

**THE LIVES OF JEHAN
VITRIER, WARDEN OF THE
FRANCISCAN CONVENT AT
ST. OMER, AND JOHN COLET**

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J. H. LUPTON

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ERASMUS'S LIVES OF VITRIER
AND COLET.

THE LIVES OF
JEHAN VITRIER,

WARDEN OF THE FRANCISCAN CONVENT AT ST. OMER,

AND

JOHN COLET,

DEAN OF ST. PAUL'S, LONDON.

WRITTEN IN LATIN, BY ERASMUS OF ROTTERDAM, IN
A LETTER TO JUSTUS JONAS.

TRANSLATED, WITH NOTES AND APPENDICES,

BY

J. H. LUPTON, M.A.,

SURMASTER OF ST. PAUL'S SCHOOL, AND FORMERLY FELLOW OF
ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.



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PREFACE.

THE thought of making this translation from Erasmus was suggested, in the first instance, by some remarks that occurred in the course of an article in the *Saturday Review* of April 1st, 1876. Commenting on a new edition of J. G. Nichols' *Pilgrimages to St. Mary of Walsingham*, the reviewer called attention to "two minor tractates of Erasmus, of very considerable historical interest," incorporated in the notes to that work. The opinion was further expressed, that they were "more deserving of a permanent place in literature than the *Peregrinatio* itself."

One of the two pieces thus commended was the biographical sketch of Dean Colet, which fills the latter half of the letter of Erasmus here translated. The other was a much shorter extract, taken from the *Ecclesiastes*, in which Erasmus portrays the character of Archbishop Warham. This too has been added as an appendix. Though the only excuse for introducing it is a single mention of Warham in the text, the reader may pardon its insertion, if only as a relief to the inadequate appreciation of such a man observable in Froude.

The name of Vitrier is joined with that of Colet on the title-page, simply because Erasmus thought proper so to join them in his letter to Justus Jonas. In answer to his friend's request, he sent him an account of the English Dean, lately dead; linking to it, whether judiciously or not, an

account of his contemporary at St. Omer, Jehan Vitrier. No doubt Erasmus had reasons for placing them side by side. They were nearly of the same age, Vitrier being a few years the senior. Both were heads of religious communities; both, from their uncompromising sincerity, were obnoxious, in a greater or less degree, alike to their superiors and subordinates. Both were of strong reforming tendencies, though loyal, in the truest sense, to the Church of their fathers. Even in personal appearance there would seem to have been a likeness between the two.

Hence it was judged most advisable not to interfere with the grouping of Erasmus. His letter to the Wittemberg reformer will now for the first time, so far as I am aware, appear in its entirety in an English version. Parts of it have been several times reproduced. The latter portion, containing the Life of Colet, was translated and published by Thomas Smith in 1661, by J. G. Nichols in 1849, and by W. Palmer in 1851. Much of the earlier half, containing the Life of Vitrier, was given by Mr. Drummond, in his *Life of Erasmus*, in 1873. But no translation of the Letter as a whole has so far, I believe, been published. In the mere work of translating I have, indeed, been forestalled. For it appears, from an entry in Mr. Gairdner's Calendar of the *Letters and Papers of the Reign of Henry VIII.*, that on July 2nd, 1553, Martin Tyndall, a young fellow of King's College, sent such a translation, as a specimen of his powers, and in the hope of obtaining some requital, to Thomas Cromwell, Earl of Essex. These "Lives of John Colet and John Vitriari," he writes, "lay buried in a corner of Erasmus's Epistles; but now Colet may revisit his kinsmen, friends, and scholars, all of whom are not yet dead."

Tyndall's too sanguine expectation would seem to have been doomed to disappointment. But still, as he truly declared, Colet's friends and scholars are not yet all dead. There are yet those who have caught something of his disinterested spirit, and have striven to honour one who shunned all outward honours himself. After the labours of such men as Mr. Seebohm, the late Mr. J. R. Green, and Professor Henry Morley, it is not likely that any history of this country will appear in the future, from which his name will be missing.

When I finished, some few years ago, the task of editing Dean Colet's unpublished works, it seemed natural that I should endeavour to complete the series by preparing a Life of the author. From various quarters, in fact, the request came to me that I would do so, either by writing an entirely fresh biography, or by re-editing the standard Life of Dr. Knight. But the first of these undertakings was beyond my ambition; and as for the second, I had such a poor opinion of Dr. Knight's performance, that I had no inclination to meddle with it. And thus, on the whole, it seemed best to spend what labour I could afford in illustrating this letter of Erasmus. If his portrait of Colet, on which the reader's interest will naturally centre, be but a sketch, it is yet a contemporary sketch, and from the hand of a master; and if it occupy but half his canvas, the companion picture may help to set it off.

I had thought of adding, in an appendix, the Catechism, and Latin Prayers, and School Statutes of Dean Colet; but these, or some of these, will probably appear in an edition of the *Fasti*, or Registers of St. Paul's School, which my colleague, the Rev. R. B. Gardiner, is about to publish in the

course of the present year. It should be mentioned in conclusion that the text here translated from is that of the Leyden edition of Erasmus's works, in the third volume of which the Letter will be found, numbered ccccxv.

J. H. L.

Easter, 1883.