. It follows as a natural consequence of their views, that they never desired the position of leaders. Colet deprecated the idea of founding a sect. Erasmus exclaimed against Eck's use of the term "Erasmians": "I hate that term of division. We are all Christians, and labour, each in his own sphere, to advance the glory of Christ." He laments, in his "Colloquies," that "Christ's seamless coat is rent asunder on all sides."[1] He would fain see the Church a common bond of union between Christians. He longed that men would cease disputing about abstract doctrine, and unite in dwelling on things necessary to salvation. He looked back with regret to the time when there was but one creed, and that the shortest of the three. It is clear, then, that Erasmus' idea of reform was very different from Luther's. He writes to Melanchthon that as to Luther's doctrines there were different opinions. He writes to Luther himself, advising courtesy rather than impetuosity, urging him to attack abuses of papal authority, not popes themselves. He felt that Luther's bolder work was an interruption to his Scriptural labours. His own work was one for which he was pre-eminently fitted, and in which he had received the sympathy and the pecuniary support of English scholars.

Moreover, there was between them a divergence, not only in method but in doctrine. Luther had seen this from the first. He had been keenly disappointed on reading Erasmus' "Annotations," finding them deficient on the questions of freewill and original sin. He especially disliked Erasmus' free method of interpretation, as destroying the spiritual sense of Scripture. That which, to Erasmus, was "unto life," Luther found to be "unto death." To Luther, Erasmus' views seemed loose and unorthodox; to Erasmus, Luther's views seemed rigid and intolerant. Erasmus admits, in the preface to his "Colloquies,"[2] that young students will find in them many things which oppose the opinions of the Lutherans. In truth, the two methods are irreconcilable. The leader of broader and more moderate views hopes for everything from the quieter course

[1] Bailey's Translation, p. 226.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. xvi.

of internal reform, and looks on more extreme and decided measures as leading only to a catastrophe. The bolder spirit is impatient of paths which seem to lead nowhere, hates what appear the half-measures of a mere trimmer and time-server, and longs for freedom at whatever cost.

Each of the two sides has found supporters. To the mere philosopher the more purely intellectual movement appears preferable. Goethe held that Luther only undid the work which Erasmus had begun.[1] Mr. Seebohm (who is followed by Mr. Green in his "Short History of the English People") contends that the Protestant Reformers were behind, not before, the Oxford Reformers; that they did but replace the scholastic yoke by the Augustinian, from which the Oxford Reformers had endeavoured to set men free. So, too, Colet's latest biographer, Mr. Lupton, speaks of the reviving tendency to trace back the Reformation to Colet, and to see in him a connecting-link between the old and the new.

On the other hand, Mr. Froude (in his "Three Lectures on the Times of Erasmus and Luther") sees in the two men the contrast between intellect and faith, speculation and conviction, caution and conscientiousness. He looks on the former as a type of leader unsuited to the times, and unequal to the work to be done. "Erasmus, in preaching moderation, was preaching to the winds." "Erasmus believed himself that his work was spoilt by the Reformation; but, in fact, under no conditions could any more have come of it." This paper has been written in vain, however, if it has not shown that there is much more in the work of the Oxford friends than the caution and speculation of a merely intellectual movement. Even if Mr. Froude's verdict on the character and work of Erasmus were accepted, it might still be contended that much which is true of Erasmus would not apply to Colet. As Mr. Lupton remarks, "To say that Erasmus wanted the single-mindedness of Colet, or the intrepidity of More, is merely to say that his character was not a perfect one." It is idle to speculate what might have happened had Colet lived to witness the later Reformation in England. Yet it seems more than probable that the sentence he so narrowly escaped would have overtaken him, and that he would have manfully laid down his life in defence of the truths he believed and taught.

To conclude, then, we indicate at once the strength and the weakness of the movement in speaking of it as preparatory. Widely as the earlier and later Reformers differed—sorrowfully, even bitterly, as each looked on the other—yet each was neces-

[1] Froude's "Short Studies on Great Subjects: Erasmus and Luther," vol. i., p. 48. Cf. pp. 86, 87, 114-135.

sary to the success of the other's work. Unless the minds of men had been first aroused and enlightened by the writings of the earlier Reformers, Luther, when he made his great stand, would have failed from want of support. As the monks said, "Erasmus laid the egg, and Luther hatched the cockatrice." And unless a more vigorous hand had carried on the earlier work, it would have failed of its due effect. Erasmus' mainly destructive criticism might have driven some unstable souls into partial infidelity, or have thrust back others, in despair, into deeper darkness. In times of darkness and death two things are needed—light and life. If the special characteristic of the former movement was light, that of the later was life.

There have been times in the history alike of states and of churches, when quiet constitutional methods of reform seem unavailing, when the slumber of men's souls has been too profound to be shaken by anything less than the shock of some great convulsion. The Reformer for such times must be a son of thunder, a man of sterner stuff than the noble Colet, or the tolerant Erasmus, or the polished More. Such a time was that which preceded the Protestant Reformation: such a Reformer was Martin Luther.

W. E. PLATER.

ART. III.—SIR WALTER SCOTT—(CONTINUED).

"THE Lady of the Lake," which depends for its chief interest on incident and romantic situation, but which is also full of light and colour, martial ardour, and national feeling, was published in May, 1810. Scott's reputation had so steadily increased that he sold the copyright for double the price that "Marmion" had produced. A lady, a cousin of his, who, when the work was in progress, used to ask him what he could possibly have to do so early in the morning, and to whom he at last told the subject of his meditations, tried to dissuade him from publishing a poem after "Marmion," fearing lest its popularity should stand in the way of another, however good. "He stood high," she said, "and should notrashly attempt to climb higher, and incur the risk of a fall; for he might depend upon it a favourite would not be permitted even to stumble with impunity." But he replied, in the words of Montrose:

> He either fears his fate too much,
> Or his deserts are small,
> Who dares not put it to the touch,
> To win or lose it all.

As the last sheets were passing through the press he writes to Morritt: "If I fail, as Lady Macbeth gallantly says, I fail, and