

RENAISSANCE NEWS

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Thomas More's 1518 Letter to the University of Oxford

BY T. S. K. SCOTT-CRAIG

IN the spring of 1518, the humanist and lawyer More was in Abingdon near Oxford, in attendance on his royal master, Henry VIII, the humanist prince. Since More was present in his capacity of Master of Requests or examiner of petitions, it is likely that he drew Henry's attention to the current attack on Hellenism in the University of Oxford, and wrote the following letter, more or less in the course of his duties. In any case, the whole tone of the letter which More composed to deal with the barbarians reflects the early Tudor situation at its best—a general humanistic critique of a church-dominated and intellectually backward society, combined with a very real sense of the interests of the State, through the monarch and his advisers, in a sound humanistic education for its future scholars, lawyers, and churchmen.

More begins with the ironic bow of a man of affairs to the world of