

Matthew Arnold eBook

Matthew Arnold by George William Erskine Russell

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Page 1

MATTHEW ARNOLD

Eldest son of Thomas Arnold, D.D., and Mary Penrose

Born 1822

Entered Winchester College 1836

Transferred to Rugby School 1837

Scholar of Balliol 1840

Entered Balliol College 1841

Newdigate Prizeman 1843

B.A. 1844

Fellow of Oriel 1845

Private Secretary to Lord Lansdowne 1847

Inspector of Schools 1851

Married Frances Lucy Wightman 1851

Professor of Poetry at Oxford 1857

D.C.L. 1870

Resigned Inspectorship 1886

Died 1888

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This book is intended to deal with substance rather than with form. But, in estimating the work of a teacher who taught exclusively with the pen, it would be perverse to disregard entirely the qualities of the writing which so penetrated and coloured the



intellectual life of the Victorian age. Some cursory estimate of Arnold's powers in prose and verse must therefore be attempted, before we pass on to consider the practical effect which those powers enabled him to produce.

And here it behoves a loyal and grateful disciple to guard himself sedulously against the peril of overstatement. For to the unerring taste, the sane and sober judgment, of the Master, unrestrained and inappropriate praise would have been peculiarly distressing.

This caution applies with special force to our estimate of his rank in poetry. That he was a poet, the most exacting, the most paradoxical criticism will hardly deny; but there is urgent need for moderation and self-control when we come to consider his place among the poets. Are we to call him a great poet? The answer must be carefully pondered.

In the first place, he did not write very much. The total body of his poetry is small. He wrote in the rare leisure-hours of an exacting profession, and he wrote only in the early part of his life. In later years he seemed to feel that the "ancient fount of inspiration"[1] was dry. He had delivered his message to his generation, and wisely avoided last words. Then it seems indisputable that he wrote with difficulty. His poetry has little ease, fluency, or spontaneous movement. In every line it bears traces of the laborious file. He had the poet's heart and mind, but they did not readily express themselves in the poetic medium. He longed for poetic utterance, as his only adequate vent, and sought it earnestly with tears. Often he achieved it, but not seldom he left the impression of frustrated and disappointing effort, rather than of easy mastery and sure attainment.

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Again, if we bear in mind Milton's threefold canon, we must admit that his poetry lacks three great elements of power. He is not Simple, Sensuous, or Passionate. He is too essentially modern to be really simple. He is the product of a high-strung civilization, and all its complicated crosscurrents of thought and feeling stir and perplex his verse. Simplicity of style indeed he constantly aims at, and, by the aid of a fastidious culture, secures. But his simplicity is, to use the distinction which he himself imported from France, rather akin to *simplesse* than to *simplicite*—to the elaborated and artificial semblance than to the genuine quality. He is not sensuous except in so far as the most refined and delicate appreciation of nature in all her forms and phases can be said to constitute a sensuous enjoyment. And then, again, he is pre-eminently not passionate. He is calm, balanced, self-controlled, sane, austere. The very qualities which are his characteristic glory make passion impossible.

Another hindrance to his title as a great poet, is that he is not, and never could be, a poet of the multitude. His verse lacks all popular fibre. It is the delight of scholars, of philosophers, of men who live by silent introspection or quiet communing with nature. But it is altogether remote from the stir and stress of popular life and struggle. Then, again, his tone is profoundly, though not morbidly, melancholy, and this is fatal to popularity. As he himself said, "The life of the people is such that in literature they require joy." But not only his thought, his very style, is anti-popular. Much of his most elaborate work is in blank verse, and that in itself is a heavy draw-back. Much also is in exotic and unaccustomed metres, which to the great bulk of English readers must always be more of a discipline than of a delight. And, even when he wrote in our indigenous metres, his ear often played him false. His rhymes are sometimes only true to the eye, and his lines are over-crowded with jerking monosyllables. Let one glaring instance suffice—

Calm not life's crown, though calm is well.

The sentiment is true and even profound; but the expression is surely rugged and jolting to the last degree; and there are many lines nearly as ineuphonious. Here are some samples, collected by that fastidious critic, Mr. Frederic Harrison—

"The sandy spits, the shore-lock'd lakes."

"Could'st thou no better keep, O Abbey old?"

"The strange-scrawl'd rocks, the lonely sky."

These Mr. Harrison cites as proof that, "where Nature has withheld the ear for music, no labour and no art can supply the want." And I think that even a lover may add to the collection—

As the punt's rope chops round.

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But, after all these deductions and qualifications have been made, it remains true that Arnold was a poet, and that his poetic quality was pure and rare. His musings “on Man, on Nature, and on Human Life,”[2] are essentially and profoundly poetical. They have indeed a tragic inspiration. He is deeply imbued by the sense that human existence, at its best, is inadequate and disappointing. He feels, and submits to, its incompleteness and its limitations. With stately resignation he accepts the common fate, and turns a glance of calm disdain on all endeavours after a spurious consolation. All round him he sees

Uno'erleap'd Mountains of Necessity,
Sparing us narrower margin than we deem.

He dismissed with a rather excessive contempt the idea that the dreams of childhood may be intimations of immortality; and the inspiration which poets of all ages have agreed to seek in the hope of endless renovation, he found in the immediate contemplation of present good. What his brother-poet called “self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control,” are the keynotes of that portion of his poetry which deals with the problems of human existence. When he handles these themes, he speaks to the innermost consciousness of his hearers, telling us what we know about ourselves, and have believed hidden from all others, or else putting into words of perfect suitability what we have dimly felt, and have striven in vain to utter. It is then that, to use his own word, he is most “interpretative.” It is this quality which makes such poems as *Youth's Agitations*, *Youth and Calm*, *Self-dependence*, and *The Grande Chartreuse* so precious a part of our intellectual heritage.

In 1873 he wrote to his sister: “I have a curious letter from the State of Maine in America, from a young man who wished to tell me that a friend of his, lately dead, had been especially fond of my poem, *A Wish*, and often had it read to him in his last illness. They were both of a class too poor to buy books, and had met with the poem in a newspaper.”

It will be remembered that in *A Wish*, the poet, contemptuously discarding the conventional consolations of a death-bed, entreats his friends to place him at the open window, that he may see yet once again—

Bathed in the sacred dews of morn
The wide aerial landscape spread—
The world which was ere I was born,
The world which lasts when I am dead;

Which never was the friend of *one*,
Nor promised love it could not give.
But lit for all its generous sun,
And lived itself, and made us live.



There let me gaze, till I become
In soul, with what I gaze on, wed!
To feel the universe my home;
To have before my mind—instead

Of the sick room, the mortal strife,
The turmoil for a little breath—
The pure eternal course of life,
Not human combatings with death!



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Thus feeling, gazing, might I grow
Composed, refresh'd, ennobled, clear;
Then willing let my spirit go
To work or wait elsewhere or here!

This solemn love and reverence for the continuous life of the physical universe may remind us that Arnold's teaching about humanity, subtle and searching as it is, has done less to endear him to many of his disciples, than his feeling for Nature. His is the kind of Nature-worship which takes nothing at second-hand. He paid "the Mighty Mother" the only homage which is worthy of her acceptance, a minute and dutiful study of her moods and methods. He placed himself as a reverent learner at her feet before he presumed to go forth to the world as an exponent of her teaching. It is this exactness of observation which makes his touches of local colouring so vivid and so true. This gives its winning charm to his landscape-painting, whether the scene is laid in Kensington Gardens, or the Alps, or the valley of the Thames. This fills *The Scholar-Gipsy*, and *Thyrsis*, and *Obermann*, and *The Forsaken Merman* with flawless gems of natural description, and felicities of phrase which haunt the grateful memory.

In brief, it seems to me that he was not a great poet, for he lacked the gifts which sway the multitude, and compel the attention of mankind. But he was a true poet, rich in those qualities which make the loved and trusted teacher of a chosen few—as he himself would have said, of "the Remnant." Often in point of beauty and effectiveness, always in his purity and elevation, he is worthy to be associated with the noblest names of all. Alone among his contemporaries, we can venture to say of him that he was not only of the school, but of the lineage, of Wordsworth. His own judgment on his place among the modern poets was thus given in a letter of 1869: "My poems represent, on the whole, the main movement of mind of the last quarter of a century, and thus they will probably have their day as people become conscious to themselves of what that movement of mind is, and interested in the literary productions which reflect it. It might be fairly urged that I have less poetic sentiment than Tennyson, and less intellectual vigour and abundance than Browning. Yet because I have more perhaps of a fusion of the two than either of them, and have more regularly applied that fusion to the main line of modern development, I am likely enough to have my turn, as they have had theirs."

When we come to consider him as a prose-writer, cautions and qualifications are much less necessary. Whatever may be thought of the substance of his writings, it surely must be admitted that he was a great master of style. And his style was altogether his own. In the last year of his life he said to the present writer: "People think I can teach them style. What stuff it all is! Have something to say, and say it as clearly as you can. That is the only secret of style."

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Clearness is indeed his own most conspicuous note, and to clearness he added singular grace, great skill in phrase-making, great aptitude for beautiful description, perfect naturalness, absolute ease. The very faults which the lovers of a more pompous rhetoric profess to detect in his writing are the easy-going fashions of a man who wrote as he talked. The members of a college which produced Cardinal Newman, Dean Church, and Matthew Arnold are not without some justification when they boast of “the Oriel style.”

But style, though a great delight and a great power, is not everything, and we must not found our claim for him as a prose-writer on style alone. His style was the worthy and the suitable vehicle of much of the very best criticism which English literature contains. We take the whole mass of his critical writing, from the *Lectures on Homer* and the *Essays in Criticism* down to the Preface to Wordsworth and the Discourse on Milton; and we ask, Is there anything better?

When he wrote as a critic of books, his taste, his temper, his judgment were pretty nearly infallible. He combined a loyal and reasonable submission to literary authority with a free and even daring use of private judgment. His admiration for the acknowledged masters of human utterance—Homer, Sophocles, Shakespeare, Milton, Goethe—was genuine and enthusiastic, and incomparably better informed than that of some more conventional critics. Yet this cordial submission to recognized authority, this honest loyalty to established reputation, did not blind him to defects, did not seduce him into indiscriminate praise, did not deter him from exposing the tendency to verbiage in Burke and Jeremy Taylor, the excessive blankness of much of Wordsworth’s blank verse, the undercurrent of mediocrity in Macaulay, the absurdities of Ruskin’s etymology. And, as in great matters, so in small. Whatever literary production was brought under his notice, his judgment was clear, sympathetic, and independent. He had the readiest appreciation of true excellence, a quick eye for minor merits of facility and method, a severe intolerance of turgidity and inflation—of what he called “desperate endeavours to render a platitude endurable by making it pompous,” and a lively horror of affectation and unreality. These, in literature as in life, were in his eyes the unpardonable sins.

On the whole it may be said that, as a critic of books, he had in his lifetime the reputation, the vogue, which he deserved. But his criticism in other fields has hardly been appreciated at its proper value. Certainly his politics were rather fantastic. They were influenced by his father’s fiery but limited Liberalism, by the abstract speculation which flourishes perennially at Oxford, and by the cultivated Whiggery which he imbibed as Lord Lansdowne’s Private Secretary; and the result often seemed wayward and whimsical. Of this he was himself in some degree aware. At any rate he knew perfectly that

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his politics were lightly esteemed by politicians, and, half jokingly, half seriously, he used to account for the fact by that jealousy of an outsider's interference, which is natural to all professional men. Yet he had the keenest interest, not only in the deeper problems of politics, but also in the routine and mechanism of the business. He enjoyed a good debate, liked political society, and was interested in the personalities, the trivialities, the individual and domestic ins-and-outs, which make so large a part of political conversation.

But, after all, Politics, in the technical sense, did not afford a suitable field for his peculiar gifts. It was when he came to the criticism of national life that the hand of the master was felt. In all questions affecting national character and tendency, the development of civilization, public manners, morals, habits, idiosyncrasies, the influence of institutions, of education, of literature, his insight was penetrating, his point of view perfectly original, and his judgment, if not always sound, invariably suggestive. These qualities, among others, gave to such books as *Essays in Criticism*, *Friendship's Garland*, and *Culture and Anarchy*, an interest and a value quite independent of their literary merit. And they are displayed in their most serious and deliberate form, dissociated from all mere fun and vivacity, in his *Discourses in America*. This, he told the present writer, was the book by which, of all his prose-writings, he most desired to be remembered. It was a curious and memorable choice.

Another point of great importance in his prosewriting is this; if he had never written prose the world would never have known him as a humorist. And that would have been an intellectual loss not easily estimated. How pure, how delicate, yet how natural and spontaneous his humour was, his friends and associates knew well; and—what is by no means always the case—the humour of his writing was of exactly the same tone and quality as the humour of his conversation. It lost nothing in the process of transplantation. As he himself was fond of saying, he was not a popular writer, and he was never less popular than in his humorous vein. In his fun there is no grinning through a horse-collar, no standing on one's head, none of the guffaws, and antics, and “full-bodied gaiety of our English Cider-Cellar.” But there is a keen eye for subtle absurdity, a glance which unveils affectation and penetrates bombast, the most delicate sense of incongruity, the liveliest disrelish for all the moral and intellectual qualities which constitute the Bore, and a vein of personal raillery as refined as it is pungent. Sydney Smith spoke of Sir James Mackintosh as “abating and dissolving pompous gentlemen with the most successful ridicule.” The words not inaptly describe Arnold's method of handling personal and literary pretentiousness.

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His praise as a phrase-maker is in all the Churches of literature. It was his skill in this respect which elicited the liveliest compliments from a transcendent performer in the same field. In 1881 he wrote to his sister: "On Friday night I had a long talk with Lord Beaconsfield. He ended by declaring that I was the only living Englishman who had become a classic in his own lifetime. The fact is that what I have done in establishing a number of current phrases, such as *Philistinism*, *Sweetness and Light*, and all that is just the thing to strike him." In 1884 he wrote from America about his phrase, *The Remnant*—"That term is going the round of the United States, and I understand what Dizzy meant when he said that I had performed 'a great achievement in launching phrases.'" But his wise epigrams and compendious sentences about books and life, admirable in themselves, will hardly recall the true man to the recollection of his friends so effectually as his sketch of the English Academy, disturbed by a "flight of Corinthian leading articles, and an irruption of Mr. G.A. Sala;" his comparison of Miss Cobbe's new religion to the British College of Health; his parallel between Phidias' statue of the Olympian Zeus and Coles' truss-manufactory; Sir William Harcourt's attempt to "develop a system of unsectarian religion from the Life of Mr. Pickwick;" the "portly jeweller from Cheapside," with his "passionate, absorbing, almost blood-thirsty clinging to life;" the grandiose war-correspondence of the *Times*, and "old Russell's guns getting a little honey-combed;" Lord Lumpington's subjection to "the grand, old, fortifying, classical curriculum," and the "feat of mental gymnastics" by which he obtained his degree; the Rev. Esau Hittall's "longs and shorts about the Calydonian Boar, which were not bad;" the agitation of the Paris Correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph* on hearing the word "delicacy"; the "bold, bad men, the haunters of Social Science Congresses," who declaim "a sweet union of philosophy and poetry" from Wordsworth on the duty of the State towards education; the impecunious author "commercing with the stars" in Grub Street, reading "the *Star* for wisdom and charity, the *Telegraph* for taste and style," and looking for the letter from the Literary Fund, "enclosing half-a-crown, the promise of my dinner at Christmas, and the kind wishes of Lord Stanhope[3] for my better success in authorship."

One is tempted to prolong this analysis of literary arts and graces; but enough has been said to recall some leading characteristics of Arnold's genius in verse and prose. We turn now to our investigation of what he accomplished. The field which he included in his purview was wide—almost as wide as our national life. We will consider, one by one, the various departments of it in which his influence was most distinctly felt; but first of all a word must be said about his Method.

[Footnote 1: Tennyson.]



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[Footnote 2: Wordsworth.]

[Footnote 3: See p. 207. Philip Henry, 5th Earl Stanhope (1805-1875), Historian, and Patron of Letters.]

[Illustration: Laleham Ferry

Matthew Arnold was born on Christmas Eve, 1822, at Laleham, near Staines.

Photo H.W. Taunt]

CHAPTER II

METHOD

The Matthew Arnold whom we know begins in 1848; and, when we first make his acquaintance, in his earliest letters to his mother and his eldest sister, he is already a Critic. He is only twenty-five years old, and he is writing in the year of Revolution. Thrones are going down with a crash all over Europe; the voices of triumphant freedom are in the air; the long-deferred millennium of peace and brotherhood seems to be just on the eve of realization. But, amid all this glorious hurly-burly, this "joy of eventful living," the young philosopher stands calm and unshaken; interested indeed, and to some extent sympathetic, but wholly detached and impartially critical. He thinks that the fall of the French Monarchy is likely to produce social changes here, for "no one looks on, seeing his neighbour mending, without asking himself if he cannot mend in the same way." He is convinced that "the hour of the hereditary peerage and eldest sonship and immense properties has struck"; he thinks that a five years' continuance of these institutions is "long enough, certainly, for patience, already at death's door, to have to die in." He pities (in a sonnet) "the armies of the homeless and unfed." But all the time he resents the "hot, dizzy trash which people are talking" about the Revolution. He sees a torrent of American vulgarity and "*laideur*" threatening to overflow Europe. He thinks England, as it is, "not liveable-in," but is convinced that a Government of Chartists would not mend matters; and, after telling a Republican friend that "God knows it, I am with you," he thus qualifies his sympathy—

Yet, when I muse on what life is, I seem
Rather to patience prompted, than that proud
Prospect of hope which France proclaims so loud—
France, famed in all great arts, in none supreme.

In fine, he is critical of his own country, critical of all foreign nations, critical of existing institutions, critical of well-meant but uninstructed attempts to set them right. And, as he was in the beginning, so he continued throughout his life and to its close. It is



impossible to conceive of him as an enthusiastic and unqualified partisan of any cause, creed, party, society, or system. Admiration he had, for worthy objects, in abundant store; high appreciation for what was excellent; sympathy with all sincere and upward-tending endeavour. But few indeed were the objects which he found wholly admirable, and keen was his eye for the flaws and foibles which war against absolute perfection.



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On the last day of his life he said in a note to the present writer: "S—— has written a letter full of shriekings and cursings about my innocent article; the Americans will get their notion of it from that, and I shall never be able to enter America again." That "innocent article" was an estimate, based on his experience in two recent visits to the United States, of American civilization. "Innocent" perhaps it was, but it was essentially critical. He began by saying that in America the "political and social problem" had been well solved; that there the constitution and government were to the people as well-fitting clothes to a man; that there was a closer union between classes there than elsewhere, and a more "homogeneous" nation. But then he went on to say that, besides the political and social problem, there was a "human problem," and that in trying to solve this America had been less successful—indeed, very unsuccessful. The "human problem" was the problem of civilization, and civilization meant "humanization in society"—the development of the best in man, in and by a social system. And here he pronounced America defective. America generally—life, people, possessions—was not "interesting." Americans lived willingly in places called by such names as Briggsville, Jacksonville and Marcellus. The general tendency of public opinion was against distinction. America offered no satisfaction to the sense for beauty, the sense for elevation. Tall talk and self-glorification were rampant, and no criticism was tolerated. In fine, there were many countries, less free and less prosperous, which were more civilized.

That "innocent article," written in 1888, shows exactly the same balanced tone and temper—the same critical attitude towards things with which in the main he sympathizes—as the letters of 1848.

And what is true of the beginning and the end is true of the long tract which lay between. From first to last he was a Critic—a calm and impartial judge, a serene distributor of praise and blame—never a zealot, never a prophet, never an advocate, never a dealer in that "*blague* and mob-pleasing" of which he truly said that it "is a real talent and tempts many men to apostasy."

For some forty years he taught his fellow-men, and all his teaching was conveyed through the critical medium. He never dogmatized, preached, or laid down the law. Some great masters have taught by passionate glorification of favourite personalities or ideals, passionate denunciation of what they disliked or despised. Not such was Arnold's method; he himself described it, most happily, as "sinuous, easy, unpolemical." By his free yet courteous handling of subjects the most august and conventions the most respectable, he won to his side a band of disciples who had been repelled by the brutality and cocksureness of more boisterous teachers. He was as temperate in eulogy as in condemnation; he could hint a virtue and hesitate a liking.[4]

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It happens, as we have just seen, that his earliest and latest criticisms were criticisms of Institutions, and a great part of his critical writing deals with similar topics; but these will be more conveniently considered when we come to estimate his effect on Society and Politics. That effect will perhaps be found to have been more considerable than his contemporaries imagined; for, though it became a convention to praise his literary performances and judgments, it was no less a convention to dismiss as visionary and absurd whatever he wrote about the State and the Community.

But in the meantime we must say a word about his critical method when applied to Life, and when applied to Books. When one speaks of criticism, one is generally thinking of prose. But, when we speak of Arnold's criticism, it is necessary to widen the scope of one's observation; for he was never more essentially the critic than when he concealed the true character of his method in the guise of poetry. Even if we decline to accept his strange judgment that all poetry "is at bottom a criticism of life," still we must perceive that, as a matter of fact, many of his own poems are as essentially critical as his Essays or his Lectures.

We all remember that he poked fun at those misguided Wordsworthians who seek to glorify their master by claiming for him an "ethical system as distinctive and capable of exposition as Bishop Butler's," and "a scientific system of thought." But surely we find in his own poetry a sustained doctrine of self-mastery, duty, and pursuit of truth, which is essentially ethical, and, in its form, as nearly "scientific" and systematic as the nature of poetry permits. And this doctrine is conveyed, not by positive, hortatory, or didactic methods, but by Criticism—the calm praise of what commends itself to his judgment, the gentle but decisive rebuke of whatever offends or darkens or misleads. Of him it may be truly said, as he said of Goethe, that

He took the suffering human race,
He read each wound, each weakness clear;
And struck his finger on the place,
And said: *Thou ailst here, and here.*

His deepest conviction about "the suffering human race" would seem to have been that its worst miseries arise from a too exalted estimate of its capacities. Men are perpetually disappointed and disillusioned because they expect too much from human life and human nature, and persuade themselves that their experience, here and hereafter, will be, not what they have any reasonable grounds for expecting, but what they imagine or desire. The true philosophy is that which

Neither makes man too much a god,
Nor God too much a man.

Wordsworth thought it a boon to "feel that we are greater than we know": Arnold thought it a misfortune. Wordsworth drew from the shadowy impressions of the past the

most splendid intimations of the future. Against such vain imaginings Arnold set, in prose, the “inexorable sentence” in which Butler warned us to eschew pleasant self-deception; and, in verse, the persistent question—



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Say, what blinds us, that we claim the glory
Of possessing powers not our share?

He rebuked

Wishes unworthy of a man full-grown.

He taught that there are

Joys which were not for our use designed.

He warned discontented youth not to expect greater happiness from advancing years,
because

one thing only has been lent
To youth and age in common—discontent.

Friendship is a broken reed, for

Our vaunted life is one long funeral,

and even Hope is buried with the “faces that smiled and fled.”

Death, at least in some of its aspects, seemed to him the

Stern law of every mortal lot,
Which man, proud man, finds hard to bear;
And builds himself I know not what
Of second life I know not where.

And yet, in gleams of happier insight, he saw the man who “flagged not in this earthly
strife,”

His soul well-knit, and all his battles won,

mount, though hardly, to eternal life. And, as he mused over his father’s grave, the
conviction forced itself upon his mind that somewhere in the “labour-house of being”
there still was employment for that father’s strength, “zealous, beneficent, firm.”

Here indeed is the more cheerful aspect of his “criticism of life.” Such happiness as
man is capable of enjoying is conditioned by a frank recognition of his weaknesses and
limitations; but it requires also for its fulfilment the sedulous and dutiful employment of
such powers and opportunities as he has.



First and foremost, he must realize the “majestic unity” of his nature, and not attempt by morbid introspection to dissect himself into

Affections, Instincts, Principles, and Powers,
Impulse and Reason, Freedom and Control.

Then he must learn that

To its own impulse every action stirs.

He must live by his own light, and let earth live by hers. The forces of nature are to be in this respect his teachers—

But with joy the stars perform their shining,
And the sea its long moon-silvered roll;
For self-poised they live, nor pine with noting
All the fever of some differing soul.

But, though he is to learn from Nature and love Nature and enjoy Nature, he is to remember that she

never was the friend of *one*,
Nor promised love she could not give;

and so he is not to expect too much from her, or demand impossible boons. Still less is he to be content with feeling himself “in harmony” with her; for

Man covets all which Nature has, but more.

That “more” is Conscience and the Moral Sense.

Man must begin, know this, where Nature ends;
Nature and man can never be fast friends.

And this brings us to the idea of Duty as set forth in his poems, and Duty resolves itself into three main elements: Truth—Work—Love. Truth comes first. Man’s prime duty is to know things as they are. Truth can only be attained by light, and light he must cultivate, he must worship. Arnold’s highest praise for a lost friend is that he was “a child of light”; that he had “truth without alloy,”



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And joy in light, and power to spread the joy.

The saddest part of that friend's death is the fear that it may bring,

After light's term, a term of cecity:

the best hope for the future, that light will return and banish the follies, sophistries, delusions, which have accumulated in the darkness. "Lucidity of soul" may be—nay, must be, "sad"; but it is not less imperative. And the truth which light reveals must not only be sought earnestly and cherished carefully, but even, when the cause demands it, championed strenuously. The voices of conflict, the joy of battle, the "garments rolled in blood," the "burning and fuel of fire" have little place in Arnold's poetry. But once at any rate he bursts into a strain so passionate, so combatant, that it is difficult for a disciple to recognize his voice; and then the motive is a summons to a last charge for Truth and Light—

They out-talk'd thee, hiss'd thee, tore thee?
Better men fared thus before thee;
Fired their ringing shot and pass'd,
Hotly charged—and sank at last.

Charge once more, then, and be dumb!
Let the victors, when they come,
When the forts of folly fall,
Find thy body by the wall!

But the note of battle, even for what he holds dearest and most sacred, is not a familiar note in his poetry. He had no natural love of

the throng'd field where winning comes by strife.

His criticism of life sets a higher value on work than on fighting. "Toil unsevered from tranquillity," "Labour, accomplish'd in repose"—is his ideal of happiness and duty.

Even the Duke of Wellington—surely an unpromising subject for poetic eulogy—is praised because he was a worker,

Laborious, persevering, serious, firm.

Nature, again, is called in to teach us the secret of successful labour. Her forces are incessantly at work, and in that work they are entirely concentrated—

Bounded by themselves, and unregardful
In what state God's other works may be,



In their own tasks all their powers pouring,
These attain the mighty life you see.

But those who had the happiness of knowing Arnold in the flesh will feel that they never so clearly recognize his natural voice as when, by his criticism of life, he is inculcating the great law of Love. Even in the swirl of Revolution he clings to his fixed idea of love as duty. After discussing the rise and fall of dynasties, the crimes of diplomacy, the characteristic defects of rival nations, and all the stirring topics of the time, he abruptly concludes his criticism with an appeal to Love. "Be kind to the neighbours—'this is all we can.'"

And as in his prose, so in his poetry. Love, even in arrest of formal justice, is the motive of *The Sick King in Bokhara*; love, that wipes out sin, of *Saint Brandan*—



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That germ of kindness, in the womb
Of mercy caught, did not expire;
Outlives my guilt, outlives my doom,
And friends me in the pit of fire.

The Neckan and *The Forsaken Merman* tell the tale of contemptuous unkindness and its enduring poison. *A Picture at Newstead* depicts the inexpiable evils wrought by violent wrong. *Poor Matthias* tells in a parable the cruelty, not less real because unconscious, of imperfect sympathy—

Human longings, human fears,
Miss our eyes and miss our ears.
Little helping, wounding much,
Dull of heart, and hard of touch,
Brother man's despairing sign
Who may trust us to divine?

In *Geist's Grave*, the "loving heart," the "patient soul" of the dog-friend are made to "read their homily to man"; and the theme of the homily is still the same: the preciousness of the love which outlives the grave. But nowhere perhaps is his doctrine about the true divinity of love so exquisitely expressed as in *The Good Shepherd with the Kid*—

He saves the sheep, the goats He doth not save.
So rang Tertullian's sentence . . .
. . . . But she sigh'd,
The infant Church! Of love she felt the tide
Stream on her from her Lord's yet recent grave.
And then she smiled; and in the Catacombs,
With eye suffused but heart inspired true,
On those walls subterranean, where she hid
Her head 'mid ignominy, death, and tombs,
She the Good Shepherd's hasty image drew—
And on His shoulders not a lamb, a kid.

So much, then, for his *Criticism of Life*, as applied in and through his poems. It is not easy to estimate, even approximately, the effect produced by a loved and gifted poet, who for thirty years taught an audience, fit though few, that the main concerns of human life were Truth, Work, and Love. Those "two noblest of things, Sweetness and Light" (though heaven only knows what they meant to Swift), meant to him Love and Truth; and to these he added the third great ideal, Work—patient, persistent, undaunted effort for what a man genuinely believes to be high and beneficent ends. Such a "Criticism of Life," we must all admit, is not unworthy of one who seeks to teach his fellow-men; even though some may doubt whether poetry is the medium best fitted for conveying it.



We must now turn our attention to his performances in the field of literary criticism; and we begin in the year 1853. He had won the prize for an English poem at Rugby, and again at Oxford. In 1849 he had published without his name, and had recalled, a thin volume, called *The Strayed Reveller, and other Poems*. He had done the same with *Empedocles on Etna, and other Poems* in 1852. The best contents of these two volumes were combined in *Poems*, 1853, and to this book he gave a Preface, which was

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his first essay in Literary Criticism. In this essay he enounces a certain doctrine of poetry, and, true to his lifelong practice, he enounces it mainly by criticism of what other people had said. A favourite cry of the time was that Poetry, to be vital and interesting, must “leave the exhausted past, and draw its subjects from matters of present import.” It was the favourite theory of Middle Class Liberalism. The *Spectator* uttered it with characteristic gravity; Kingsley taught it obliquely in *Alton Locke*. Arnold assailed it as “completely false,” as “having a philosophical form and air, but no real basis in fact.” In assailing it, he justified his constant recourse to Antiquity for subject and method; he exalted Achilles, Prometheus, Clytemnestra, and Dido as eternally interesting; he asserted that the most famous poems of the nineteenth century “left the reader cold in comparison with the effect produced upon him by the latter books of the *Iliad*, by the *Oresteia*, or by the episode of Dido.” He glorified the Greeks as the “unapproached masters of the *grand style*.” He even ventured to doubt whether the influence of Shakespeare, “the greatest, perhaps, of all poetical names,” had been wholly advantageous to the writers of poetry. He weighed Keats in the balance against Sophocles and found him wanting.

[Illustration: Thomas Arnold, D.D.

Head Master of Rugby, and father of Matthew Arnold

From the Painting in Oriel College

Photo H.W. Taunt]

Of course, this criticism, so hostile to the current cant of the moment, was endlessly misinterpreted and misunderstood. He thus explained his doctrine in a Preface to a Second Edition of his Poems: “It has been said that I wish to limit the poet, in his choice of subjects, to the period of Greek and Roman antiquity; but it is not so. I only counsel him to choose for his subjects great actions, without regarding to what time they belong.” A few years later he wrote to a friend (in a letter hitherto unpublished): “The modern world is the widest and richest material ever offered to the artist; but the moulding and representing power of the artist is not, or has not yet become (in my opinion), commensurate with his material, his *mundus representandus*. This adequacy of the artist to his world, this command of the latter by him, seems to me to be what constitutes a first-class poetic epoch, and to distinguish it from such an epoch as our own; in this sense, the Homeric and Elizabethan poetry seems to me of a superior class to ours, though the world represented by it was far less full and significant.”

There is no need to describe in greater detail the two Prefaces, which can be read, among rather incongruous surroundings, in the volume called *Irish Essays, and Others*. But they are worth noting, because in them, at the age of thirty, he first displayed the



peculiar temper in literary criticism which so conspicuously marked him to the end; and that temper happily infected the critical writing of a whole generation; until the Iron Age returned, and the bludgeon was taken down from its shelf, and the scalping-knife refurbished.



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In his critical temper, lucidity, courage, and serenity were equally blended. In his criticism of books, as in his criticism of life, he aimed first at Lucidity—at that clear light, uncoloured by prepossession, which should enable him to see things as they really are. In a word, he judged for himself; and, however much his judgment might run counter to prejudice or tradition, he dared to enounce it and persist in it. He spoke with proper contempt of the “tenth-rate critics, for whom any violent shock to the public taste would be a temerity not to be risked”; but that temerity he himself had in rich abundance. Homer and Sophocles are the only poets of whom, if my memory serves me, he never wrote a disparaging word. Shakespeare is, and rightly, an object of national worship; yet Arnold ventured to point out his “over-curiousness of expression”; and, where he writes—

Till that Bellona’s bridegroom, lapped in proof,
Confronted him with self-comparisons,

Arnold dared to say that the writing was “detestable.”

Macaulay is, perhaps less rightly, another object of national worship; yet Arnold denounced the “confident shallowness which makes him so admired by public speakers and leading-article writers, and so intolerable to all searchers for truth”; and frankly avowed that to his mind “a man’s power to detect the ring of false metal in the *Lays of Ancient Rome* was a good measure of his fitness to give an opinion about poetical matters at all.” According to Macaulay, Burke was “the greatest man since Shakespeare.” Arnold admired Burke, revered him, paid him the highest compliment by trying to apply his ideas to actual life; but, when Burke urged his great arguments by obstetrical and pathological illustrations, Arnold was ready to denounce his extravagances, his capriciousness, his lapses from good taste.

The same perfectly courageous criticism, qualifying generous admiration, he applied in turn to Jeremy Taylor and Addison, to Milton, and Pope, and Gray, and Keats, and Shelley, and Scott—to all the principal luminaries of our literary heaven. He went all lengths with Mr. Swinburne in praising Byron’s “sincerity and strength,” but he qualified the praise: “Our soul had *felt* him like the thunder’s roll,” but “he taught us little.” Devout Wordsworthian as he is, he does not shrink from saying that much of Wordsworth’s work is “quite uninspired, flat and dull,” and sets himself to the task of “relieving him from a great deal of the poetical baggage which now encumbers him.”

And so Lucidity, which reveals the Truth, enounces its decisions with absolute courage; and to Lucidity and Courage is added the crowning grace of Serenity. However much the subject of his study may offend his taste or sin against his judgment, he never loses his temper with the author whom he is criticising. He never bludgeons or scalps or scarifies; but serenely indicates, with the calm gesture of a superior authority, the defects and blots which mar perfection, but which the unthinking multitude ignores, or, at worst, admires.



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The years 1860 and 1861 mark an important stage in the development of his critical method. He was now Professor of Poetry at Oxford, and he delivered from the professorial chair his famous lectures *On Translating Homer*, to which in 1862 he added his "Last Words." As much as anything which he ever wrote, these lectures have a chance of living and being enjoyed when we are dust. For Homer is immortal, and he who interprets Homer to Englishmen may hope at least for a longer life than most of us.

Few are those who can still recall the graceful figure in its silken gown; the gracious address, the slightly supercilious smile, of the *Milton jeune et voyageant*,^[5] just returned from contact with all that was best in French culture to instruct and astonish his own university; few who can still catch the cadence of the opening sentence: "It has more than once been suggested to me that I should translate Homer"; few that heard the fine tribute of the aged scholar,^[6] who, as the young lecturer closed a later discourse, murmured to himself, "The Angel ended."

With his characteristic trick of humorous mock-humility, Arnold wrote to a friendly reviewer who praised these lectures on translating Homer: "I am glad any influential person should call attention to the fact that there was some criticism in the three lectures; most people seem to have gathered nothing from them except that I abused F.W. Newman, and liked English hexameters."

Criticisms of criticism are the most melancholy reading in the world, and therefore no attempt will here be made to examine in detail the praise which in these lectures he poured upon the supreme exemplar of pure art, or the delicious ridicule with which he assailed the most respectable attempts to render Homer into English. For the praise, let one quotation suffice—"Homer's grandeur is not the mixed and turbid grandeur of the great poets of the North, of the authors of *Othello* and *Faust*; it is a perfect, a lovely grandeur. Certainly his poetry has all the energy and power of the poetry of our ruder climates; but it has, besides, the pure lines of an Ionian horizon, the liquid clearness of an Ionian sky."

On the ridicule, we must dwell a little more at length; for this was, in the modern slang, "a new departure" in his critical method. At the date when he published his lectures *On Translating Homer*, English criticism of literature was, and for some time had been, an extremely solemn business. Much of it had been exceedingly good, for it had been produced by Johnson and Coleridge, and De Quincey and Hazlitt. Much had been atrociously bad, resembling all too closely Mr. Girdle's pamphlet "in sixty-four pages, post octavo, on the character of the Nurse's deceased husband in *Romeo and Juliet*, with an enquiry whether he had really been a 'merry man' in his lifetime, or whether it was merely his widow's affectionate partiality that induced her so to report him."^[7]



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But, whether good or bad, criticism had been solemn. Even Arnold's first performances in the art had been as grave as Burke or Wordsworth. But in his lectures *On Translating Homer* he added a new resource to his critical apparatus. He still pursued Lucidity, Courage, and Serenity; he still praised temperately and blamed humanely; but now he brought to the enforcement of his literary judgment the aid of a delicious playfulness. Cardinal Newman was not ashamed to talk of "chucking" a thing off, or getting into a "scrape." So perhaps a humble disciple may be permitted to say that Arnold pointed his criticisms with "chaff."

This method of depreciating literary performances which one dislikes, of conveying dissent from literary doctrines which one considers erroneous, had fallen out of use in our literary criticism. It was least to be expected from a professorial chair in a venerable university—least of all from a professor not yet forty, who might have been expected to be weighed down and solemnized by the greatness of his function and the awfulness of his surroundings. Hence arose the simple and amusing wrath of pedestrian poets like Mr. Ichabod Wright, and ferocious pedants like Professor Francis Newman, and conventional worshippers of such idols as Scott and Macaulay, when they found him poking his seraphic fun at the notion that Homer's song was like "an elegant and simple melody from an African of the Gold Coast," or at lines so purely prosaic as—

All these thy anxious cares are also mine,
Partner beloved;

or so eccentric as—

Nor liefly thee would I advance to man-ennobling battle

or so painful as—

To every man upon this earth
Death cometh soon or late.

This habit of enlisting playfulness in aid of literary judgment was carried a step further in *Essays in Criticism*, published in 1865. This book, of which Mr. Paul justly remarks that it was "a great intellectual event," was a collection of essays written in the years 1863 and 1864. The original edition contained a preface dealing very skittishly with Bishop Colenso's biblical aberrations. The allusions to Colenso were wisely omitted from later editions, but the preface as it stands contains (besides the divinely-beautiful eulogy of Oxford) some of Arnold's most delightful humour. He never wrote anything better than his apology to the indignant Mr. Ichabod Wright; his disclaimer of the title of Professor, "which I share with so many distinguished men—Professor Pepper, Professor Anderson, Professor Frickel"; his attempt to comfort the old gentleman who was afraid of being murdered, by reminding him that "il n'y a pas d'homme necessaire"; and in all these cases the humour subserves and advances a serious criticism of books or of life.



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As we have now seen him engaged in the duty of criticising others, it will not be out of place to cite in this connection, though they belong to other periods, some criticisms of himself. As far back as 1853, he had observed, with characteristic lucidity, that the great fault of his earlier poems was “the absence of charm.” “Charm” was indeed the element in which they were deficient; but, as years advanced, charm was superadded to thought and feeling. In 1867, he said in a letter to his friend F.T. Palgrave: “Saint Beuve has written to me with great interest about the *Obermann poem*, which he is getting translated. Swinburne fairly took my breath away. I must say the general public praise me in the dubious style in which old Wordsworth used to praise Bernard Barton, James Montgomery, and suchlike; and the writers of poetry, on the other hand—Browning, Swinburne, Lytton—praise me as the general public praises its favourites. This is a curious reversal of the usual order of things. Perhaps it is from an exaggerated estimate of my own unpopularity and obscurity as a poet, but my first impulse is to be astonished at Swinburne’s praising me, and to think it an act of generosity. Also he picks passages which I myself should have picked, and which I have not seen other people pick.”

In 1869, when the first Collected Edition of his poems was in the press, he wrote to Palgrave, who had suggested some alterations, this estimate of his own merits and defects,—

“I am really very much obliged to you for your letter. I think the printing has made too much progress to allow of dealing with any of the long things now; I have left ‘Merope’ aside entirely, but the rest I have reprinted. In a succeeding edition, however, I am not at all sure that I shall not leave out the second part of the ‘Church of Brou.’ With regard to the others, I think I shall let them stand—but often for other reasons than because of their intrinsic merit. For instance, I agree that in the ‘Sick King in Bokhara’ there is a flatness in parts; but then it was the first thing of mine dear old Clough thoroughly liked. Against ‘Tristram,’ too, many objections may fairly be urged; but then the subject is a very popular one, and many people will tell you they like it best of anything I have written. All this has to be taken into account. ‘Balder’ perhaps no one cares much for except myself; but I have always thought, though very likely I am wrong, that it has not had justice done to it; I consider that it has a natural *propriety* of diction and rhythm which is what we all prize so much in Virgil, and which is not common in English poetry. For instance, Tennyson has in the *Idylls* something dainty and *tourmente* which excludes this natural propriety; and I have myself in ‘Sohrab’ something, not dainty, but *tourmente* and Miltonically *ampouille*, which excludes it.... We have enough Scandinavianism in our nature and history to



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make a short *conspectus* of the Scandinavian mythology admissible. As to the shorter things, the 'Dream' I have struck out. 'One Lesson' I have re-written and banished from its pre-eminence as an introductory piece. 'To Marguerite' (I suppose you mean 'We were apart' and not 'Yes! in the sea') I had paused over, but my instinct was to strike it out, and now your suggestion comes to confirm this instinct, I shall act upon it. The same with 'Second Best.' It is quite true there is a horrid falsetto in some stanzas of the 'Gipsy Child'—it was a very youthful production. I have re-written those stanzas, but am not quite satisfied with the poem even now. 'Shakespeare' I have re-written. 'Cruikshank' I have re-titled, and re-arranged the 'World's Triumphs.' 'Morality' I stick to—and 'Palladium' also. 'Second Best' I strike out and will try to put in 'Modern Sappho' instead—though the metre is not right. In the 'Voice' the falsetto rages too furiously; I can do nothing with it; ditto in 'Stagirus,' which I have struck out. Some half-dozen other things I either have struck out, or think of striking out. 'Hush, not to me at this bitter departing' is one of them. The Preface I omit entirely. 'St. Brandan,' like 'Self-Deception,' is not a piece that at all satisfies me, but I shall let both of them stand."

In 1879 he wrote with reference to the edition of his poems in two volumes—

"In beginning with 'early poems' I followed, as I have done throughout, the chronological arrangement adopted in the last edition, an arrangement which is, on the whole, I think, the most satisfactory. The title of 'early' implies an excuse for defective work of which I would not be supposed blind to the defects—such as the 'Gipsy Child,' which you suggest for exclusion; but something these early pieces have which later work has not, and many people—perhaps for what are truth faults in the poems—have liked them. You have been a good friend to my poems from the first, one of those whose approbation has been a real source of pleasure to me. There are things which I should like to do in poetry before I die, and of which lines and bits have long been done, in particular Lucretius, St. Alexius, and the journey of Achilles after death to the Island of Leuce; but we accomplish what we can, not what we will."

Enough, perhaps, has now been said about his critical method; and, as this book proposes to deal with results, it is right to enquire into the effect of that method upon men who aspired to follow him, at whatever distance, in the path of criticism. The answer can be easily given. He taught us, first and foremost, to judge for ourselves; to take nothing at second hand; to bow the knee to no reputation, however high its pedestal in the Temple of Fame, unless we were satisfied of its right to stand where it was. Then he taught us to discriminate, even in what we loved best, between its excellences and its defects; to swallow nothing

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whole, but to chew the cud of disinterested meditation, and accept or reject, praise or blame, in accordance with our natural and deliberate taste. He taught us to love Beauty supremely, to ensue it, to be on the look out for it; and, when we found it—when we found what really and without convention satisfied our “sense for beauty”—to adore it, and, as far as we could, to imitate it. Contrariwise, he taught us to shun and eschew what was hideous, to make war upon it, and to be on our guard against its contaminating influence. And this teaching he applied alike to hideousness in character, sight, and sound—to “watchful jealousy” and rancour and uncleanness; to the “dismal Mapperly Hills,” and the “uncomeliness of Margate,” the “squalid streets of Bethnal Green,” and “Coles’ Truss Manufactory standing where it ought not, on the finest site in Europe”; to such poetry as—

And scarcely had she begun to wash
When she was aware of the grisly gash,

to such hymns as—

O happy place!
When shall I be
My God with Thee,
To see Thy face?

“What a touch of grossness!” he exclaimed, “what an original shortcoming in the more delicate spiritual perceptions, is shown by the natural growth amongst us of such hideous names—Higginbottom, Stiggins, Bugg! In Ionia and Attica they were luckier in this respect than “the best race in the world”; by the Ilissus there was “no Wragg,[8] poor thing!”

Then he taught us to aim at sincerity in our intercourse with Nature. Never to describe her as others saw her, never to pretend a knowledge of her which we did not possess, never to endow her with fanciful attributes of our own or other people’s imagining, never to assume her sympathy with mortal lots, never to forget that she, like humanity, has her dark, her awful, her revengeful moods. He taught us not to be ashamed of our own sense of fun, our own faculty of laughter; but to let them play freely even round the objects of our reasoned reverence, just in the spirit of the teacher who said that no man really believed in his religion till he could venture to joke about it. Above all, he taught us, even when our feelings were most forcibly aroused, to be serene, courteous, and humane; never to scold, or storm, or bully; and to avoid like a pestilence such brutality as that of the *Saturday Review* when it said that something or another was “eminently worthy of a great nation,” and to disparage it “eminently worthy of a great fool.” He laid it down as a “precious truth” that one’s effectiveness depends upon “the power of



persuasion, of charm; that without this all fury, energy, reasoning power, acquirement, are thrown away and only render their owner more miserable.”

In a word, he combined Light with Sweetness, and in the combination lies his abiding power.

[Footnote 4: “Just hint a fault, and hesitate dislike.”—*Pope*.]

[Footnote 5: He was so described by George Sand.]



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[Footnote 6: Dr. Williams, President of Jesus College.]

[Footnote 7: *Nicholas Nickleby*.]

[Footnote 8: “A shocking child-murder has just been committed at Nottingham. A girl named Wragg left the workhouse there on Saturday morning with her young illegitimate child. The child was soon afterwards found dead on Mapperly Hills, having been strangled. *Wragg is in custody.*”]

CHAPTER III

EDUCATION

“Though I am a schoolmaster’s son, I confess that school-teaching or school-inspecting is not the line of life I should naturally have chosen. I adopted it in order to marry a lady who is here to-night, and who feels your kindness as warmly and gratefully as I do. My wife and I had a wandering life of it at first. There were but three lay-inspectors for all England. My district went right across from Pembroke Dock to Great Yarmouth. We had no home. One of our children was born in a lodging at Derby, with a workhouse, if I recollect aright, behind and a penitentiary in front. But the *irksomeness* of my new duties was what I felt most, and during the first year or so it was sometimes insupportable.”

[Illustration: Laleham Church

As it was in Matthew Arnold’s boyhood

Photo H.W. Taunt]

The name of Arnold is so inseparably connected with Education[9] that many of Matthew Arnold’s friends were astonished by this frank confession, which he made in his address to the Westminster Teachers’ Association on the occasion of his retirement from the office of Inspector. There is reason to believe that the profession on which he had set his early affections was Diplomacy. It is easy to see how perfectly, in many respects, diplomatic life would have suited him. The proceeds of his Fellowship, then considerable and unhampered by any conditions of residence, would have supplied the lack of private fortune. He had some of the diplomatist’s most necessary gifts—love of travel, familiarity with European literature, keen interest in foreign politics and institutions, taste for cultivated society, rich enjoyment of life, and fascinating manners conspicuously free from English stiffness and shyness. As to his interest in foreign politics, it is only necessary to cite *England and the Italian Question*, which he wrote in 1859, and which deals with the unity and independence of Italy. It is the first essay which he ever published, but it abounds in clearness and force, and is entirely free from the whimsicality which in later years sometimes marred his prose. Above all it shows a



sympathetic insight into foreign aspirations which is rare indeed even among cultivated Englishmen. In reference to this pamphlet he truly observed: "The worst of the English is that on foreign politics they search so very much more for what they like and wish to be true, than for what *is* true. In Paris there is certainly a larger body of people than in London who treat foreign politics as a science, as a matter to *know* upon before *feeling* upon."

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As regards the diplomatic life, it seems certain that he would have enjoyed it thoroughly, and one would think that he was exactly the man to conduct a delicate negotiation with tact, good humour, and good sense. Some glimmering of these gifts seems to have dawned from time to time on the unimaginative minds of his official chiefs; for three times he was sent by the Education Office on Foreign Missions, half diplomatic in their character, to enquire into the condition and methods of Public Instruction on the Continent. The ever-increasing popularity which attended him on these Missions, and his excellent judgment in handling Foreign Ministers and officials, might perhaps suggest the thought that in renouncing diplomacy he renounced his true vocation. But the thought, though natural, is superficial, and must give way to the absolute conviction that he never could have known true happiness—never realized his own ideal of life—without a wife, a family, and a home. And these are luxuries which, as a rule, diplomatists cannot attain till

youth and bloom and this delightful world

have lost something of their freshness. In renouncing diplomacy he secured, before he was twenty-nine, the chief boon of human life; but a vague desire to enjoy that boon amid continental surroundings seems constantly to have visited him. In 1851 he wrote to his wife: "We can always look forward to retiring to Italy on L200 a year." In 1853 he wrote to her again: "All this afternoon I have been haunted by a vision of living with you at Berne, on a diplomatic appointment, and how different that would be from this incessant grind in schools." And, thirty years later, when he was approaching the end of his official life, he wrote a friend: "I must go once more to America to see my daughter, who is going to be married to an American, settled in her new home. Then I 'feel like' retiring to Florence, and rarely moving from it again."

But, in spite of all these dreams and longings, he seems to have known that his lot was cast in England, and that England must be the sphere of his main activities. "Year slips away after year, and one begins to find that the Office has really had the main part of one's life, and that little remains."

We, who are his disciples, habitually think of him as a poet, or a critic, or an instructor in national righteousness and intelligence; as a model of private virtue and of public spirit. We do not habitually think of him as, in the narrow and technical sense, an Educator. And yet a man who gives his life to a profession must be in a great measure judged by what he accomplished in and through that profession, even though in the first instance he "adopted it in order to marry."

Though not a born educator, not an educator by natural aptitude or inclination, he made himself an educator by choice; and, having once chosen his profession, he gradually developed an interest in it, a pride in it, a love of it which astonished some of his friends. How irksome it was to him at the beginning we saw just now in his address to

the Teachers. How irksome in many of its incidents it remained we can see in his published Letters.



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“I have had a hard day. Thirty pupil-teachers to examine in an inconvenient room, and nothing to eat except a biscuit which a charitable lady gave me.”

“This certainly has been one of the most uncomfortable weeks I ever spent. Battersea is so far off, the roads so execrable, and the rain so incessant.... There is not a yard of flagging, I believe, in all Battersea.”

“Here is my programme for this afternoon: Avalanches—The Steam-Engine—The Thames—India-Rubber—Bricks—The Battle of Poitiers—Subtraction—The Reindeer—The Gunpowder Plot—The Jordan. Alluring, is it not? Twenty minutes each, and the days of one’s life are only three score years and ten.”

“About four o’clock I found myself so exhausted, having eaten nothing since breakfast, that I sent out for a bun, and ate it before the astonished school.”

“Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday I had to be at the Westminster Training School at ten o’clock; be there till half-past one, and begin again at two, going on till half-past six; this, with eighty candidates to look after, and gas burning most of the day, either to give light or to help to warm the room.”

“One sees a teacher holding up an apple to a gallery of little children, and saying: ‘An apple has a stalk, peel, pulp, core, pips, and juice; it is odorous and opaque, and is used for making a pleasant drink called cider.’”

“I sometimes grow impatient of getting old amid a press of occupation and labour for which, after all, I was not born.... The work I like is not very compatible with any other. But we are not here to have facilities found us for doing the work we like, but to make them.”

Still, his work as an inspector might have been made more interesting and less irksome, if he had served under chiefs of more enlightened or more liberal temper, as may be inferred from some words uttered after his retirement—

“To Government I owe nothing. But then I have always remembered that, under our Parliamentary system, the Government probably takes little interest in such work, whatever it is, as I have been able to do in the public service, and even perhaps knows nothing at all about it. But we must take the evil of our system along with the good. Abroad probably a Minister might have known more about my performances; but then abroad I doubt whether I should ever have survived to perform them. Under the strict bureaucratic system abroad, I feel pretty sure that I should have been dismissed ten times over for the freedom with which on various occasions I have exposed myself on matters of Religion and Politics. Our Government here in England takes a large and liberal view about what it considers a man’s private affairs, and so I have been able to

survive as an Inspector for thirty-five years; and to the Government I at least owe this—to have been allowed to survive.”



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For thirty-five years then he served his country as an Inspector of Elementary Schools, and the experience which he thus gained, the interest which was thus awoke in him, suggested to him some large and far-reaching views about our entire system of National Education. It is no disparagement to a highly-cultivated and laborious staff of public servants to say that he was the greatest Inspector of Schools that we have ever possessed. It is true that he was not, as the manner of some is, omnidoc and omnidocent. His incapacity to examine little girls in needlework he frankly confessed; and his incapacity to examine them in music, if unconfessed, was not less real. "I assure you," he said to the Westminster Teachers, "I am not at all a harsh judge of myself; but I know perfectly well that there have been much better inspectors than I." Once, when a flood of compliments threatened to overwhelm him, he waved it off with the frank admission—"Nobody can say I am a punctual Inspector." Why then do we call him the greatest Inspector that we ever had? Because he had that most precious of all combinations—a genius and a heart. Trying to account for what he could not ignore—his immense popularity with the masters and mistresses of the schools which he inspected—he attributed part of it to the fact that he was Dr. Arnold's son, part to the fact that he was "more or less known to the public as an author"; but, of personal qualifications for his office, he enumerated two only, and both eminently characteristic: "One is that, having a serious sense of the nature and function of criticism, I from the first sought to see the schools as they really were; thus it was felt that I was fair, and that the teachers had not to apprehend from me crotchets, pedantries, humours, favouritism, and prejudices." The other was that he had learnt to sympathize with the teachers. "I met daily in the schools men and women discharging duties akin to mine, duties as irksome as mine, duties less well paid than mine; and I asked myself: Are they on roses? Gradually it grew into a habit with me to put myself into their places, to try and enter into their feelings, to represent to myself their life."

It belongs to the very nature of an Inspector's work that it escapes public notice. Very few are the people who care to inform themselves about the studies, the discipline, the intellectual and moral atmosphere of Elementary Schools, except in so far as those schools can be made battle-grounds for sectarian animosity. And, if they are few now, they were still fewer during the thirty-five years of Arnold's Inspectorship. A conspicuous service was rendered both to the cause of Education and to Arnold's memory when the late Lord Sandford rescued from the entombing blue-books his friend's nineteen General Reports to the Education Department on Elementary Schools. In those Reports we read his deliberate judgment on the merits, defects, needs, possibilities and ideals of elementary schools; and this not merely as regards the choice of subjects taught, but as regards cleanliness, healthiness, good order, good manners, relations between teachers and pupils, selection of models in prose and verse, and the literary as contrasted with the polemical use of the Bible.

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Such an enumeration may sound dull enough, but there is no dullness in the Reports themselves. They are stamped from the first page to the last with his lightness of touch and perfection of style. They belong as essentially to literature as his Essays or his Lectures.

In reading these Reports on Elementary Schools we catch repeated allusions to his three Missions of enquiry into Education on the Continent. Those Missions produced separate Reports of their own, and each Report developed into a volume. "The Popular Education of France" gave the experience which he acquired in 1859, and its Introduction is reproduced in *Mixed Essays* under the title of "Democracy." *A French Eton* (not very happily named) was an unofficial product of the same tour; for, extending his purview from Elementary Education, he there dealt with the relation between "Middle Class Education and the State."

"Why," he asked, "cannot we have throughout England as the French have throughout France, as the Germans have throughout Germany, as the Swiss have throughout Switzerland, and as the Dutch have throughout Holland, schools where the middle and professional classes may obtain at the rate of from L20 to L50 a year if they are boarders, and from L5 to L15 a year if they are day scholars, an education of as good quality, with as good guarantees of social character and advantages for a future career in the world, as the education which French children of the corresponding class can obtain from institutions like that of Toulouse or Soreze?"

Schools and Universities of the Continent gave the result of the Mission in 1865 to investigate the Education of the Upper and Middle Classes in France, Italy, Germany, and Switzerland. Its bearing on English Education may be inferred from these words of its author, written in October, 1868: "There is a vicious article in the new *Quarterly* on my school-book, by one of the Eton undermasters, who, like Demetrius the Silversmith, seems alarmed for the gains of his occupation."

The "Special Report on Elementary Education Abroad" grew out of his third Mission in 1885; and, over and above these books, dealing specifically with educational problems, we meet constant allusions to the same topics in nearly all his prose-writings. A life-long contact with Education produced in him a profound dissatisfaction with our English system, or want of system, and an almost passionate desire to turn chaos into order by the persistent use of the critical method.

When one talks about English Education, the subject naturally divides itself into the Universities, the Public Schools, the Private Schools, and the Elementary Schools. The classification is not scientifically accurate, but it will serve. With all these strata of Education, he in turn concerned himself; but with the two higher strata much less effectively than with the two lower. It was necessary to the theoretical



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completeness of his scheme for organizing National Education, that the Universities and the Public Schools, as well as the Private and the Elementary Schools, should be criticised; but, in dealing with the former, his criticism is far less drastic and insistent than with the latter. The reason of the difference probably is that, though an Inspector, a Professor, and a critic, he was frankly human, and shrank from laying his hand too roughly on institutions to which he himself had owed so much.

His feeling for Oxford every one knows. The apostrophe to the “Adorable Dreamer” is familiar to hundreds who could not, for their life, repeat another line of his prose or verse. It was “the place he liked best in the world.” When he climbed the hill at Hinksey and looked down on Oxford, he “could not describe the effect which this landscape always has upon me—the hillside, with its valleys, and Oxford in the great Thames Valley below.”

Of the spiritual effect of the place upon hearts nurtured there, he said: “We in Oxford, brought up amidst the beauty and sweetness of that beautiful place, have not failed to seize one truth—the truth that beauty and sweetness are essential characters of a complete human perfection. When I insist on this, I am all in the faith and tradition of Oxford.”

Of the Honorary Degree conferred on him by Oxford, he said: “Nothing could more gratify me, I think, than this recognition by my own University, of which I am so fond, and where, according to their own established standard of distinction, I did so little.” And, after the Encaenia at which the degree was actually given, he wrote: “I felt sure I should be well received, because there is so much of an Oxford character about what I have written, and the undergraduates are the last people to bear one a grudge for having occasionally chaffed them.”

And here let me insert the moving passage in which, speaking in his last years to an American audience, he did honour to the spiritual master of his undergraduate days. “Forty years ago Cardinal Newman was in the very prime of life; he was close at hand to us at Oxford; he was preaching in St. Mary’s pulpit every Sunday; he seemed about to transform and to renew what was for us the most national and natural institution in the world, the Church of England. Who could resist the charm of that spiritual apparition, gliding in the dim afternoon light through the aisles of St. Mary’s, rising into the pulpit, and then, in the most entrancing of voices, breaking the silence with words and thoughts which were a religious music—subtle, sweet, mournful? I seem to hear him still.... Or, if we followed him back to his seclusion at Littlemore, that dreary village by the London road, and to the house of retreat and the church which he built there—a mean house such as Paul might have lived in when he was tent-making at Ephesus, a church plain and thinly sown with worshippers—who could resist him there either,

welcoming back to the severe joys of Church-fellowship, and of daily worship and prayer, the firstlings of a generation which had well-nigh forgotten them?"

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When we bear in mind this devotion to Oxford, it is not surprising that he dealt very gently with the defects of English Universities. In 1868 he laid it down that the University ought to provide facilities, after the general education is finished, for the cultivation of special aptitudes. "Our great Universities," he said, "Oxford and Cambridge, do next to nothing towards this end. They are, as Signor Mateucci called them, *hauts lycees*; and, though invaluable in their way as places where the youth of the upper class prolong to a very great age, and under some very valuable influences, their school-education, yet, with their college and tutor system, nay, with their examination and degree system, they are still, in fact, *schools*, and do not carry education beyond the stage of general and school education." This is just in the spirit of his famous quotation about the Oxford which he loved so well—

There are our young barbarians, all at play!

In 1875 he wrote: "I do not at all like the course for the History School (at Oxford). Nothing but read, read, read, endless histories in English, many of them by quite second-rate men; nothing to form the mind as reading truly great authors forms it, or even to exercise it, as learning a new language, or mathematics, or one of the natural sciences exercises it.... The regulation of studies is all-important, and there is no one to regulate them, and people think that anyone can regulate them. We shall never do any good till we get a man like Guizot, or W. von Humboldt to deal with the matter, men who have the highest mental training themselves, and this we shall probably in this country never get."

In the wittiest of all his books, and one of the wisest, *Friendship's Garland*,^[10] he thus summarized the too-usual result of our "grand, old, fortifying, classical curriculum." To his Prussian friend enquiring what benefit Lord Lumpington and the Rev. Esau Hittall have derived from that curriculum, that "course of mental gymnastics," the imaginary Arnold replied: "Well, during their three years at Oxford, they were so much occupied with Bullingdon and hunting that there was no great opportunity to judge. But for my own part, I have always thought that their both getting their degrees at last with flying colours, after three weeks of a famous coach for fast men, four nights without going to bed, and an incredible consumption of wet towels, strong cigars, and brandy-and-water, was one of the most astonishing feats of mental gymnastics I ever heard of!"

It must be admitted that his effect on the Universities was not very tangible, not very positive. It was not the kind of effect which can be expressed in figures or reported in Blue Books. One cannot stand in the High Street of Oxford, or on King's Parade at Cambridge, and point to an Institute, or a college, or a school of learning, and say: "Matthew Arnold made that what it is."

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His effect was of a different kind. It was written on the fleshly tables of the heart. To Oxford men he seemed like an elder brother, brilliant, playful, lovable, yet profoundly wise; teaching us what to think, to admire, to avoid. His influence fell upon a thirsty and receptive soil. We drank it with delight; and it co-operated with all the best traditions of the place in making us lifelong lovers of romance, and truth, and beauty. One of the keenest minds produced by Oxford between 1870 and 1880 thus summarized his effect on us: "I think he was almost the only man who did not disappoint one."

[Illustration: Fox How, Ambleside

Dr. Thomas Arnold's holiday home.

Mrs. Arnold continued to reside at Fox How until her death, in 1873

Photo Herbert Bell]

As in dealing with the Universities, so also in dealing with the Public Schools, Arnold found it difficult to liberate himself from his early environment and prepossessions. He was the son of a Wykehamist, who had become the greatest of Head Masters; he himself was both a Wykehamist and a Rugbeian; he was the brother of three Rugbeians, and the father of three Harrovians. Thus it was impossible for him to regard the Public Schools of England with the dispassionate eye of the complete outsider. It is true that, when he gave rein to his critical instinct, he could not help observing that Public Schools are "precious institutions where, for £250 a year, our boys learn gentlemanlike deportment and cricket"; that with us "the playing-fields are the school"; and that a Prussian Minister of Education would not permit "the keepers of those absurd cock-pits" to examine the boys as they choose, "and send them jogging comfortably off to the University on their lame longs and shorts about the Calydonian Boar." But, when it came to practical dealing, he had a tenderness for the "cock-pit"—even for the playing-fields—almost for the Calydonian Boar—which hindered him from being a very formidable or effective critic. Rugby, with which he was so closely connected, and to which he was so much attached, owes nothing, as far as one knows, to his suggestions or reproaches. At Harrow he lived for five years, on terms of affectionate intimacy with the Head Master and the staff; and, though he was keenly alive to the absurdities of the "catch-scholarship," as he called it, which was cultivated there, and to the inefficiency of the *Principia* and *Notabilia*, on which the Harrovian mind was nourished, his adverse judgment never made itself felt. Marlborough he praised and admired as "a decided offspring of Rugby." At Eton his fascinating essay on "Eutrapelia" was given;^[11] and he in turn was fascinated by the Memorials of "An Eton Boy," which he reviewed in the *Fortnightly* for June, 1882.^[12] That boy, Arthur Baskerville-Mynors, was certainly a most lovable and attractive character, and he was thus commemorated in the Eton College Chronicle:

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“His life here was always joyous, a fearless, keen boyhood, spent *sans peur et sans reproche*. Many will remember him as fleet of foot and of lasting powers, winning the mile and the steeplechase in 1871, and the walking race in 1875. As master of the Beagles in 1875, he showed himself to possess all the qualities of a keen sportsman, with an instinctive knowledge of the craft.” On this last sentence Arnold fastened with his characteristic insistence, and used it to point the moral which he was always trying to teach. The Barbarian, as “for shortness we had accustomed ourselves to call” a member of the English upper classes, even when “adult and rigid,” had often “invaluable qualities.” “It is hard for him, no doubt, to enter into the Kingdom of God—hard for him to believe in the sentiment of the ideal life transforming the life which now is, to believe in it and even to serve it—hard, but not impossible. And in the young the qualities take a brighter colour, and the rich and magical time of youth adds graces of its own to them; and then, in happy natures, they are irresistible.”

And so he goes on to give a truly appreciative and affectionate sketch of young Arthur Mynors; and then he quotes the sentence about the Master of the Beagles, and on this he comments thus: “The aged Barbarian will, upon this, admiringly mumble to us his story how the battle of Waterloo was won in the playing-fields of Eton. Alas! disasters have been prepared in those playing-fields as well as victories; disasters due to inadequate mental training—to want of application, knowledge, intelligence, lucidity. The Eton playing-fields have their great charm, notwithstanding; but with what felicity of unconscious satire does that stroke of ‘the Master of the Beagles’ hit off our whole system of provision of public secondary schools; a provision for the fortunate and privileged few, but for the many, for the nation, ridiculously impossible!” This is his last word on the Public Schools, as that title is conventionally understood. He had a much fuller and more searching criticism for the schools in which the great Middle Class is educated.

It may perhaps be fairly questioned whether great humourists much enjoy the humour of other people. If we apply this question to Arnold’s case and seek to answer it by his published works, we shall probably answer in the negative. From first to last, he takes little heed of humorous writers or humorous books. Even in those great authors who are masters of all moods, it is the grave, rather than the humorous mood, which he chooses for commendation. He was a devout Shakespearian, but it is difficult to recall an allusion to Shakespeare’s humour, except in the rather oblique form of Dogberry as the type of German officialdom. Swift he quoted with admirable effect, but it was Swift the reviler, not Swift the jester. He says that he made a “wooden Oxford audience laugh aloud with two pages of Heine’s wit”; but the lecture, as we read it, shows

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more of mordant sarcasm than of the material for laughter. Scott he knew by heart, and Carlyle he honestly revered; but he admired the one for his romance and the other for his philosophy. Thackeray, sad to remember, he “did not think a great writer,” and so Thackeray’s humour disappears, with his pathos and his satire, into the limbo of common-place. The imaginary spokesman of the *Daily Telegraph* in *Friendship’s Garland* reckons as “the great masters of human thought and human literature, Plato, Shakespeare, Confucius, and Charles Dickens”; and there, to judge from the great bulk of his writing, Arnold’s acquaintance with Dickens begins and ends.

But it was one of his amiable traits that, whenever he read a book which pleased him, he immediately began to share his pleasure with his friends. In the year 1880, he writes to his colleague, Mr. Fitch, “I have this year been reading *David Copperfield* for the first time.[13] Mr. Creakle’s School at Blackheath is the type of our English Middle Class Schools, and our Middle Class is satisfied that so it should be.”

It would seem that he made this rather belated acquaintance with Dickens’ masterpiece, through reading it aloud to one of his children who was laid up with a swelled face. But, however introduced to his notice, the book made a deep impression on him. In the following June he contributed to the *Nineteenth Century* an article on Ireland styled “The Incompatibles.” In that article he suggests that the Irish dislike of England arises in part from the fact that “the Irish do not much come across our aristocracy, exhibiting that factor of civilization, the power of manners, which has undoubtedly a strong attraction for them. What they do come across, and what gives them the idea they have of our civilization and its promise, is our Middle Class.”

The mention, so frequent in his writings, of “our Middle Class,” seems to demand a definition; and, admitting that in this country the Middle Class has no naturally defined limits, and that it is difficult to say who properly belong to it and who do not, he adopts an educational test. The Middle Class means the people who are brought up at a particular kind of school, and to illustrate that kind of school he has recourse to his newly-discovered treasure. “Much as I have published, I do not think it has ever yet happened to me to comment in print upon any production of Charles Dickens. What a pleasure to have the opportunity of praising a work so sound, a work so rich in merit, as *David Copperfield*!... Of the contemporary rubbish which is shot so plentifully all round us, we can, indeed, hardly read too little. But to contemporary work so good as *David Copperfield* we are in danger of perhaps not paying respect enough, of reading it (for who could help reading it?) too hastily, and then putting it aside for something else and forgetting it. What treasures of gaiety, invention, life, are in that book! what alertness

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and resource! what a soul of good nature and kindness governing the whole! Such is the admirable work which I am now going to call in evidence. Intimately, indeed, did Dickens know the Middle Class; he was bone of its bone and flesh of its flesh. Intimately he knew its bringing-up. With the hand of a master he has drawn for us a type of the teachers and trainers of its youth, a type of its places of education. Mr. Creakle and Salem House are immortal. The type itself, it is to be hoped, will perish; but the drawing of it which Dickens has given cannot die. Mr. Creakle, the stout gentleman with a bunch of watch-chain and seals, in an armchair, with the fiery face and the thick veins in his forehead; Mr. Creakle sitting at his breakfast with the cane, and a newspaper, and the buttered toast before him, will sit on, like Theseus, for ever. For ever will last the recollection of Salem House, and of the 'daily strife and struggle' there; the recollection 'of the frosty mornings when we were rung out of bed, and the cold, cold smell of the dark nights when we were rung into bed again; of the evening schoolroom dimly lighted and indifferently warmed, and the morning schoolroom which was nothing but a great shivering-machine; of the alternation of boiled beef with roast beef, and boiled mutton with roast mutton; of clods of bread and butter, dog's-eared lesson-books, cracked slates, tear-blotted copy-books, canings, rulerings, hair-cuttings, rainy Sundays, suet puddings, and a dirty atmosphere of ink surrounding all.' By the Middle Class I understand those who are brought up at establishments more or less like Salem House, and by educators more or less like Mr. Creakle. And the great mass of the Middle part of our community, the part which comes between those who labour with their hands, on the one side, and people of fortune on the other, is brought up at establishments of this kind, although there is a certain portion broken off at the top which is educated at better. But the great mass are both badly taught, and are also brought up on a lower plane than is right, brought up ignobly. And this deteriorates their standard of life, their civilization."

It surely must have been Salem House, or an institution very like it, that produced the delicious letter quoted by Arnold in his General Report for 1867. Even Mr. Anstey Guthrie never excelled it in the letter dictated by Dr. Grimstone to his pupils at Crichton House.

"MY DEAR PARENTS.—The anticipation of our Christmas vacation abounds in peculiar delights. Not only that its 'festivities,' its social gatherings and its lively amusements crown the old year with happiness and mirth, but that I come a guest commended to your hospitable love by the performance of all you bade me remember when I left you in the glad season of sun and flowers. And time has sped fleetly since reluctant my departing step crossed the threshold of that home whose indulgences and endearments their temporary loss



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has taught me to value more and more. Yet that restraint is salutary, and that self-reliance is as easily learnt as it is laudable, the propriety of my conduct and the readiness of my services shall ere long aptly illustrate. It is with confidence I promise that the close of every year shall find me advancing in your regard by constantly observing the precepts of my excellent tutors and the example of my excellent parents.

“We break up on Thursday, the 11th of December instant, and my impatience of the short delay will assure my dear parents of the filial sentiments of

“Theirs very sincerely,

“N.

“P.S. We shall reassemble on the 19th of January. Mr. and Mrs. P. present their respectful compliments.”

The present writer lately asked a close observer of educational matters if Arnold had produced any practical effect on Secondary Education, and the answer was—“He pulled down the strongholds of such as Mr. Creakle.” If he did that, he did much; and it is a eulogy which he would have greatly appreciated. Let us see how far it was deserved. Let us admit at the outset that Mr. Squeers is dead; but then he was dead before Arnold took in hand to reform our system of Education. Mr. Creakle, it is to be feared, still exists, though his former assistant, the more benign Mr. Mell, has to some extent supplanted him. Dr. Blimber is, perhaps, a little superannuated, but still holds his own. Dr. Grimstone is going strong and well. In a word, the Private School for bigger boys—(we are not thinking of Preparatory Schools for little boys)—still exists and even flourishes. Now, if Arnold could have had his way, the Private School for bigger boys would long since have disappeared. “Mr. Creakle’s stronghold” would have been pulled down, and Salem House and Crichton House and Lycurgus House Academy would have crumbled into ruins.

And what would he have raised in their place? He wrote so often and so variously about Education—now in official reports, now in popular essays, now again in private letters, that it is not difficult to detect some inconsistencies, some contradictions, some changes of view. Indeed, it needs but the alteration of a single word to justify, at least to some extent, the “damning sentence,” which, according to Arnold, Mr. Frederic Harrison “launched” against him in 1867. “We seek vainly in Mr. A. a system of philosophy with principles coherent, interdependent, subordinate, and derivative.” For “Philosophy” read “Education,” and the reproach holds good. For in Education, as in everything else that he touched, he proceeded rather by criticism than by dogma—by showing faults in existing things rather than by theoretically constructing perfection. Yet, after all said and done, his general view of the subject is quite plain. He had in his mind an idea or



scheme of what National Education ought to be; and, though from time to time he changed his view about details and methods, the general outline of his scheme is clear enough.



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One of the most characteristic passages which he ever wrote is that in which he describes his interview in 1865 with Cardinal Antonelli, then Secretary of State at Rome. "When he asked me what I thought of the Roman schools, I said that, for the first time since I came on the Continent, I was reminded of England. I meant, in real truth, that there was the same easy-going and absence of system on all sides, the same powerlessness and indifference of the State, the same independence in single institutions, the same free course for abuses, the same confusion, the same lack of all idea of *co-ordering* things, as the French say—that is, of making them work fitly together to a fit end; the same waste of power, therefore the same extravagance, and the same poverty of result."

Enlarging on this congenial theme, and applying it to England and English requirements, he promulgated in 1868 a very revolutionary scheme for Public Education. At the apex of the pyramid there should be a Minister of Education. "Merely for administrative convenience he is, indeed, indispensable. But it is even more important to have *a centre in which to fix responsibility*." In 1886 he said to the teachers at Westminster, "I know the Duke of Richmond told the House of Lords that, as Lord President, he was Minister of Education—(laughter)—but really the Duke of Richmond's sense of humour must have been slumbering when he told the House of Lords that. A man is not Minister of Education by taking the name, but by doing the functions. (Cheers.) To do the functions he must put his mind to the subject of education; and so long as Lord Presidents are what they are, and education is what it is, a Lord President will not be a man who puts his mind to the subject of education. A Vice-President is not, on the Lord President's own showing, and cannot be, Minister for Education. He cannot be made responsible for faults and neglects. Now what we want in a Minister for Education is this—a centre where we can fix the responsibility." This great and responsible officer, who presumably was to be a Cabinet Minister and change with the changes of administration, was to preside over the whole education of the country. The Universities, the Public Schools, the Middle-Class Schools, and the Elementary Schools were all to be, in greater or less degree, subject to his sway. The Minister was to be assisted by a Council of Education, "comprising, without regard to politics, the personages most proper to be heard on questions of public education." It was to be, like the Council at the India Office, consultative only, but the Minister was to be bound to take its opinion on all important measures. It should be the special duty of this Council to advise on the graduation of schools, on the organization of examinations both in the schools and in the Universities, and to adjust them to one another. The Universities were not to be increased in number, but all such anomalous

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institutions as King's College and University College were to be co-ordinated to the existing Universities; and the Universities were to establish "faculties" in great centres of population, supply professors and lecturers, and then examine and confer degrees. Then the country should be mapped out into eight or ten districts, and each of these districts should have a Provincial School-Board, which should "represent the State in the country," keep the Minister informed of local requirements, and be the organ of communication between him and the schools in its jurisdiction. The exact amount of interference, inspection, and control which the Minister, the Council, and the Boards should exercise should vary in accordance with the grade of the schools: it should be greater in the elementary schools, less in the higher. But, in their degree, all, from Eton downwards, were to be subject to it. Then came the most revolutionary part of the whole scheme. Mr. Creakle and his congeners were to be abolished. They were not to be put to a violent death, but they were to be starved out. The whole face of the country is studded with small grammar-schools or foundation-schools, like knots in a network; and these schools, enlarged and reformed, were to be the ordinary training-places of the Middle Class. Where they did not exist, similar schools were to be created by the State—"Royal or Public Schools"—and these, like all the rest, were to be subject to the Minister and to the Provincial Boards. Arnold contended that ancient schools so revived, and modern schools so constituted, would have a dignity and a status such as no private school could attain, and would be free from the pretentiousness and charlatanism which he regarded as the bane of private education. The inspection and control of these Public Schools would be in the hands of competent officers of the State, whereas the private school is appraised only by the vulgar and uneducated class that feeds it.

And so, descending from the Universities through Public Schools of two grades, we touch the foundation of the whole edifice—the Elementary Schools. On this all-important topic, he wrote in 1868: "About popular education I have here but a very few words to say. People are at last beginning to see in what condition this really is amongst us. Obligatory instruction is talked of. But what is the capital difficulty in the way of obligatory instruction, or indeed any national system of instruction, in this country? It is this: that the moment the working class of this country have this question of instruction brought home to them, their self-respect will make them demand, like the working classes of the Continent, *Public* Schools, and not schools which the clergyman, or the squire, or the mill-owner calls "my school." And again: "The object should be to draw the existing Elementary Schools from their present private management, and to reconstitute them on a municipal basis."

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That word which he italicized—*public*—is the key to his whole system. The whole education of the country was to be Public. The Universities, already “public” in the sense that they are not private ventures, were to be made public in the sense that they were to be supervised and to some extent regulated by the State. The Public Schools, traditionally so-called, were to be made more really public by being brought under the Minister and the School-Boards. The lesser foundation-schools were to be made public by a redistribution of their revenues and a reconstruction of their system; and new schools, public by virtue of their creation, were to be put alongside of the older ones. So schools of private venture would be eliminated. And thus the whole elementary education of the country was to be taken out of the hands of societies or individuals, and was to be organized and conducted by the officials of the State. Finally, all four (or three, as you choose to reckon them) grades of public education were to be co-ordinated with one another and subordinated to a chief Minister of State presiding over a great department.

[Illustration: The House of the Rev. John Buckland, at Laleham

Where Matthew Arnold went to school from 1830-1836.

The Rev. John Buckland was his maternal Uncle

Photo Ralph Lane]

Here was a scheme of National Education, clear enough in its general outlines, and sufficiently far-reaching in its scope. But its author, promulgating it thirty-five years ago, saw one “capital difficulty” in the way of realizing it, and he stated the difficulty thus: “The Public School for the people must rest upon the municipal organization of the country. In France, Germany, Italy, Switzerland, the public elementary school has, and exists by having, the Commune, and the Municipal Government of the Commune, as its foundations, and it could not exist without them. But we in England have our municipal organization state to get; the country districts, with us, have at present only the feudal and ecclesiastical organization of the Middle Ages, or of France before the Revolution.... The real preliminary to an effective system of popular education is, in fact, to provide the country with an effective municipal organization.”

It would be impossible, unless one could trace the mental processes of the Bishop of Rochester, Mr. Arthur Balfour, Sir John Gorst, and other eminent persons who had a hand in constructing the Education Acts of 1892 and 1893, to say how far the system now in existence owes any of its features to the influence of Matthew Arnold. It is the lot of great thoughts to fall upon very different kinds of soil; to be trodden under foot by one set of enemies, and carried away by another; and yet sometimes to find a congenial lodgment, and after long years to spring into life and manifest themselves in very unexpected quarters. So it may well have been with Arnold’s educational



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theories. Certainly during the last five-and-thirty years people have come to regard Education in all its branches as far more a matter of public concern, far less a matter of private venture, than formerly. More and more we have come to see that the State and the Municipality, in their respective areas, have something to say on the matter. The idea of the Golden Ladder, having its base in the Elementary Schools and its top rung in the highest honours of the University, has taken hold of the public mind, and has passed out of the region of abstractions into practical life. Institutions of Local Government have developed themselves on the lines desiderated by Arnold in 1868. The subordination of education to municipal authority is a new and a risky experiment, but it is exactly the experiment which he wished to see. The resuscitation of the Edwardian and Elizabethan Grammar Schools all over the country has brought the notion of the Public School to the very door of the Middle Class, and has shaken, if it has not yet destroyed, Mr. Creakle's stronghold. Even in the matter of Denominational Education in the Elementary Schools, where many deem that a retrograde step has been taken, the State has acted on a hint which Arnold gave to the extreme reformers of his time.

"Most English Liberals," he said, "seem persuaded that our Elementary Schools should be undenominational, and their teaching secular; and that with a public elementary school it cannot well be otherwise. Let them clearly understand, however, that on the Continent generally—everywhere except in Holland—the public elementary school is denominational (of course with what we should call a 'conscience clause') and its teaching religious as well as secular."

In one important respect the State, which has so often adopted his views, at once outstripped and fell short of his ideal. He was not a strong or indiscriminating advocate for Compulsory Education. He believed that, in the foreign countries where compulsion obtained, it was not the cause, but the effect, of a national feeling for education. When a people set a high value on knowledge, they would insist that every child should have a chance of acquiring it. But you could not create that high value by compelling people to send their children to school. As late as the end of the year 1869, he seems to have feared that any legislation which hindered a child from working for its own or its parents' support would be highly unpopular and would be evaded. "A law of direct compulsion on the parent and child would probably be violated every day in practice; and, so long as this is the case, a law levelled at the employer is preferable."



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But when those words were written, compulsion was near at hand. The Parliament of 1868-1874—the first elected by a democratic suffrage—was intent on Reform, and the right of a father to starve his child's mind was strenuously denied. Forster, then Vice-President of the Council, was charged with the duty of preparing a Bill to establish Compulsory Education. Arnold was Forster's brother-in-law, and "heard the contents" of the Bill in November, 1869. When in the following February it was brought in, he wrote: "I think William's Bill will do very well. I am glad it is so little altered"; and, after the Second Reading, he wrote: "The majority on the Education Bill is a great relief; it will now, if William has tolerable luck, get through safely this session." By this time, therefore, he must have become a convert to the system of compulsion. Perhaps he regarded the demand for the Bill as a proof that the English people were at length waking up to a sense of the value of Education. But, while the State thus outstripped his ideal by establishing compulsion, it fell short of his ideal by severely limiting the area of the population to which compulsion was to apply. Again and again he warned his countrymen, then unaccustomed to the practical working of Compulsory Education, that it would be intolerable, unjust, and absurd if it were applied only to the children of the poor. He contended that the Upper and Middle Classes were every bit as much in need of a compulsory system, if their children were to be properly educated, as the working classes for whom it was proposed to legislate. This theme he illustrated, with the most exuberant fun and fancy, in a letter addressed to the *Pall Mall Gazette* in 1867, and afterwards republished in *Friendship's Garland*. Arminius, the cultivated Prussian, accompanies his English friend to Petty Sessions in a country town, and is horrified by the degraded plight of an old peasant who is tried for poaching. The English friend (the imaginary Arnold) says that for his own part he is not so much concerned about the poacher as about his children. They are being allowed to grow up anyhow. Really he thinks the time has come when compulsion must be applied to the education of children of this class. "The gap between them and our educated and intelligent classes is really too frightful."

"*Your educated and intelligent classes,*" sneered Arminius, in his most offensive manner—"where are they? I should like to see them." The English friend, thus rudely challenged, leads the Prussian into the justice-room, where they find on the Bench three excellent specimens of education and intelligence—Lord Lumpington, the Rev. Esau Hittall, and Mr. Bottles. Arminius insists on knowing their qualifications for the post of magistrate. He begins by defining the principle of Compulsory Education. "It means that to ensure, as far as you can, every man's being fit for his business in life, you put education as a bar, or condition,



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between him and what he aims at. The principle is just as good for one class as another, and it is only by applying it impartially that you save its application from being insolent and invidious.... You propose to make old Diggs' boys instruct themselves before they go bird-scaring or sheep-tending. I want to know what you do to make those three worthies in that justice-room instruct themselves before they may go acting as magistrates and judges?"

The imaginary Arnold replies that Lord Lumpington was at Eton, and Mr. Hittall at Charterhouse, and Mr. Bottles at Lycurgus House Academy, Peckham. But Arminius insists that to send boys of the wealthy classes to school is nothing—the natural course of things takes them there. "Don't suppose that, by doing this, you are applying the principle of Compulsory Education fairly, and as you apply it to Diggs' boys. You are not interposing, for the rich, education as a bar or condition between them and what they aim at.

"In my country," he went on, "we should have begun to put a pressure on those future magistrates at school. Before we allowed Lord Lumpington and Mr. Hittall to go to the University at all, we should have examined them.... There would have been some Mr. Grote as School Board Commissary, pitching into them questions about history, and some Mr. Lowe, as Crown Patronage Commissary, pitching into them questions about English literature; and these young men would have been kept from the University, as Diggs' boys are kept from their bird-scaring, till they had instructed themselves. Then, if, after three years of their University, they wanted to be magistrates, another pressure!—a great Civil Service Examination before a Board of Experts, an examination in English law, Roman law, English history, history of jurisprudence."

"A most abominable liberty to take with Lumpington and Hittall," says Arnold.

"Then your compulsory education is a most abominable liberty to take with Diggs' boys," retorted Arminius.... "Oh, but," I answered, "to live at all, even at the lowest stage of human life, a man needs instruction." "Well," returns Arminius, "and to administer at all, even at the lowest stage of public administration, a man needs instruction."

"*We have never found it so,*" I said.

The same argument was urged, in a graver fashion, in *Schools and Universities of the Continent*.

"In the view of the English friends of compulsory education, the educated and intelligent Middle and Upper Classes amongst us are to confer the boon of compulsory education upon the ignorant lower class, which needs it while they do not. But, on the Continent, instruction is obligatory for Lower, Middle, and Upper Class alike. I doubt whether our

educated and intelligent classes are at all prepared for this. I have an acquaintance in easy circumstances, of distinguished connexions, living in a fashionable part of London, who, like many other people, deals rather easily with



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his son's schooling. Sometimes the boy is at school, then for months together he is away from school, and taught, so far as he is taught, by his father and mother at home. He is not the least an invalid, but it pleases his father and mother to bring him up in this manner. Now, I imagine, no English friends of compulsory education dream of dealing with such a defaulter as this, and certainly his father, who perhaps is himself a friend of compulsory education for the working classes, would be astounded to find his education of his own son interfered with. But, if my worthy acquaintance lived in Switzerland or Germany, he would be dealt with as follows. I speak with the school-law of Canton Neufchatel, immediately under my eyes, but the regulations on this matter are substantially the same in all the states of Germany and of German Switzerland. The Municipal Education Committee of the district where my acquaintance lived would address a summons to him, informing him that a comparison of the school-rolls of their district with the municipal list of children of school-age, showed his son not to be at school; and requiring him, in consequence, to appear before the Municipal Committee at a place and time named, and there to satisfy them, either that his son did attend some public school, or that, if privately taught, he was taught by duly trained and certificated teachers. On the back of the summons, my acquaintance would find printed the penal articles of the School-Law, sentencing him to a fine if he failed to satisfy the Municipal Committee; and, if he failed to pay the fine, or was found a second time offending, to imprisonment. In some Continental States he would be liable, in case of repeated infraction of the School-Law, to be deprived of his parental rights, and to have the care of his son transferred to guardians named by the State. It is indeed terrible to think of the consternation and wrath of our educated and intelligent classes under a discipline like this; and I should not like to be the man to try and impose it on them. But I assure them most emphatically—and if they study the experience of the Continent they will convince themselves of the truth of what I say—that only on these conditions of its equal and universal application is any law of compulsory education possible.”

We have now seen, at least in general outline, the system of National Education which he would have wished to set up—how he would have co-ordinated all instruction from the lowest to the highest, and how he would have compelled all classes alike to submit their children, and in the higher ranks of life to submit themselves, to the training which should best equip them for their chosen or appointed work. We must now enquire what sort of knowledge he would have endeavoured, by his co-ordinated system, to impart.

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He laid it down, more than once, that the aim of culture was “to know ourselves and the world,” and that, as the means to this end, we ought “to know the best which has been thought and said in the world.” He recognized, candidly and fully, the claims of the physical sciences, and their use and value in Education. For example, in advising about the instruction of a little girl, in whom her teacher wished to arouse “perception,” he said, “You had much better take some science—(botany is perhaps the best for a girl) and, choosing a good handbook, go through it regularly with her.... The verification of the laws of grammar, in the examples furnished by one’s reading, is certainly a far less fruitful stimulus of one’s powers of observation and comparison, than the verification of the laws of a science like botany in the examples furnished by the world of nature before one’s eyes.”

But in spite of this, and of similar concessions, he deliberately held the opinion that Literature, rather than Science, was the chief agent in culture. In 1872 he wrote to an enquirer: “A single line of poetry, working in the mind, may produce more thought and lead to more light, which is what man wants, than the fullest acquaintance (to take your own instance) with the processes of digestion.” In 1884 he said to his American audience: “My own studies have been almost wholly in Letters, and my visits to the field of the natural sciences have been very slight and inadequate, although those sciences have always strongly moved my curiosity.” In a word, he was, and gloried in being, a Humanist. What Humanism meant for him is curiously illustrated by his comment on some speeches which the late^[14] Lord Salisbury delivered at Oxford on his first appearance there as Chancellor of the University. After praising his skill and courtesy, Arnold says: “He is a dangerous man, through, and chiefly from, his want of any true sense and experience of literature and its beneficent function. Religion he knows, and physical science he knows; but the immense work between the two, which is for literature to accomplish, he knows nothing of; and all his speeches at Oxford^[15] pointed this way. On the one hand, he was full of the great future for physical science, and begging his University to make up her mind to it, and to resign much of her literary studies; on the other hand, he was full, almost defiantly full, of counsels and resolves for retaining and upholding the old ecclesiastical and dogmatic form of religion. From a juxtaposition of this kind, nothing but shocks and collisions can come.”



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The immense work which is for literature to accomplish. This work, lying between the work of Religion and the work of Science, was, in his view, nothing less than the culture of Humanity. Religion had its sphere, and Science had its sphere, but culture was to be effected neither by Religion nor by Science, but by Literature. The literature which he extolled was literature in its widest sense—ancient and modern, English and Continental, Occidental and Oriental—whatever contained “the best which had been thought and said in the world.” And, when we come to the sub-divisions of literature, we note that he was pre-eminently a classicist. This he was partly by temperament, partly by training, partly by his matured and deliberate judgment. It can scarcely be doubted that he had an innate love of perfect form, an innate “sentiment against hideousness and rawness,” and so he was a classicist by temperament. Then his training was essentially classical. He used to protest, with amusing earnestness, against the notion that his father had been a bad scholar. “People talk the greatest nonsense about my father’s scholarship. The Wykehamists of his day were excellent scholars. Dr. Gabell made them so. My father’s Latin verses were not good; but that was because he was not poetical—not because he was a bad scholar. But he wrote the most admirable Latin prose; and, as for his Greek prose, you couldn’t tell it from Thucydides.” In this kind of scholarship Matthew Arnold was nurtured; and whatever in this respect his training had left imperfect, he perfected by close and continuous study. His Greek and Latin reading was both wide and accurate, perhaps wider in Greek than in Latin, though the soundness of his Latin scholarship is proved by the fact that he was *proxime* for the Hertford Scholarship at Oxford. He had read Plato in the Sixth Form at Rugby, and Oxford taught him Aristotle. From first to last his “unapproachable favourites” were Homer and Sophocles, and Hesiod was “a Greek friend to whom he turned with excellent effect.” But though he was thus essentially a classicist, a mere classicist he was not. No one had a wider, a more familiar, a more discriminating knowledge of English literature; no one—and this is worthy of remark—had the text of the Bible more perfectly at his fingers’ ends. He had read all that was best in French, German, and Italian;[16] and in French at any rate he was an exact and judicious critic, as is sufficiently shown by his essay on *The French Play in London*. [17] Hebrew he mastered sufficiently to “follow and weigh the reasons offered by others” for a retranslation of the Old Testament; and into Celtic literature he made at any rate one memorable incursion. [18]



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A man so equipped was essentially a man of letters: a great deal more than a classicist, but a classicist first and foremost. And so it was natural that he should think a classical education the best education that could be offered to boys, and should desire to see classics, taught in a literary and not a pedantic spirit, the staple of instruction in all those Public Schools, whether of ancient or of modern foundation, to which the Upper and Middle Classes should resort. He was perfectly ready to make composition in Greek and Latin the luxury of the few who had a special aptitude for it, therein following the doctrine of Dr. Whewell, and leading the way to a notable reform in Public Schools. But to read the best Latin and Greek authors was to be the staple of a boy's education, and thereto were to be added a full and scholarly knowledge of English, and a sufficiency, such as modern life demands, of Science and Mathematics. He "ventured once, in the very Senate-House and heart of Cambridge, to hazard the opinion that for the majority of mankind a little of mathematics goes a long way." He thought it no particular gain for a boy to know that "when a taper burns, the wax is converted into carbonic acid and water." He thought it a clear loss that he should not know the last book of the *Iliad*, or the sixth book of the *Aeneid*, or the *Agamemnon*. He encouraged the Eton boys to laugh at "Scientific lectures, and lessons on the diameter of the sun and moon"; but he was moved almost to tears when "Can you not wait upon the lunatic?" was offered as a paraphrase of "Canst thou not minister to a mind diseased?" He listened with amused interest to the teachers who deduced our descent from "a hairy quadruped furnished with a tail and pointed ears, probably arboreal in his habits." But he thought it deplorable that a leading physicist should never have heard of Bishop Wilson of Sodor and Man, and that a leading journalist should confound him with Bishop Wilson of Calcutta.

To the Public Schools he would have entrusted that thorough drilling in Greek, Latin and English which was to be the foundation of the pupils' culture; and, this done, he would have required the University to offer scope for the fullest development of any special aptitude which the pupil might display. In brief, the school was to train in general knowledge; the University was to specialize. In 1868 he wrote: "An admirable English mathematician told me that he should never recover the loss of the two years which after his degree he wasted without fit instruction at an English University, when he ought to have been under superior instruction, for which the present University course in England makes no provision. I daresay he *will* recover it, for a man of genius counts no worthy effort too hard; but who can estimate the loss to the mental training and intellectual habits of the country, from the absence—so complete that it needs genius to be sensible of it, and costs genius an effort to repair it—of all regular public provision for the scientific study and teaching of any branch of knowledge?"

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[Illustration: Rugby

Matthew Arnold entered Rugby School in August, 1837, living under his father's roof at the School-house.

He left Rugby for Oxford in June, 1841

Photo H.W. Taunt]

But these larger views of education belong, after all, to the region of theory, and he never had the opportunity, except very indirectly, of putting them into practice. With the Elementary Schools he dealt practically, officially, and directly; but even here, as in so many other departments, his influence was rather critical than constructive. He had only an imperfect sympathy with "that somewhat terrible character, the scientific educator." A brother-inspector says that, "if he saw little children looking good and happy, and under the care of a kindly and sympathetic teacher, he would give a favourable report, without enquiring too curiously into the percentage of scholars who could pass the 'standard' examination." There must be many who still remember with amused affection his demeanour in an Elementary School. They see the tall figure, at once graceful and stately; the benign air, as of an affable archangel; the critical brow and enquiring eyeglass bent on some very immature performance in penmanship or needlework; and the frightened children and the anxious teacher, gradually lapsing into smiles and peace, as the great man tested the proficiency in some such humble art as spelling. "Well, my little man, and how do you spell *dog*?" "Please sir, *d-o-g*." "Capital, very good indeed. I couldn't do it better myself. And now let us go a little further, and see if we can spell *cat*." (Chorus excitedly.) "C-A-T." "Now, this is really excellent. (To the teacher.) You have brought them on wonderfully in spelling since I was here last. You shall have a capital report. Good-bye." To those who cherish these memories there is nothing surprising in this tribute by a friend: "His effect on the teachers when he examined a school was extraordinary. He was sympathetic without being condescending, and he reconciled the humblest drudge in a London school to his or her drudgery for the next twelve months."

As regards the matter of education, he was all for Reality, as against Pretentiousness, "the stamp of plainness and freedom from charlatanism." He had no notion that children could be humanized by being made to read that "the crocodile is oviparous," or that "summer ornaments for grates are made of wood shavings and of different coloured papers." He wished that the youngest and poorest children should be nurtured on the wholesome and delicious food of actual literature, instead of "skeletons" and "abstracts." He set great store on learning poetry by heart, for he believed in poetry as the chief instrument of culture. He poured just contempt upon the wretched doggerel which in school reading-books too often passed for poetry. "When one thinks how noble and admirable a thing genuine popular poetry is, it is provoking to think that such

rubbish should be palmed off on a poor child, with any apparent sanction from the Education Department and its grants.”



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With regard to the special evil of teaching poetry by “selections” or “extracts,” he wrote in his Report for 1880: “That the poetry chosen should have real beauties of expression and feeling, that these beauties should be such as the children’s hearts and minds can lay hold of, and that a distinct point or centre of beauty and interest should occur within the limits of the passage learned—all these are conditions to be insisted on. Some of the short pieces by Mrs. Hemans, such as ‘The Graves of a Household,’ ‘The Homes of England,’ ‘The Better Land,’ are to be recommended because they fulfil all three conditions; they have real merits of expression and sentiment; the merits are such as the children can feel, and the centre of interest, these pieces being so short, necessarily occurs within the limits of what is learnt. On the other hand, in extracts taken from Scott or Shakespeare, the point of interest is not often reached within the hundred lines which is all that children in the Fourth Standard learn. The Judgment Scene in the *Merchant of Venice* affords me a good example of what I mean.... The children in the Fourth Standard begin at the beginning and stop at the end of a hundred lines. Now the children in the Fourth Standard are often a majority of the children learning poetry, and this is all their poetry for the year. But within these hundred lines the real interest of the situation is not reached; neither do they contain any poetry of signal beauty and effectiveness. How little, therefore, has the poetry-exercise been made to do for these children, many of whom will leave school at once, and learn no more poetry!” He greatly favoured all such exercises as tend to make the mind “creative,” and give it “a native play of its own, as against such exercises as learning strings of promontories, battles, and minerals.” As to the number of subjects taught, he was in favour of few rather than many. He dreaded for the children the strain of having to receive a large number of “knowledges” (as he oddly called them), and “store them up to be reproduced in an examination.” But in spite of this well-founded dread of an undue multiplication of subjects, he wished to make Latin compulsory in the upper standards of elementary schools, and he wished to see it taught through the Vulgate. Perhaps in this particular he showed an effect of his father’s influence; for the late Dean of Westminster[19] used to imitate the enormous emphasis with which Dr. Arnold replied to some one who had depreciated the language of the Vulgate as “Dog Latin”—“*Dog Latin*, indeed! I call it *Lion Latin*!”

Be that as it may, Matthew Arnold thus gave his judgment on the possible uses of the Vulgate in elementary schools—



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“Latin is the foundation of so much in the written and spoken language of modern Europe, that it is the best language to take as a second language; in our own written and book language, above all, it fills so large a part that we perhaps hardly know how much of their reading falls meaningless upon the eye and ear of children in our elementary schools, from their total ignorance of either Latin or a modern language derived from it. For the little of languages that can be taught in our elementary schools, it is far better to go to the root at once; and Latin, besides, is the best of all languages to learn grammar by. But it should by no means be taught as in our classical schools; far less time should be spent on the grammatical framework, and classical literature should be left quite out of view. A second language, and a language coming very largely into the vocabulary of modern nations, is what Latin should stand for to the teacher of an elementary school. I am convinced that for his purpose the best way would be to disregard classical Latin entirely, to use neither Cornelius Nepos, nor Eutropius, nor Caesar, nor any *delectus* from them, but to use the Latin Bible, the Vulgate. A chapter or two from the story of Joseph, a chapter or two from Deuteronomy, and the first two chapters of St. Luke’s Gospel would be the sort of *delectus* we want; add to them a vocabulary and a simple grammar of the main forms of the Latin language, and you have a perfectly compact and cheap school book, and yet all that you need. In the extracts the child would be at home, instead of, as in extracts from classical Latin, in an utterly strange land; and the Latin of the Vulgate, while it is real and living Latin, is yet, like the Greek of the New Testament, much nearer to modern idiom, and therefore much easier for a modern learner than classical idiom can be. True, a child whose *delectus* is taken from Cornelius Nepos or Caesar will be better prepared perhaps for going on to Virgil and Cicero than a child whose *delectus* is taken from the Vulgate. But we do not want to carry our elementary schools into Virgil or Cicero; one child in five thousand, with a special talent, may go on to higher schools, and to Virgil, and he will go on to them all the better for the little we have at any rate given him. But what we want to give to our Elementary Schools in general is the vocabulary, to some extent, of a second language, and that language one which is at the bottom of a great deal of modern life and modern language. This, I am convinced, we may give in some such method as the method I have above suggested, but in no other.”



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There is, perhaps, no more interesting or more characteristic feature of his doctrine about elementary schools than his insistence, early and late, on a close and familiar acquaintance with the Bible. "Chords of power," he said, "are touched by this instruction which no other part of the instruction in a popular school reaches, and chords various, not the single religious chord only. The Bible is for the child in an elementary school almost his only contact with poetry and philosophy. What a course of eloquence and poetry (to call it by that name alone) is the Bible in a school which has and can have but little eloquence and poetry! and how much do our elementary schools lose by not having any such course as part of their school programme! All who value the Bible may rest assured that thus to know and possess the Bible is the most certain way to extend the power and efficacy of the Bible."

The spiritual sense, the doctrinal and dogmatic import, of Holy Scripture lay, in his judgment, quite outside the scope of the School. "The Bible's application and edification belong to the Church; its literary and historical substance to the School." He saw clearly the manifold and conflicting perils to which a simple love and knowledge of the Bible were exposed the moment that exegesis began to play about it. He pointed out that Cardinal Newman interpreted the words, *I will lay thy stones with fair colours and thy foundations with sapphires*, as authorizing "the sumptuosities of the Church of Rome"; and to Protestants who said that this was a wrong use of the passage he pointed out that their similar use of the Beast and the Scarlet Woman and Antichrist would seem equally wrong to Cardinal Newman; "and in these cases of application who shall decide"? What he insisted on was the value of the Bible as a beautiful and ennobling literature, easily accessible to all. He would have it taught with intelligence, sympathy, reverence, and, above all, "as a Literature,"—for biblical teaching ought to show the widely varying elements of which the Bible is composed: the profound differences, not merely of authorship and style, but of tone and temper, between one book and another; the historical circumstances under which each came into being; the section of humanity and the period of time to which each made its appeal.

In 1869 he wrote in his Annual Report—

"Let the school managers make the main outlines of Bible history, and the getting by heart a selection of the finest Psalms, the most interesting passages from the historical and prophetic books of the Old Testament, and the chief parables, discourses, and exhortations, of the New, a part of the regular school work, to be submitted to inspection and to be seen in its strength or weakness like any other. This could raise no jealousies; or, if it still raises some, let a sacrifice be made of them for the sake of the end in view. Some will say that what we propose

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is but a small use to put the Bible to; yet it is that on which all higher use of the Bible is to be built, and its adoption is the only chance for saving the one elevating and inspiring element in the scanty instruction of our primary schools from being sacrificed to a politico-religious difficulty. There was no Greek school in which Homer was not read; cannot our popular schools, with their narrow range and their jejune alimentation in secular literature, do as much for the Bible as the Greek schools did for Homer?"

In 1870 he wrote about a book[20] by two young Jewish ladies: "I am sure it will be found, as I told them, that their book meets a real want; there were good books about the Bible for the learned, and there were bad books about it—that is to say, bad *resumes* of its history and literature—for the general public; but anything like a good and sound *resume* for the general public did not exist till this book came."

It is interesting to observe that to his deep conviction of the ethical and educational value of the Bible is due his only direct and constructive effort to enrich the apparatus of the schools which he inspected. Of improvement by way of criticism and suggestion he gave them enough and to spare, but to supply them with a new reading-book was a departure from his usual method. Nevertheless in 1872 he wrote: "An ounce of practice, they say, is better than a pound of theory; and certainly one may talk for ever about the wonder-working power of Letters, and yet produce no good at all, unless one really puts people in the way of feeling their power. The friends of Physics do not content themselves with extolling Physics; they put forth school-books by which the study of Physics may be with proper advantage brought near to those who before were strangers to it; and they do wisely. For any one who believes in the civilizing power of Letters, and often talks of this belief, to think that he has for more than twenty years got his living by inspecting schools for the people, has gone in and out among them, has seen that the power of Letters never reaches them at all, and that the whole study of Letters is thereby discredited, and its power called in question, and yet has attempted nothing to remedy this state of things, cannot but be vexing and disquieting. He may truly say, like the Israel of the prophet, 'We have not wrought any deliverance in the earth'! and he may well desire to do something to pay his debt to popular education before he finally departs, and to serve it, if he can, in that point where its need is sorest, where he has always said its need was sorest, and where, nevertheless, it is as sore still as when he began saying this twenty years ago. Even if what he does cannot be of service at once, owing to special prejudices and difficulties, yet these prejudices and difficulties years are almost sure to dissipate, and the work may be of service hereafter."

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These wise, though rather melancholy, words occur in the Preface to a little book called *A Bible Reading for Schools*, and in its fuller and alternative title, *The Great Prophecy of Israel's Restoration, Arranged and Edited for Young Learners*. Arnold, himself a constant and attentive student of Holy Writ, "liked reading his Bible without being baffled by unmeaningnesses." He complained that "the fatal thing about our version is that it so often spoils a chapter in the Old Testament by making sheer nonsense out of one or two verses, and so throwing the reader out." He habitually used a Bible—a present from his godfather, John Keble—"where the numbers of the chapters are marked at the side and do not interpose a break between chapter and chapter; and where the divisions of the verses, being numbered in like manner at the side of the page, not in the body of the verse, and being numbered in very small type, do not thrust themselves forcibly on the attention," and these circumstances suggested the form of his *Bible Reading for Schools*. The little book consists of the last twenty-seven chapters of Isaiah, running on continuously, with some twenty pages of notes, and he thus introduces it—

"At the very outset, the humbleness of what is professed in this little book cannot be set forth too strongly. With the aim of enabling English school children to read as a connected whole the last twenty-seven chapters of Isaiah, without being frequently stopped by passages of which the meaning is almost or quite unintelligible, I have sought to choose, among the better meanings which have been offered for each of the passages, that which seemed the best, and to weave it into the authorized text in such a manner as not to produce any sense of strangeness or interruption." The attempt was truly laudable, and the execution admirable for taste and ease. The majestic flow and cadence of the traditional English are never interrupted. There is no concession to such pedantries as Professor Robertson Smith's "greaves of the warrior that stampeth in the fray," or such barbarisms as Professor Cheynes' "boot of him that trampleth noisily." But here and there a turn is given to a sentence, which for the first time reveals its true meaning; here and there a word which really represents the Hebrew is substituted for one which makes nonsense of the sentence.

The little book has often been reprinted; but as "A Bible Reading for Schools" it failed, as, to judge by his own melancholy words about it, he seems to have foreseen that it would fail. People who have charge of Elementary Education in England, whether in Church Schools or in Board Schools, are eminently and rightly suspicious about new views in religion; and *The Great Prophecy of Israel's Restoration* gave currency to a view which in 1872 was probably new to most School Managers and School Boards. He carefully disclaimed any intention to decide the authorship of the chapters which he edited. But

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the fact that they were detached from the earlier ones might perhaps raise questions in enquiring minds; and in the preface he stated his personal belief that “the author of the earlier part of the Book of Isaiah was not the author of these last chapters.” He most truly added that “there is nothing to forbid a member of the Church of England, or, for that matter, a member of the Church of Rome either, or a member of the Jewish Synagogue, from holding such a belief”; but probably clergymen and Dissenting ministers and pious laymen of all denominations looked rather askance at it; and the little book never got itself adopted as “A Bible Reading for Schools.”

Thus ended his one attempt to improve, positively and by construction, the curriculum of the Elementary Schools; and we return, at the end of this study of his Educational doctrine, to the point at which we began.

“Organize your Elementary, your Secondary, your Superior, Education.” This was the burden of his teaching for five-and-thirty years; and, if the community has at length really set its hand to that great task, it is only right that we should remember with honour the Master who first taught us (when the doctrine was unpopular) that the primary duty of a civilized State is to educate its children.

[Footnote 9: Thomas Arnold, D.D., Head Master of Rugby. His eldest son, Matthew Arnold, Inspector of Schools. His second son, Thomas Arnold, Professor in University College, Dublin. His third son, Edward Penrose Arnold, Inspector of Schools. His fourth son, William Delafield Arnold, Director of Public Instruction in the Punjab.]

[Footnote 10: See p. 135.]

[Footnote 11: Reprinted in *Irish Essays and Others*.]

[Footnote 12: This essay, unfortunately, was never reprinted.]

[Footnote 13: It was published in 1850.]

[Footnote 14: An Oxford man must write this word *late* with regret. August 23, 1903.]

[Footnote 15: In 1870.]

[Footnote 16: For the width of his reading, see his *Note-Books*, Edited by his daughter, Mrs. Wodehouse.]

[Footnote 17: Reprinted in *Irish Essays, and Others*.]

[Footnote 18: *On the Study of Celtic Literature*, 1867.]



[Footnote 19: Dr. Bradley.]

[Footnote 20: *The History and Literature of the Israelites*. By C. and A. de Rothschild.]

CHAPTER IV

SOCIETY

“Culture seeks to do away with classes and sects; to make the best that has been thought and known in the world current everywhere; to make all men live in an atmosphere of sweetness and light, where they may use ideas, as it uses them itself, freely; nourished, and not bound, by them. This is the *social idea*; and the men of culture are the true apostles of equality.”



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The words—*social idea*—which Arnold himself italicized in the foregoing extract from *Culture and Anarchy*, will indicate the sense in which “Society” is here intended. We are not thinking of that which Pennialinus[21] means when he writes about “Society gossip” or “a Society function.” We are concerned with the thoughts and temper and actions of men, not as isolated units, but as living in an organized community; and, taking “Society” in this sense, we are to examine Arnold’s influence on the Society of his time.

[Illustration: Front of Balliol College, Oxford, in Arnold’s Time

In 1840 Matthew Arnold won an open scholarship at Balliol and went into residence in 1841

Photo H.W. Taunt]

Certainly the most obvious and palpable way of affecting Society—and to many Englishmen the only conceivable way—is by the method of Politics; by the definite and positive action of human law, and by such endeavours as we can make towards shaping that action. Now, if indeed the Political method were the only one, there could be little to be said about his effect on Society. Politics, in the limited and conventional sense just now suggested, were not much in his line. He was interested in them; he had opinions about them; he occasionally intervened in them. But he made no mark on the political work of his time; nor, so far as one can judge, did he aspire to do so. Of the man of letters in the field of politics, he said: “He is in truth not on his own ground there, and is in peculiar danger of talking at random.” In politics, as in all else that he touched, he was critical rather than constructive; and in politics, “immersed,” as Bacon said, “in matter,” a man must be constructive, if his influence is to be felt and to endure. “Politicians,” he said in 1880, “we all of us here in England are and must be, and I too cannot help being a politician; but a politician of that commonwealth of which the pattern, as the philosopher says, exists perhaps somewhere in Heaven, but certainly is at present found nowhere on earth.” In 1887, describing himself as “an aged outsider,” he thus stated his own attitude towards political problems—

“The professional politicians are always apt to be impatient of the intervention in politics of a candid outsider, and he must expect to provoke contempt and resentment in a good many of them. Still the action of the regular politicians continues to be, for the most part, so very far from successful, that the outsider is perpetually tempted to brave their anger and to offer his observations, with the hope of possibly doing some little good by saying what many quiet people are thinking and wishing outside of the strife, phrases, and routine of professional politics.”



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From first to last, he professed himself, and no doubt believed himself, to be on the Liberal side. At the General Election of 1868 he urbanely informed a Tory Committee, which asked for the advantage of his name, that he was “an old Whig,” nurtured in the traditions of Lansdowne House. “Although,” he said in 1869, “I am a Liberal, yet I am a Liberal tempered by experience, reflection, and renouncement.” In 1878 he described himself as a “sincere but ineffectual Liberal”: in 1880, as “a Liberal of the future rather than a Liberal of the present.” A year later, he spoke smilingly of “all good Liberals, of whom I wish to be considered one”; and as late as 1887 he declared himself “one of the Liberals of the future, who happen to be grown, alas! rather old.”

But, though he believed himself to be a Liberal, he had the most lively disrelish for the Liberalism of that great Middle Class which, during the greater part of his life, played so large a part in Liberal politics. In 1882, reviewing, in his favourite manner, the various classes of English Society, and discussing their adequacy to fulfil the ideal of perfect citizenship, he wrote—

“Suppose we take that figure we know so well, the earnest and non-conforming Liberal of our Middle Classes, as his schools and his civilization have made him. He is for Disestablishment; he is for Temperance; he has an eye to his Wife’s Sister; he is a member of his local caucus; he is learning to go up to Birmingham every year to the feast of Mr. Chamberlain. His inadequacy is but too visible.”

Certainly Arnold’s Liberalism had nothing in common with the Liberalism of the great Middle Class. Indeed, so far as theory is concerned, it had a democratic basis, inasmuch as he believed that democracy was a product of natural law, and that our business was to adapt our political and social institutions to it. “Democracy,” he said, “is trying to *affirm its own essence*: to live, to enjoy, to possess the world, as aristocracy has tried, and successfully tried, before it.”

The movement of Democracy he regarded as being an “operation of nature,” and, like other operations of nature, it was neither to be praised nor blamed. He was neither a “partisan” of it, nor an “enemy.” His only care was, if he could, to guide it aright, and to secure that it used its predominant power in human affairs at least as wisely as the aristocracy which had preceded it. Of aristocratic rule in foreign countries—of such rule as preceded the French Revolution—he thought as poorly as most men think; but for the aristocracy of England he had a singular esteem. It is true that he gave it a nickname; that he poked fun at its illiteracy and its inaccessibility to ideas; that he was impatient of “immense inequalities of condition and property,” and huge estates, and irresponsible landlordism; that he contemned the “hideous English toadyism” and “immense vulgar-mindedness” of the Middle Class when confronted with “lords and great people.”



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But, for all that, he wrote about the English Aristocracy, as it stood in 1859: "I desire to speak of it with the most unbounded respect. It is the most popular of aristocracies; it has avoided faults which have ruined other aristocracies equally splendid. While the aristocracy of France was destroying its estates by its extravagance, and itself by its impertinence, the aristocracy of England was founding English agriculture, and commanding respect by a personal dignity which made even its pride forgiven. Historical and political England, the England of which we are all so proud, is of its making."

In spite, however, of this high estimate of what Aristocracy had accomplished in the past, he felt that power was slipping away from it, and was passing into the hands of the Multitude. But he also felt—and it was certainly one of his most profound convictions—that the Multitude could never govern properly, could never regulate its own affairs, could never present England adequately to the view of the world, unless it cast aside the Individualism in which it had been nurtured, and made up its mind to act in and through the State. Perhaps his ideal of a State can best be described as an Educated Democracy, working by Collectivism in Government, Religion, and Social order.

"If experience has established any one thing in this world, it has established this: that it is well for any great class or description of men in society to be able to say for itself what it wants, and not to have other classes, the so-called educated and intelligent classes, acting for it as its proctors, and supposed to understand its wants and to provide for them. They do not really understand its wants, they do not really provide for them. A class of men may often itself not either fully understand its own wants, or adequately express them; but it has a nearer interest and a more sure diligence in the matter than any of its proctors, and therefore a better chance of success." Amid many fluctuations of opinion on minor points, he was, from first to last, a thoroughgoing advocate for extending the action of the State. In his ideal of government, the State was to play in a democratic age the part which the Aristocracy had played in earlier ages—it was to govern and administer and control and inspire. And, it was, in one important respect, a far nobler thing than the best aristocracy could ever be, for it was the "representative acting-power of the nation"; and so the relation of the citizen to the State was a much more dignified relation than that of a citizen to an aristocracy could ever be. "Is it that of a dependant to a parental benefactor? By no means: it is that of a member in a partnership to the whole firm." The citizens of a State, the members of a society, are really "'a *partnership*,' as Burke nobly says, '*in all science, in all art, in every virtue, in all perfection.*' Towards this great final design of their connexion, they apply the aids which co-operative association can give them." We turn now to the practical application of this doctrine.



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We have seen in the previous chapter how earnestly and consistently throughout his working life he urged the State to take into its control, and so far as was needed to subsidize, the Education of the whole nation. “How vain, how meaningless,” he cried, “to tell a man who, for the instruction of his offspring, receives aid from the State, that he is humiliated! Humiliated by receiving help for himself as an individual from himself in his corporate and associated capacity! help to which his own money, as a tax-payer, contributes, and for which, as a result of the joint energy and intelligence of the whole community in employing as powers, he himself deserves some of the praise!... He is no more humiliated than when he crosses London Bridge or walks down the King’s Road, or visits the British Museum. But it is one of the extraordinary inconsistencies of some English people in this matter, that they keep all their cry of humiliation and degradation for help which the State offers.” We shall see in a subsequent chapter that he was as strong for Established Churches as for State-regulated Schools, and for the same reason. In Religion, as in Education, he disparaged private institutions and individual ventures. The State, “the nation in its corporate and collective capacity,” ought to transcend the individual citizen: it should supply him, to help him as one of its units to supply himself, with the thing which he wanted—Education or Religion—in the grand style, on a large scale, with all the authority which comes from national recognition, with all the dignity of a historical descent.

Arnold’s appeal for State-supplied and State-controlled Education has, as we have already seen, met with some practical response, and in the main falls in with the modern drift of Liberal ideas. In upholding State-supported and State-controlled Religion, he was rather continuing an old tradition than starting a new idea, and modern Liberalism is moving away from him.

But in some important respects, all strictly political, his advocacy of extended action by the State fell in with the Liberal movement of his time. The hideous misgovernment of Ireland he had always deplored. It touched him long before it touched the great majority of Englishmen. With a view to informing people on the Irish question, he compiled a book of Burke’s most telling utterances on Ireland and her woes. Those utterances, as he said, “Show at work all the causes which have brought Ireland to its present state—the tyranny of the grantees of confiscation; of the English garrison; Protestant ascendancy; the reliance of the English Government upon this ascendancy and its instruments as their means of government; the yielding to menaces of danger and insurrection what was never yielded to considerations of equity and reason; the recurrence to the old perversity of mismanagement as soon as ever the danger was passed.” To all these evils he would have applied the remedies



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which Burke suggested. He would have had the State endow the religions of Ireland and their ministries, supply Ireland with good schools, and defend Irish tenants against the extortions of bad landlords. He was vehemently opposed to Gladstone's scheme of Home Rule, because, in his view, it tended to disintegration where he specially desired cohesion: but, in the tumults of 1885-8, he never lost his head, never forgot his old sympathy with Irish wrongs, never "drew up an indictment against a whole people." [22] All through these stormy years, he stood firm for an effective system of Local Government in Ireland. Irish government, he said, had "been conducted in accordance with the wishes of the minority, and of the British Philistine." He desired a system which should accord with the wishes of the majority. He deprecated Forster's "expression of general objection to Home Rule"; because, though Home Rule as understood by Parnell was intolerable, there was another kind of Home Rule which was possible and even desirable. He was keenly anxious that his friends, the Liberal Unionists, should not let the opportunity slip, but should bring forward a "counter scheme to Gladstone's," giving real powers of local government. In 1887 he again insisted that the "opinion of quiet reasonable people throughout the country" was bent on giving the Irish the due control of their own local affairs. He pleaded for a system "built on sufficiently large lines, not too complicated, not fantastic, not hesitating and suspicious, not taking back with one hand what it gives with the other." A similar system he wished to see extended to England, and he pointed out that it admirably facilitated that national control of Secondary Education for which he was always pleading.

Then again, with reference to Irish land, his belief in the action of the State displayed itself very clearly. In his opinion the remedy for agrarian trouble in Ireland was that the State should, after rigid and impartial enquiry, distinguish between good landlords and bad, and then expropriate the bad ones. This, he thought, would "give the sort of equity, the sort of moral satisfaction, which the case needed." Once again he was in harmony with Liberal opinion, when he desired to widen the basis of the State by extending the suffrage in turn to the Artisans and the Labourers. In one respect at least he was in harmony rather with Collectivist Radicalism than with orthodox Liberalism, for he did not in the least dread the intervention of the State between employer and employed. He desired to strengthen Parliament, the supreme organ of the national will, by reforming the House of Lords; though he strongly dissented from a scheme of reform just then in vogue. "One can hardly imagine sensible men planning a Second Chamber which should not include the Archbishop of Canterbury, or which should include the young gentlemen who flock to the House of Lords when pigeon-shooting is in question. But our precious Liberal Reformers are for retaining the pigeon-shooters and for expelling the Archbishop of Canterbury." [23]



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Even in the full flood of Liberal victory which followed the General Election of 1880, he saw what was coming. "What strikes one is the insecurity of the Liberals' hold upon office and upon public favour; the probability of the return, perhaps even more than once, of their adversaries to office, before that final and happy consummation is reached—the permanent establishment of Liberalism in power." And, while he saw what was coming, he thus divined the cause. The official and commanding part of the Liberal Party was at the best stolidly indifferent to Social Reform; at the worst, viciously angry with the idea and those who propagated it. The commercialism of the great Middle Class had covered the face of England with places like St. Helens, which the capitalists called "great centres of national enterprise," and Cobbett called "Hell-Holes." In these places life was lived under conditions of squalid and hideous misery, and the inhabitants were beginning to find out, in the words of one of their own class, that "free political institutions do not guarantee the well-being of the toiling class." Under these circumstances it was natural that the toilers, having looked for redress to the Liberal Party and looked in vain, should, when next they had the chance, try a spell of that Democratic Toryism which at any rate held out some shadowy hope of social betterment. Arnold's misgivings about the future of the Liberal Party were abundantly made good by the General Election of 1885; but enough has now been said about his contribution to the practical politics of his time. A much larger space must be given to the influence which he brought to bear on Society by methods not political—by criticism, by banter, by literary felicities, by "sinuous, easy, unpolemical" methods.

England had known him first as a poet, then as a literary critic. Next came a rather hazy impression that he was an educational reformer whose suggestions might be worth attending to. It was not till 1869 that his countrymen became fully aware of him as a social critic, a commentator on life and society. Looking back, one seems to see that by that time his poetical function was fulfilled. As far as the medium of poetry is concerned, he had said his say; said it incomparably well, said it with abiding effect. Now it seemed that a new function presented itself to him; a great door and effectual was opened to him. He found a fresh sphere of usefulness and influence in applying his critical method to the ideals and follies of his countrymen; to their scheme of life, ways of thinking and acting, prejudices, conventions, and limitations. Mr. Paul said, as we have already seen, that the appearance of *Essays in Criticism* was "a great intellectual event." That is perfectly true; and the appearance of *Culture and Anarchy* was a great social event. The book so named was published in 1869; but the ground had been prepared for it by some earlier writings, and these we must consider before we come to the book itself.



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In February, 1866, there appeared in the *Cornhill Magazine* an essay called “My Countrymen.” In this essay Arnold, fresh from one of his Continental tours, tried to show English people what the intelligent mind of Europe was really thinking of them. “It is not so much that we dislike England,’ a Prussian official, with the graceful tact of his nation, said to me the other day, ‘as that we think little of her.’” Broadly speaking, European judgment on us came to this—that England had been great, powerful, and prosperous under an aristocratic government, at a time when the chief requisite for national greatness was Action, “for aristocracies, poor in ideas, are rich in energy”; but that England was rapidly losing ground, was becoming a second-rate power, was falling from her place in admiration and respect, since the Government had passed into the hands of the Middle Class. What was now the chief requisite for national greatness was Intelligence; and in intelligence the Middle Class had shown itself signally deficient. In foreign affairs—in its dealings with Russia and Turkey, Germany and America—it had shown “rash engagement, intemperate threatenings, undignified retreat, ill-timed cordiality,” in short, every quality best calculated to lower England in the esteem of the civilized world.

In domestic affairs, the life and mind of the Middle Class were thus described by the foreign critic. “The fineness and capacity of man’s spirit is shown by his enjoyments; your Middle Class has an enjoyment in its business, we admit, and gets on well in business, and makes money; but beyond that? Drugged with business, your Middle Class seems to have its sense blunted for any stimulus besides, except Religion; it has a religion, narrow, unintelligent, repulsive.... What other enjoyments have they? The newspapers, a sort of eating and drinking which are not to our taste, a literature of books almost entirely religious or semi-religious, books utterly unreadable by an educated class anywhere, but which your Middle Class consumes by the hundred thousand, and in their evenings, for a great treat, a lecture on Teetotalism or Nunneries. Can any life be imagined more hideous, more dismal, more unenviable?... Your Middle Class man thinks it the highest pitch of development and civilization when his letters are carried twelve times a day from Islington to Camberwell, and from Camberwell to Islington, and if railway trains run to and fro between them every quarter of an hour. He thinks it is nothing that the trains only carry him from an illiberal, dismal life at Islington to an illiberal, dismal life at Camberwell; and the letters only tell him that such is the life there.” And, as to political and social reform, “Such a spectacle as your Irish Church Establishment you cannot find in France or Germany. Your Irish Land Question you dare not face.” English Schools, English vestrydom, English provincialism—all alike stand in the most urgent need of reform; but

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with all alike the Middle Class is serenely content. After reporting these exceedingly frank comments of foreign critics to his English readers, Arnold thus expresses his own conviction on the matters in dispute. "All due deductions made for envy, exaggeration, and injustice, enough stuck by me of these remarks to determine me to go on trying to keep my mind fixed on these, instead of singing hosannahs to our actual state of development and civilization. The old recipe, to think a little more and bustle a little less, seemed to me still to be the best recipe to follow. So I take comfort when I find the *Guardian* reproaching me with having no influence; for I know what influence means—a party, practical proposals, action; and I say to myself: 'Even suppose I could get some followers, and assemble them, brimming with affectionate enthusiasm, to a committee-room in some inn; what on earth should I say to them? What resolutions could I propose? I could only propose the old Socratic commonplace, *Know thyself*; and how black they would all look at that!' No; to enquire, perhaps too curiously, what that present state of English development and civilization is, which according to Mr. Lowe is so perfect that to give votes to the working class is stark madness; and, on the other hand, to be less sanguine about the divine and saving effect of a vote on its possessor than my friends in the committee-room at the *Spotted Dog*—that is my inevitable portion. To bring things under the light of one's intelligence, to see how they look there, to accustom oneself simply to regard the Marylebone Vestry, or the Educational Home, or the Irish Church Establishment, or our railway management, or our Divorce Court, or our gin-palaces open on Sunday and the Crystal Palace shut, as absurdities—that is, I am sure, invaluable exercise for us just at present. Let all persist in it who can, and steadily set their desires on introducing, with time, a little more soul and spirit into the too, too solid flesh of English society."

[Illustration: Fisher's Buildings, Balliol College, Oxford

Showing Matthew Arnold's Rooms

Photo H.W. Taunt]

So much for his first deliberate attempt in the way of social criticism. It was levelled, we observe, at the thoughts and doings of the great Middle Class, and it is natural to ask why that class was so specially the target for his scorn. To that class, as he was fond of declaring, half in fun and half in earnest, he himself belonged. "I always thought my marriage," he used to say, "such a perfect marriage of the Middle Classes—a schoolmaster's son and a judge's daughter." In the preface to the *Essays in Criticism*, he spoke of "the English Middle Class, of which I am myself a feeble unit." He used to declare that his feeling towards his brethren of the Middle Class was that of St. Paul towards his brethren of Israel: "My heart's desire and prayer for them is that they may be saved." In *Culture and Anarchy* he was constrained to admit that "through circumstances which will perhaps one day be known, if ever the affecting history of my



conversion comes to be written, I have, for the most part, broken with the ideas and the tea-meetings of my own class"; but he found that he had not, by that conversion, come much nearer to the ideas and works of the Aristocracy or the Populace.



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He admired the fine manners, the governing faculty, the reticent and dignified habit, of the Aristocracy. He deplored its limitations and its obduracy, its “little culture and no ideas.” He made fun of it when its external manifestations touched the region of the ludicrous—“Everybody knows Lord Elcho’s[24] appearance, and how admirably he looks the part of our governing classes; to my mind, indeed, the mere cock of his lordship’s hat is one of the finest and most aristocratic things we have.” In a more serious vein he taught—and enraged the *Guardian* by teaching—that, “ever since the advent of Christianity, *the prince of this world is judged*”; and that wealth and rank and dignified ease are bound to justify themselves for their apparent inconsistency with the Christian ideal. He pitied the sorrows of the “people who suffer,” the “dim, common populations,” the “poor who faint away”; but he pitied them from above. He certainly did not enter into their position; did not share their ideas, or feel their sorrows as part of his own experience. In an amazing passage he says that, when we snatch up a vehement opinion in ignorance and passion, when we long to crush an adversary by sheer violence, when we are envious, when we are brutal, when “we add our voices to swell a blind clamour against some unpopular personage,” when “we trample savagely on the fallen,” then we find in our own bosom “the eternal spirit of the Populace.” That a spirit so hideous, so infernal as is here described, is the eternal spirit of fallen humanity may be painfully true; but to say that it is the special or characteristic spirit of “the Populace” is to show that one has no genuine sympathy and no real acquaintance with the life and heart of the poor. So far, then, his account of his own transition is true. He had “broken with the ideas of his own class, and had not come much nearer to the ideas and works of Aristocracy or the Populace.” But the work of his life had brought him into close and continuous contact with the great Middle Class, which practically had the whole management of Elementary Education in its hands. He knew the members of that class, as he said, “experimentally.” He slept in their houses, and ate at their tables, and observed at close quarters their books, their amusements, and their social life. Thus he judged of their civilization by intimate acquaintance, and found it eminently distasteful and defective. From 1832 to 1867 the Middle Class had governed England, manipulating the Aristocracy through the medium of the House of Commons; and the Aristocracy, though still occupying the place of visible dignity, had its eye nervously fixed on the movement, actual and impending, of the Middle Class. This system of government by the predominance of the Middle Class, was not only distasteful to culture, but was actually a source of danger to the State when it came to be applied to Foreign Affairs. “That makes the difference between Lord Grenville

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and Lord Granville.” So it was to the shortcomings of the Middle Class, from which he professed to be sprung and which he so intimately knew, that he first addressed his social criticism. The essay on “My Countrymen” immediately attracted notice. It was fresh, it was lively, it put forth a new view, it gaily ran counter to the great mass of current prejudice. He was frankly pleased by the way in which it was received. It was noticed and quoted and talked about. He reported to his mother that it was thought “witty and suggestive,” “timely and true.” Carlyle “almost wholly approved of it,” and Bright was “full of it.” He did not expect it to be liked by people who belonged to “the *old* English time, of which the greatness and success was so immense and indisputable that no one who flourished when it was at its height could ever lose the impression of it,” or realize how far we had fallen in Continental esteem. His friend Lingen was “indignant” because he thought the essay exalted the Aristocracy at the expense of the Middle Class; and the Whig newspapers were “almost all unfavourable, because it tells disagreeable truths to the class which furnishes the great body of what is called the Liberal interest.” From the foreign side came a criticism in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, “professing to be by a Frenchman,” but “I am sure it is by a woman I know something of in Paris, a half Russian, half Englishwoman, married to a Frenchman.” The first part of this criticism “is not good, and perhaps when the second part appears I shall write a short and light letter by way of reply.” That “short and light letter” appeared in the *Pall Mall* of March 20, 1866. It dealt with the respective but not incompatible claims of Culture and Liberty—the former so defective in England, the latter so abundant—and it contained this aspiration for Englishmen of the Middle Class. “I do not wish them to be the cafe-haunting, dominoes-playing Frenchmen, but some third thing: neither the Frenchmen nor their present selves.”

He was now fairly launched on the course of social criticism. As time went on, his essays attracted more and more notice, sometimes friendly, sometimes hostile, but always interested and not seldom excited. Some of the comments on the new and daring critic were inconceivably absurd. Of Mr. Frederic Harrison’s retort,[25] Arnold wrote that it was “scarcely the least vicious, and in parts so amusing that I laughed till I cried.” Mr. Goldwin Smith described him as “a gentleman of a jaunty air, and on good terms with the world.” To the *Times* he seemed “a sentimentalist whose dainty taste requires something more flimsy than the strong sense and sturdy morality of his fellow-Englishmen.” One newspaper called him “a high priest of the kid-glove persuasion”; another, “an elegant Jeremiah”; and Mr. Lionel Tollemache, combining in one harmonious whole the absurdities of all the other commentators, says: “When asked my opinion of this quaint man of genius, I have described him as a *Hebrew prophet in white kid gloves*.”



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The fact is that we are a serious people. The Middle Class, which he singled out for attack, is quite pre-eminently serious. Philosophers and critics—the *Spectator* and the *Edinburgh*—had made seriousness a religion. Editors, leader-writers, reviewers, the Press generally, were steeped to their lips in seriousness. They could not understand, and were greatly inclined to resent, the appearance of this bright, playful, unconventional spirit, happy and brilliant himself, and loving the happiness and brilliancy of the world; with not an ounce of pomposity in his own nature, and with the most irreverent demeanour towards pomposity in other people. “Our social Polyphemes,” as Lord Beaconsfield said, “have only one eye”; and they could not the least perceive that Arnold’s genius was like the genius of poetry as he himself described it—

Radiant, adorn’d outside; a hidden ground
Of thought and of austerity within.

In a letter to the *Pall Mall Gazette* of July 21, 1866, he first introduced his friend Arminius,[26] Baron Von Thunder-Ten-Tronckh, the cultivated and enquiring Prussian who had come to England to study our Politics, Education, Local Government, and social life. A series of similar letters followed at irregular intervals during the years 1866, 1867, 1869, and 1870. And Arminius’ drastic method of questioning and arguing became the idoneous vehicle for Arnold’s criticisms on such topics as our Foreign Policy, Compulsory Education, the Press, and the Deceased Wife’s Sister. The letters were eventually collected in that little-read but most fascinating book, *Friendship’s Garland*, which was published in 1871.[27] But before *Friendship’s Garland* came out, Arnold, who had tested his powers in social criticism by these fugitive pieces, addressed himself to a more serious and solid effort in the same field. The essays which eventually formed the book called *Culture and Anarchy* began to appear in the *Cornhill Magazine* for July, 1867, and were continued in 1868. The book was published in 1869. We saw at the outset that he himself said of his *Discourses in America* that they, of all his prose-writings, were the writings by which he would most wish to be remembered. Many of his disciples would say that *Essays in Criticism* was his most important work in prose. Some people would give the crown to *Literature and Dogma*. “It has been more in demand,” the author told us in 1883, “than any other of my prose-writings.” Respect is due to what a great master thought of his own work, and to what his best-qualified disciples think of it. But after all we uphold the right of private judgment, and the present writer is strongly of opinion that *Culture and Anarchy* is Arnold’s most important work in prose. It was, to borrow a phrase used by Mr. Gladstone in another connexion, not a book, but an event. We must consider it in its proper setting of time and circumstance.



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The beginning of 1869 was a great moment in our political and social history. Ever since the enthusiasm which surrounded the Reform Act of 1832 had faded away in disappointment and disillusion, the ardent friends of freedom and progress had been crying out for a further extension of the franchise. The next Reform Bill was to give the workmen a vote; and a Parliament elected by workmen was to bring the Millennium. The Act of 1867 gave the desired vote, and the workmen used it for the first time at the General Election of 1868. At the beginning of 1869 the new Parliament was just assembling, and it was possible to take stock of it, to analyze its component parts, to form some estimate of its capacity, some forecast of its intentions. It was a Liberal Parliament. There was no mistake about that. Bishop Wilberforce wrote just after the Election: "In a few weeks Gladstone will be in office, at the head of a majority of something like a hundred, elected on the distinct issue of 'Gladstone and the Irish Church.'"

Certainly the Election had been fought and won on Irish Disestablishment, but disestablishment was only part of a larger scheme. Rather late in the day, the Liberal Party, urged thereto by a statesman who had never set foot in Ireland, had taken into its head to "govern Ireland according to Irish ideas," or what was understood by that taking phrase. We were to disestablish and disendow the Irish Church, reform the Irish system of land-tenure, and reconstruct the Irish Universities. Robert Lowe, who was a conspicuous member of the new Cabinet, burst into rather premature dithyrambics, crying, "The Liberal Ministry resolved to knit the hearts of the Empire into one harmonious concord, and *knitted they were accordingly.*" And we, of the rank and file, believed this claptrap; but to us it was not claptrap, for our whole hearts were in the great enterprise of pacification in which we believed our leaders to be engaged. But Ireland by no means exhausted our reforming zeal. We had enough and to spare for many departments of the Constitution. We were determined to give the workmen the protection of the Ballot, and to compel them to educate their children. We meant to abolish Purchase in the Army and Tests at the University; and some of us were beginning to feel our way to more extensive changes still; to hanker after universal suffrage, to dream of simultaneous disarmament, to anticipate the downfall of monarchical institutions, and to listen with complacency to attacks on the Civil List and Impeachments of the House of Brunswick. In fine, Reformers were in a triumphant and sanguine mood. We were constrained to admit that, as regards its personal composition, the new House of Commons was a little Philistine—not so democratic, not so redolent of Labour, as we had hoped. But we believed that we had the promise of the future. We believed that by enfranchising the artisans we had undertaken a long step towards the ideal perfection of the Commonwealth. We



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believed that these new citizens, who had just proved themselves worthy of their citizenship, would continue to support, with increasing ardour and devotion, Liberal administrations and Liberal measures. Above all, we believed that, as our recent achievements were the direct developments of great principles asserted in the past, so they would in turn develop into constitutional changes far more momentous, and that in the fulfilment of those changes lay the only real prospect of human happiness.

This is a fair statement of the mental temper in which young and inexperienced Liberals found themselves in the year 1869.[28] And there was much to encourage us in our complacency. Gladstone, to whom during the rather dreary reign of exhausted Whiggery we had looked as to our rising star—the one man who combined Religion and Poetry and Romance with the love of Progress and the passion of Freedom—had told us that “the great social forces were on our side,” and that our opponents “could not fight against the future.” Philosophers, like Mill, had told us that all the intelligence, all the science, all the mental courage of the world were with us, and that Toryism was the creed of the intellectually destitute. Morning after morning a vigorous Press sang its loud hymn of triumph, and assured us that, even if for a moment our chariot-wheels drave rather heavily, still we were going forth conquering and to conquer, and that the future of Liberalism was to be one long series of victories, uninterrupted till the crack of doom.

And then to us, thus comfortably entrenched in self-esteem, there entered the figure, unknown to most, only half-known to any, of a new and most disturbing critic. Here was a man whose very name breathed Liberalism; for whom speculation had no fears; who had harassed the most hoary conventions with obstinate questionings; who had accepted Democracy as the evolution of natural law; who had poked delicious fun at the most highly-placed impostures, the most solemn plausibilities. In such a one we might surely have expected to find a friend, an ally, a comforter, a fellow-worker; a preacher of the smooth things which we loved to hear, an encourager of the day-dreams which we had learned from *Locksley Hall*. Instead of all this we found a critic—so gracious that we could not quarrel with him, so reasonable that we found it hard to dispute with him; so absolutely free from pomposity that we could not laugh at him, so genuinely and freshly witty that we could not help laughing with him—but a critic still. He thought scorn of our pleasant land, and gave no credence unto our word. He belittled our heroes; he pooh-poohed our achievements; he cast doubt on our prophecies; he caricatured our aspirations. He told us that we were the victims of a profound delusion. He warned us that the great Democracy on which we relied as our unchangeable foundation would give way under our feet. He pointed out that Labour had no more reason to expect its salvation

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from Liberalism than from Toryism. He insisted that all our political reform was mere machinery; that the end and object of politics was Social Reform; and that the promise of the future was for those who should help us to be better, wiser, and happier; for those who concerned themselves rather with the product of the machine than with the machine itself; who were not satisfied by eternally taking it to pieces and putting it together again, but who wanted to know what sort of stuff it was, when perfected, to turn out. He suggested that “the present troubled state of our social life” had at least something to do with “the thirty years’ blind worship of their idols by our Liberal friends,” and that it threw some doubt on “the sufficiency of their worship.” “It is not,” he said, “fatal to our Liberal friends to labour for Free Trade, Extension of the Suffrage, and Abolition of Church Rates, instead of graver social ends; but it is fatal to them to be told by their flatterers, and to believe, with our social condition what it is, that they have performed a great, a heroic work, by occupying themselves exclusively, for the last thirty years, with these Liberal nostrums.”

And, while our new critic was thus disdainful of much that we held sacred, of political machinery and logical government, and individual liberty of speech and action, he recalled our attention to certain objects of reverence which we, or at least some of us, had forgotten. He insisted on the immense value of history and continuity in the political life of a nation. He extolled (though the words were not his) the “institutions which incorporate tradition and prolong the reign of the dead.” He affirmed that external beauty, stateliness, splendour, gracious manners, were indispensable elements of civilization, and that these were the contributions which Aristocracy made to the welfare of the State. He reminded us that the true greatness of a nation was to be found in its culture, its ideals, its sentiment for beauty, its performances in the intellectual and moral spheres—not in its supply of coal, its volume of trade, its accumulated capital, or its multiplication of railways. Above all—and this was to some of our Party the unkindest cut—he asserted for Religion the chief place among the elements of national well-being. We were just then living at the fag-end of an anti-religious time. The critical, negative, and utilitarian spirit which had seized on Oxford after the apparent defeat and collapse of Newman’s movement had profoundly affected the Liberal Party. It was an essential characteristic of the political Liberals to pour scorn on that “retrograding transcendentalism” which was “the hardheads’ nickname for the Anglo-Catholic Symphony.”[29] The fact that Gladstone was so saturated with the spirit of that symphony was a cause of mistrust which his genius and courage could barely overcome; and, even when it was overcome, a good many of his Party followed him as reluctantly



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and as mockingly as Sancho Panza followed Don Quixote. The only heaven of which the political Liberal dreamed was what Arnold called “the glorified and unending tea-meeting of popular Protestantism.” And the portion of the Party which regarded itself as the intellectual wing, seemed to have reverted to the temper described by Bishop Butler; “taking for granted that Christianity is not so much as a subject of enquiry, but that it is now at length discovered to be fictitious”; and habitually talking as if “this were an agreed point among all people of discernment.” Great was the vexation of the “old Liberal hacks” who had been repeating these dismal shibboleths, and ignoring or denying the greatest force in human life, to find in this new teacher of liberal ideas a convinced and persistent opponent. He affirmed that Religion was the best, the sweetest, and the strongest thing in the world; he insisted that without it there could be no perfect culture, no complete civilization; he showed a reverent admiration for the historical character and teaching of Jesus Christ; he urged the example of His “mildness and sweet reasonableness.” He taught that the best way of extending Christ’s kingdom on earth was by sweetening the character and brightening the lives of the men and women whose nature He shared.

It belongs to another part of this work to enquire what he meant by Religion and Christianity, and how far his interpretations accorded with, or how far they departed from, the traditional creed of Christendom. But enough, perhaps, has been said to explain why the appearance of *Culture and Anarchy* so profoundly disquieted the “old Liberal hacks” and the popular teachers of irreligion. One of these called Christianity “that awful plague which has destroyed two civilizations and but barely failed to slay such promise of good as is now struggling to live amongst men.” Of that teacher, and of others like him, Arnold wrote in later years: “If the matter were not so serious one could hardly help smiling at the chagrin and manifest perplexity of such of one’s friends as happen to be philosophical radicals and secularists, at having to reckon with religion again when they thought its day was quite gone by, and that they need not study it any more or take account of it any more; that it was passing out, and a kind of new gospel, half Bentham, half Cobden, in which they were themselves particularly strong, was coming in. And perhaps there is no one who more deserves to be compassionated than an elderly or middle-aged man of this kind, such as several of their Parliamentary spokesmen and representatives are. For perhaps the younger men of the Party may take heart of grace, and acquaint themselves a little with religion, now that they see its day is by no means over. But, for the older ones, their mental habits are formed, and it is almost too late for them to begin such new studies. However, a wave of religious reaction *is* evidently passing over Europe, due very much to our revolutionary and philosophical friends having insisted upon it that religion was gone by and unnecessary, when it was neither the one nor the other.”



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[Illustration: Oriel College, Oxford

In March, 1845, Matthew Arnold was elected to a Fellowship at Oriel

Photo H.W. Taunt]

A study of Arnold's work ought to give something more than a sketch of the prose-book by which he most powerfully affected the thinking of his time, and we will therefore take the contents of *Culture and Anarchy* chapter by chapter. The Preface is only a summary of the book, and may therefore be disregarded. The Introduction briefly points out the foolishness of orators and leader-writers who had assumed that Culture meant "a smattering of Greek and Latin," and then addresses itself to the task of finding a better definition. "I propose now to try and enquire, in the simple unsystematic way which best suits both my taste and my powers, what Culture really is, what good it can do, what is our own special need of it; and I shall seek to find some plain grounds on which a faith in Culture—both my own faith in it and the faith of others—may rest securely."

The First Chapter bears the memorable heading—"Sweetness and Light"; in reference to which Lord Salisbury so happily said that, when he conferred the degree of D.C.L. on Arnold, he ought to have addressed him as "*Vir dulcissime et lucidissime*." In this chapter Arnold lays it down that Culture, as he understands the word, is, in part, "a desire after the things of the mind, simply for their own sakes, and for the pleasure of seeing them as they are." But he goes on to say that "there is of Culture another view, in which not solely the scientific passion, the sheer desire to see things as they are, natural and proper in an intelligent being, appears as the ground of it. There is a view in which all the love of our neighbour, the impulses towards action, help, and beneficence, the desire for removing human error, clearing human confusion, and diminishing human misery, the noble aspiration to leave the world better and happier than we found it—motives eminently such as are called social—come in as part of the grounds of Culture, and the main and pre-eminent part. Culture is then properly described not as having its origin in curiosity, but as having its origin in the love of perfection; it is a *study of perfection*. It moves by the force, not merely or primarily of the scientific passion for pure knowledge, but also of the moral and social passion for doing good.... There is no better motto which it can have than these words of Bishop Wilson: "To make reason and the will of God prevail." Thus the true disciple of Culture will not be content with merely "learning the truth for his own personal satisfaction"; but will try to make it *prevail*; and in this endeavour Religion plays a commanding part. It is "the greatest and most important of the efforts by which the human race has manifested its impulse to perfect itself"; it is "the voice of the deepest human experience." It teaches that "The Kingdom of God is within you,"

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and that internal perfection must first be sought; but then it goes on, hand in hand with Culture, to spread perfection in widest commonalty. "Perfection is not possible, while the individual remains isolated." "To promote the Kingdom of God is to increase and hasten one's own happiness." Finally, Perfection as Culture conceives it, is a harmonious expansion of *all* the powers which make the beauty and worth of human nature: "and here," says Arnold, "Culture goes beyond Religion, as Religion is generally conceived by us." Stress must be laid upon those last words; for Religion, according to its full and catholic ideal, is the perfection and consecration of man's whole nature, intellectual and physical, as well as moral and spiritual. All that is lovely, splendid, moving, heroic, even enjoyable, in human life—all health and vigour and beauty and cleverness and charm—all nature and all art, all science and all literature—are among the good and perfect gifts which come down from the Father of Lights. But this is just the conception of Religion which Puritanism never grasped—nay, rather which Puritanism definitely rejected." And here probably is the origin of that quarrel with Puritanism, at least in its more superficial and obvious aspects, which so coloured and sometimes barbed Arnold's meditations on Religion. "As I have said with regard to wealth: Let us look at the life of those who live in and for it—so I say with regard to the religious organizations. Look at the life imaged in such a newspaper as the *Nonconformist*—a life of jealousy of the Establishment, disputes, tea-meetings, openings of chapels, sermons; and then think of it as an ideal of human life completing itself on all sides, and aspiring with all its organs after sweetness, light, and perfection!"

So much then for his definition of Culture; and we must admit that "the old Liberal hacks," the speakers on Liberal platforms, and the writers in Liberal papers, were not without excuse when they failed so utterly to divine what the new Teacher meant by harping on a word which Bacon and Pope had used in so different a sense.

Chapter II is headed "Doing as One Likes." And here it was that our new critic came most sharply into conflict with our cherished beliefs. We believed in the liberty which Milton loved, "to know, to utter, and to argue freely, according to conscience," and to frame our action by sole reference to our conviction. We believed that of such liberty there was only one endurable limit, and that was the condition that no man should so use his own liberty as to lessen his brother's—and the liberty thus conceived we regarded as the supreme boon of human life, for which no other could conceivably be taken in exchange. And now came the new Teacher of Liberalism with a doctrine which, while it made us angry, also set us thinking. "Our familiar praise of the British Constitution under which we live, is that it is a system of checks—a



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system which stops and paralyzes any power in interfering with the free action of individuals.... As Feudalism, which with its ideas and habits of subordination was for many centuries behind the British Constitution, dies out, and we are left with nothing but our system of checks, and our notion of its being the great right and happiness of an Englishman to do as far as possible what he likes, we are in danger of drifting towards Anarchy." Aristocracy, according to Arnold, who strangely mingled admiration of it with contempt, had been doing what it liked from time immemorial. It had enjoyed all the good things of life—great station, great wealth, great power—with a comfortable assurance that they belonged to it by divine right. It had governed England with credit to itself and benefit to the country. As Lord Beaconsfield said, it was only because a Whig Minister wished to curry favour with the populace, that an Earl who had committed a murder was hanged.

The Middle Class also, had, at any rate, since the Reform Act of 1832, "done what it liked," in a style not quite so grand but excessively comfortable and self-satisfied. It had carried some great reforms on which it had set its heart. It had established, enormously to its profit, Free Trade, and it had accumulated vast wealth. Its maxim had been—"Every man for himself in business, every man for himself in religion,"—and the devil take the hindmost.

But *now*, said Arnold, *is the judgment of this world*. The Aristocracy and the Middle Class had come to an end of their reign. A "tide of secret dissatisfaction had mined the ground under the self-confident Liberalism of the last thirty years (1839-1869) and had prepared the way for its sudden collapse and supersession." So far, the young Liberals and Radicals of the day did not disagree. They liked this doctrine, and had preached it; but from this point they and their new Teacher parted company. The working-man was now enfranchised; and of the newly-enfranchised working-man, or at least of some of the most conspicuous representatives of his class, Arnold had a curious dread. "His apparition is somewhat embarrassing; because, while the Aristocratic and Middle Classes have long been doing as they like with great vigour, he has been too undeveloped and too submissive hitherto to join in the game; and now, when he does come, he comes in immense numbers, and is rather raw and rough."

The dread of the working-men, and the apprehension of the bad use which they might make of their new power, can be traced to certain incidents which happened just before they were admitted to the Franchise and which perhaps precipitated their admission. In June, 1866, the Reform Bill, for which Lord Russell and Mr. Gladstone were responsible, was defeated in the House of Commons, and the Tories came into office. The defeated Bill would have enfranchised the upper class of artisans, and its rejection led to considerable



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riots, in which certain leaders of the working-men played conspicuous parts. The mob carried all before it, and the railings of Hyde Park were broken. The Tory Government behaved with the most incredible feebleness. The Home Secretary shed tears. The whole business, half scandalous and half ridiculous, furnished Arnold with an illustration for his sermon on "Doing What One Likes." Reviewing, three years after their occurrence, the events of July, 1866, he wrote thus: "Everyone remembers the virtuous Alderman-Colonel or Colonel-Alderman, who had to lead his militia through the London streets; how the bystanders gathered to see him pass; how the London roughs, asserting an Englishman's best and most blissful right of doing what he likes, robbed and beat the bystanders; and how the blameless warrior-magistrate refused to let his troops interfere. 'The crowd,' he touchingly said afterwards, 'was mostly composed of fine, healthy, strong men, bent on mischief; if he had allowed his soldiers to interfere, they might have been overpowered, their rifles taken from them and used against them by the mob; a riot, in fact, might have ensued, and been attended with bloodshed, compared with which the assaults and loss of property that actually occurred would have been as nothing.' Honest and affecting testimony of the English Middle Class to its own inadequacy for the authoritative part which one's convictions would sometimes incline one to assign to it! 'Who are we?' they say by the voice of their Alderman-Colonel, 'that we should not be overpowered if we attempt to cope with social anarchy, our rifles taken from us and used against us by the mob, and we, perhaps, robbed and beaten ourselves? Or what light have we, beyond a freeborn Englishman's impulse to do as he likes, which would justify us in preventing, at the cost of bloodshed, other freeborn Englishmen from doing as they like, and robbing and beating as much as they please?' And again, 'the Rough is just asserting his personal liberty a little, going where he likes, assembling where he likes, bawling as he likes, hustling as he likes.... He sees the rich, the aristocratic class, in occupation of the executive government; and so, if he is stopped from making Hyde Park a bear-garden or the streets impassable, he cries out that he is being butchered by the aristocracy.'"

Now, in spite of all this banter and sarcasm, these passages express a real dread which, at the time when Household Suffrage was claimed and conceded, really possessed Arnold's mind. He came with the lapse of years to see that it was illusory, and that the working-classes of England are as steady, as law-abiding, as inaccessible to ideas, as little in danger of being hurried into revolutionary courses, as unwilling to jeopardize their national interests and their stake in the country, as the Aristocracy and the Middle Class. But at the period which we are considering, when the dread of popular violence had really laid



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hold of him, it is interesting to mark the direction in which he looked for social salvation. He did not turn to our traditional institutions; to the Church or the Throne or the House of Lords: to a military despotism, or an established religion, or a governing Aristocracy: certainly not to the Middle Class with its wealth and industry—least of all to the Populace, with its “bright powers of sympathy.” In an age which made an idol of individual action, and warred against all collectivism as tyranny, he looked for salvation to the State. But the State, if it was to fulfil its high function, must be a State in which every man felt that he had a place and a share, and the authority of which he could accept without loss of self-respect. “If ever,” Arnold said in 1866, “there comes a more equal state of society in England, the power of the State for repression will be a thousand times stronger.” He was for widening the province of the State, and strengthening its hands, and “stablishing it on behalf of whatever great changes are needed, just as much as on behalf of order.” And, forasmuch as the State, in its ideal, was “the organ of our collective best self,” our first duty was to cultivate, each man for himself, what in himself was best—in short, Perfection. “We find no basis for a firm State-power in our ordinary selves; culture suggests one to us in our *best self*.” And so we come back to the governing idea of the book before us, that Culture is the foe of Anarchy.

In the Third Chapter—“Barbarians, Philistines, Populace”—he divided English Society into three main classes, to which he gave three well-remembered nicknames. The aristocracy he named (not very happily, seeing that he so greatly admired their fine manners) the Barbarians; the Middle Class he had already named the Philistines; and to the great mass which lies below the Middle Class he gave the name of “Populace.” The name of “Philistine” in its application to the great Middle Class dates from the Lecture on Heine delivered from the Chair of Poetry at Oxford in 1863. And it seems to have supplied a want in our system of nomenclature, for it struck, and it has remained, at least as a name for a type of mind, if not exactly as a name for a social class.

When we originally encounter the word in the Lecture[30] on Heine, Arnold is speaking of Heine’s life-long battle—with what? With Philistinism. “*Philistinism!* We have not the expression in English. Perhaps we have not the word, because we have so much of the thing. At Soli, I imagine, they did not talk of solecisms; and here, at the very headquarters of Goliath, nobody talks of Philistinism. The French have adopted the term *epicier* (grocer) to designate the sort of being whom the Germans designate by the term Philistine; but the French term—besides that it casts a slur upon a respectable class, composed of living and susceptible members, while the original Philistines are dead and buried long ago—is



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really, I think, in itself much less apt and expressive than the German term. Efforts have been made to obtain in English some term equivalent to *Philister* or *epicier*; Mr. Carlyle has made several such efforts: "Respectability with its thousand gigs," he says; well, the occupant of every one of these gigs is, Mr. Carlyle means, a Philistine. However, the word *respectable* is far too valuable a word to be thus perverted from its proper meaning; if the English are ever to have a word for the thing we are speaking of—and so prodigious are the changes which the modern spirit is introducing, that even we English shall perhaps one day come to want such a word—I think we had much better take the word *Philistine* itself.

"*Philistine* must have originally meant, in the mind of those who invented the nickname, a sturdy, dogged, unenlightened opponent of the Chosen People, of the Children of Light. The party of change, the would-be remodellers of the old traditional European order, the invokers of reason against custom, the representatives of the modern spirit in every sphere where it is applicable, regarded themselves, with the robust self-confidence natural to reformers, as a chosen people, as children of the light. They regarded their adversaries as humdrum people, slaves to routine, enemies to light, stupid and oppressive, but at the same time very strong.... Philistia has come to be thought by us the true Land of Promise, and it is anything but that; the born lover of ideas, the born hater of commonplaces, must feel in this country that the sky over his head is of brass and iron. The enthusiast for the idea, for reason, values reason, the idea, in and for themselves; he values them, irrespectively of the practical conveniences which their triumphs may obtain for him, and the man who regards the profession of these practical conveniences as something sufficient in itself which compensates for the absence or surrender of the idea, of reason, is, in his eyes, a Philistine."

In *Culture and Anarchy*, Arnold thus elaborates the term "Philistine," and justifies, not without some misgiving, its exclusive appropriation to the Middle Class. "Philistine gives the notion of something particularly stiffnecked and perverse in the resistance to light and its children, and therein it specially suits our Middle Class, who not only do not pursue Sweetness and Light, but who even prefer to them that sort of machinery of business, chapels, tea-meetings, and addresses from Mr. Murphy,[31] which make up the dismal and illiberal life on which I have so often touched." The force of Philistinism in English life and society is the force which, from first to last, he set himself most steadily to fight, and, if possible, transform. That the effort was arduous, and even perilous, he was fully aware. He must, he said, pursue his object through literature, "freer perhaps in that sphere than I could be in any other, but with the risk always before me, if I cannot charm the wild beast of Philistinism while I am trying to convert him, of being torn in pieces by him, and, even if I succeed to the utmost and convert him, of dying in a ditch or a workhouse at the end of it all."



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The nickname of “Barbarians” for the Aristocracy he justified on the ground that, like the Barbarians of history who reinvigorated and renewed our worn-out Europe, they had eminent merits, among which were staunch individualism and a passion for doing what one likes; a love of field sports; vigour, good looks, fine complexions, care for the body and all manly exercises; distinguished bearing, high spirit, and self-confidence—an admirable collection of attributes indeed, but marred by insufficiency of light, and “needing, for ideal perfection, a shade more soul.” When we have done with the Barbarians at the top of the social edifice, and the Middle Class half way up, we come to the Working Class; and of that class the higher portion “looks forward to the happy day when it will sit on thrones with commercial Members of Parliament and other Middle Class potentates; and this portion is naturally akin to the Philistinism just above it. But below this there is that vast portion of the Working Class which, raw and undeveloped, has long lain half hidden amidst its poverty and squalor, and is now issuing from its hiding-place to assert an Englishman’s heaven-born right of doing as he likes. To this vast residuum we give the name of ‘Populace.’” In thus dividing the nation, he is careful to point out that in each class we may from time to time find “aliens”—men free from the prejudices, the faults, the temptations of the class in which they were born; elect souls who, unhindered by their antecedents, share the higher life of intellectual and moral aspiration.

But, after making this exception, he traces in all three classes the presence and working of the same besetting sin. All alike, by a dogged persistence in doing as they like, have come to ignore the existence of Authority or Right Reason; and this irrecognition of what ought to be the rule of life operates not only in the political sphere, but also, and conspicuously, in the spheres of morals, taste, society, and literature. Self-satisfaction blinds all classes. All alike believe themselves infallible, and there is no sovereign organ of opinion to set them right. The fundamental ground of our erroneous habits, and our unwillingness to be corrected, is “our preference of doing to thinking,” The mention of this preference leads us to the subject of Chapter IV, “Hebraism and Hellenism.”

[Illustration: Matthew Arnold, 1869

Photo Hills & Saunders]

Of all the phrases which Arnold either created or popularized, there is none more closely associated with his memory than this famous conjunction of Hebraism and Hellenism; and in this connexion, it is not out of place to note his abiding interest in, and affection for, the House of Israel. The present writer once delivered a rather long and elaborate lecture on Arnold’s genius and writings; and next morning a daily paper gave this masterpiece of condensed and tactful reporting: “The lecturer stated



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that Mr. Arnold was of Jewish extraction, and proceeded to read passages from his works." It might have been more truly said that the lecturer suggested, as interesting to those who speculate in race and pedigree, the question whether Arnold's remote ancestors had belonged to the Ancient Race, and had emigrated from Germany to Lowestoft, where they dwelt for several generations. There is certainly no proof that so it was; and genealogical researches would in any case be out of keeping with the scope of this book. It is enough to note the fact of his affectionate and grateful feeling towards the Jewish race, and this can best be done in his own words. The present Lord Rothschild, formerly Sir Nathaniel de Rothschild, is the first adherent of the Jewish faith who ever was admitted to the House of Lords, though of course there have been other Peers of Jewish descent. When Mr. Gladstone created this Jewish peerage,[32] Arnold wrote as follows to an admirable lady whose name often appears in his published Letters—

"I have received so much kindness from your family, and I have so sincere a regard for yourself, that I should in any case have been tempted to send you a word of congratulation on Sir Nathaniel's peerage; but I really feel also proud and happy for the British public to have, by this peerage, signally marked the abandonment of its old policy of exclusion, the final and total abandonment of it. What have we not learned and gained from the people whom we have been excluding all these years! And how every one of us will see and say this in the future!"

What, in his view, we had "learned and gained" from the Jewish people, is well expressed in the preface to *Culture and Anarchy*.

"To walk staunchly by the best light one has, to be strict and sincere with oneself, not to be of the number of those who say and do not, to be in earnest—this is the discipline by which alone man is enabled to rescue his life from thralldom to the passing moment and to his bodily senses, to ennoble it, and to make it eternal. And this discipline has been nowhere so effectively taught as in the School of Hebraism. The intense and convinced energy with which the Hebrew, both of the Old and the New Testament, threw himself upon his ideal of righteousness, and which inspired the incomparable definition of the great Christian virtue, Faith—*the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen*—this energy of devotion to its ideal has belonged to Hebraism alone. As our idea of perfection widens beyond the narrow limits to which the over-rigour of Hebraising has tended to confine it, we shall yet come again to Hebraism for that devout energy in embracing our ideal, which alone can give to man the happiness of doing what he knows. "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them!"—the last word for human infirmity will always be that. For this word, reiterated with a power now sublime, now affecting, but always admirable, our race will, as long as the world lasts, return to Hebraism."



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Having thus described the function of Hebraism, Arnold goes on to define Hellenism as “the intelligence driving at those ideas which are, after all, the basis of right practice, the ardent sense for all the new and changing combinations of them which man’s development brings with it, the indomitable impulse to know and adjust them perfectly.” These two great forces divide the empire of the world between them; and we call them Hebraism and Hellenism after the two races of men who have most signally illustrated them. “Hebraism and Hellenism—between these two points of influence moves our world.” The idea of Hellenism is to see things as they are: the idea of Hebraism is conduct and obedience. Our aim should be to combine the merits of both ideas, and be “evenly and happily balanced between them.” Enlarging on this text, he traces the working of the two principles, which ought not to be rivals but have been made such by the perverseness of men, philosophy and history; and then, turning to our own day and its doings, he says that Puritanism, which originally was a reaction of the conscience and moral sense against the indifference and lax conduct of the Renaissance, has gone counter, during the last two centuries, to the main stream of human advance; has hindered men from trying to see things as they really are, and has made strictness of conduct the great aim of human life. “It made the secondary the principal at the wrong moment, and the principal it at the wrong moment treated as secondary.” Hence have arisen all sorts of confusion and inefficiency. Everywhere we see the signs of anarchy, and the need for some sound order and authority. “This we can only get by going back upon the actual instincts and forces which rule our life, seeing them as they really are, connecting them with other instincts and forces, and enlarging our whole view and rule of life.”

From this short chapter, he passes on to Chapter V, which he heads: “*Porro unum est necessarium*”; and here he pursues his controversy with modern Puritanism, which imagines that it has, in its special conception of God and religion, the *unum necessarium*, which can dispense with Sweetness and Light, self-culture and self-discipline. “The Puritan’s great danger is that he imagines himself in possession of a rule telling him the *unum necessarium*, or one thing needful, and that he then remains satisfied with a very crude conception of what this rule really is and what it tells him, thinks he has now knowledge and henceforth needs only to act, and, in this dangerous state of assurance and self-satisfaction, proceeds to give full swing to a number of the instincts of his ordinary self.... What he wants is a larger conception of human nature, showing him the number of other points at which his nature must come to its best, besides the points which he himself knows and thinks of. There is no *unum necessarium*, or one thing needful, which can free human nature

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from the obligation of trying to come to its best at all these points. Instead of our 'one thing needful' justifying in us vulgarity, hideousness, ignorance, violence—our vulgarity, hideousness, ignorance, violence are really so many touchstones which try our one thing needful, and which prove that in the state, at any rate, in which we ourselves have it, it is not all we want. And, as the force which encourages us to stand staunch and fast by the rule and ground we have is Hebraism, so the force which encourages us to go back upon this rule, and to try the very ground on which we appear to stand, is Hellenism—a term for giving our consciousness free play, and enlarging its range.”

In his Sixth Chapter—headed “Our Liberal Practitioners”—he applies his general doctrine to persons and performances of the year 1869. The Liberal Party was just then busy disestablishing and disendowing the Irish Church. He was in favour of Established Churches, and of Concurrent Endowment. He realized the absurdity of the Irish Church as it then stood; but, true to his critical character, he rebuked the “Liberal Practitioners” for the spirit in which they were disestablishing and disendowing it. They did not approach the subject in the spirit of Hellenism: they did not appeal to Right Reason: they did not attempt to see the problem of religious establishment as it really was. But they Hebraized about it—that is, they took an uncritical interpretation of biblical words as their absolute rule of conduct. “It may,” he said, “be all very well for born Hebraizers, like Mr. Spurgeon, to Hebraize; but for Liberal statesmen to Hebraize is surely unsafe, and to see poor old Liberal hacks Hebraizing, whose real self belongs to a kind of negative Hellenism—a state of moral indifference, without intellectual ardour—is even painful.” In the same manner he dealt with the movement to abolish Primogeniture, strongly urged by John Bright; the movement to legalize marriage with a wife’s sister—“the craving for forbidden fruit” joined with “the craving for legality”; and the doctrine, then supposed to be incontrovertible, of Free Trade. In all these cases, he proposed to “Hellenize a little,” to “turn the free stream of our thought” on the Liberal policy of the moment; and to “see how this is related to the intelligible law of human life, and to national well-being and happiness.”

And so we were brought to the conclusion of the whole matter. The stock-beliefs and stock-performances of Liberalism were exhausted, uninteresting, in some grave respects mischievous. Seekers after truth, disciples of culture, men bent on trying to see things as they really are, should lend no hand to these labours of the Philistines. Their right course was to stand absolutely aloof from the political work which was going on round them; and to pursue, with undeviating consistency, “increased sweetness, increased light, increased life, increased sympathy.”

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It is interesting to recall that Charles Kingsley praised *Culture and Anarchy* in a letter which greatly pleased Arnold, as showing “the generous and affectionate side” of Kingsley’s disposition. And this is his answer to Kingsley’s praise: “Of my reception by the general public I have, perhaps, no cause to boast; but from the men who lead in literature, from men like you, I have met with nothing but kindness and generosity. The being thrown so much for the last twenty years with Dissenters, and the observing their great strength and their great impenetrability—how they seemed to think that in their ‘gospel’—a mere caricature, in truth, of the real Gospel—they had a secret which enabled them to judge all literature and all art and to keep aloof from modern ideas—set me on thinking how they might be got at, and on the use of this parallel of Hebraism and Hellenism. If I was to think only of the Dissenters, or if I were in your position, I should press incessantly for more Hellenism; but, as it is, seeing the tendency of our *young* poetical litterateur (Swinburne), and, on the other hand, seeing much of Huxley (whom I thoroughly liked and admire, but find very disposed to be tyrannical and unjust), I lean towards Hebraism, and try to prevent the balance from on this side flying up out of sight.” Dean Church, also, in writing about the book, expressed “his sense of the importance of the distinction between Hellenism and Hebraism.” “This,” said Arnold, “showed his width of mind”; for “it is a distinction on which more and more will turn, and on dealing wisely with it everything depends.”

I have dwelt at this rather disproportionate length on the structure and teaching of *Culture and Anarchy*, partly because it was to men who were young in 1869 a landmark in their mental life, and partly because it gives the whole body of Arnold’s political and social teaching. He pursued this line of thought for twenty years; *Friendship’s Garland*, with its inimitable fun, appeared in 1871, and was followed by a long series of essays and lectures; but the germ of whatever he subsequently wrote is to be found in *Culture and Anarchy*. And from that memorable book what did we learn?

To answer first by negatives, we did not learn to undervalue personal liberty, or to stand aloof from the practical work of citizenship, or to despise Parliamentary effort and its bearing on the better life of England. To these lessons of a fascinating teacher we closed our ears, charmed he never so wisely. To answer affirmatively, we learned that our first object must be to attain our own best self, and that only so could we hope to help others. We learned to discard prepossessions, and try to see things as they really are. We learned that the Liberty which we worshipped must be conditioned by Authority—an authority not wielded by rank or bureaucracy, but by the State acting as a whole through its accredited representatives,

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and depending for its existence on the co-operation of the entire nation. In self-government so founded, however stringently it might exercise its power, there was no degradation for the governed, because, in the wider sense, they were also governors. In brief, Arnold's idea of the State was exactly that which in later years one of his disciples—Henry Scott Holland—conceived, when, defending Christian Socialism against the reproach of “grandmotherly legislation,” he said that, in a well-governed commonwealth, “every man was his own grandmother.” But, while Authority belongs to the State as a whole, it must be exercised through the agency of officialdom—through the action of officers or governors designated for the special functions. And here he taught us that we must not, as Bishop Westcott said, “trust to an uncultivated notion of duty for an improvised solution of unforeseen difficulties”; must not, like the Alderman-Colonel, “sit in the hall of judgment or march at the head of men of war, without some knowledge how to perform judgment and how to direct men of war.”

Then again we learned from him to value machinery, not for itself, but for what it could produce. He taught us that all political reconstruction was at the best mere improvement of machinery; that political reform was related to social reform as the means to the end: and that the end was the perfection of the race in all its physical, mental, and moral attributes.

Above all we learned—and perhaps it was the most important of our lessons—to think little of material boons—vulgar wealth and stolid comfort and ignoble ease; to set our affections on the joys of soul and spirit; and to recognize in the practice of religion the highest development and most satisfying use of the powers which belong to man.

[Footnote 21: A favourite creation of the late Mr. William Cory.]

[Footnote 22: Burke.]

[Footnote 23: Mr. Willis' motion to remove the Bishops from the House of Lords was lost by 11 votes on the 21st of March, 1884.]

[Footnote 24: Now (1893) Lord Wemyss.]

[Footnote 25: *Culture: a Dialogue*, 1867.]

[Footnote 26: See p. 63.]

[Footnote 27: It contains also “My Countrymen” and “A Courteous Explanation.”]

[Footnote 28: The writer was then a schoolboy at Harrow, where Arnold lived from 1868 to 1873.]



[Footnote 29: William Cory.]

[Footnote 30: Reprinted in *Essays in Criticism*.]

[Footnote 31: A Protestant lecturer of the period.]

[Footnote 32: In 1885.]

CHAPTER V

CONDUCT

“By desiring what is perfectly good, even when we don’t quite know what it is and cannot do what we would, we are part of the divine power against evil—widening the skirts of light and making the struggle with darkness narrower.”

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Whether Lactantius was etymologically right or wrong, there is no doubt that he was right substantially when he defined Religion as that which binds the soul to God. And religion thus conceived naturally divides itself into two parts: duty and doctrine, practice and theory, conduct and theology. Both elements are presented to us in the Bible. Of the one it is written: "The wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein." Of the other: "Which things the angels desire to look into." Even the respective functions of the Synoptists and St. John seem to accommodate themselves to this natural division. Following the line thus indicated, we shall consider Arnold's influence on Religion under the two heads of Conduct and Theology. The passage from *Middlemarch* which stands at the head of this chapter seems in a way to express his attitude towards the religious problems of his time. It would be impossible for a convinced believer in the faith of the Christian Church, as traditionally received, to profess that Arnold "knew what was perfectly good" in the domain of religion; but beyond all question he "desired" it with an even passionate desire, and attained far more closely to it than many professors of a more orthodox theology.

Of him it might be truly said, as of his favourite poet, that he "saw life steadily and saw it whole." And of life he declared that Conduct was three-fourths. For all the infinite varieties and contradictions of mere opinion he had the largest tolerance, knowing that no opinion, as such, is culpable. For people thinking so diversely as Wordsworth, Bunsen, Clough, and Palgrave; Church and Temple, Lake and Stanley; Lord Coleridge, William Forster, and John Morley, he had equally warm regard, and, in some ways, sympathy. It was only when the sphere of conduct was approached that his judgment became severe and his sympathy dried up. In Politics—levity, time-serving, mob-pleasing, the spirit which prefers partisanship to patriotism, were the faults which he could not pardon. His imperfect sympathy with Mr. Gladstone, a deplorable but undeniable fact, was due not so much to dissent from Gladstone's theory of the public good as to disapproval of his character. "Respect is the very last feeling he excites in me; he has too little solidity and composure of character or mind for that. He is brilliantly clever, of course, and he is honest enough, but he is passionate, and in no way great, I think." In Religion—obscurantism, resistance to the light, the smug endeavour to make the best of both worlds, offended Arnold as much on the one hand, as insolence, violence, ignorant negation, "lightly running amuck at august things," offended him on the other. He loved a "free handling, *in a becoming spirit*, of religious matters," and did not always find it in the writings of his Liberal friends. It is true that he once made a signal lapse from his own canon of religious criticism, but he withdrew it with genuine regret that

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“an illustration likely to be torn from its context, to be improperly used, and to give pain, should ever have been adopted.” In Literature, again, though his judgment was critical, his charity was unbounded. He could find something to praise even in the most immature and unpretending efforts; and he knew how to distinguish what we call “good of its sort,” good in the second order of achievement, from what is simply bad. In literature, as in opinion, it was only when moral faults were mingled with intellectual defects that he became censorious. He detested literary humbug—a pretence of knowledge without the reality, a show of philosophy masking poverty of thought; the vanity of quaintness, the “ring of false metal,” the glorification of commonplace.

And so again when we come to Life—the social life of the civilized community—he was the consistent teacher and the bright example of an exalted and scrupulous morality. Even the intellectual brilliancy of authors whom he intensely admired did not often blind him to ethical defects. It is true that some objects of his literary admiration—Goethe and Byron and George Sand—could scarcely be regarded as moral exemplars; but, while he praised the genius, he marked his disapproval of the moral defect. In writing of George Sand, who had so profoundly influenced his early life, he did not deny or extenuate “her passions and her errors.” Byron, though he thought him “the greatest natural force, the greatest elementary power, which has appeared in our literature since Shakespeare,” he roundly accused of “vulgarity and effrontery,” “coarseness and commonness,” “affectation and brutal selfishness.” In the case of Goethe, he said that “the moralist and the man of the world may unite in condemning” his laxity of life; and even in *Faust*, which he esteemed the “most wonderful work of poetry in our century,” the fact that it is a “seduction-drama” marred his pleasure. In the same tone he wrote, in the last year of his life, about Renan’s *Abbesse*—“I regret the escapade extremely; he was entirely out of his role in writing such a book.... Renan descends sensibly in the scale from having produced his *Abbesse*.” Heine, with all his genius, “lacked the old-fashioned, laborious, eternally needful moral deliverance”: he left a name blemished by “intemperate susceptibility, unscrupulousness in passion, inconceivable attacks on his enemies, still more inconceivable attacks on his friends, want of generosity, sensuality, incessant mocking.”

[Illustration: Pains Hill Cottage, Cobham, Surrey

Matthew Arnold’s home from 1873 until his death in 1888]

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And, while he thus criticised the defective morality of writers whom he greatly admired, he was, perhaps naturally, still more severe on the moral defects of those whom he esteemed less highly. “Burns,” he said, “is a beast, with splendid gleams, and the medium in which he lived, Scotch peasants, Scotch Presbyterianism, and Scotch drink, is repulsive.” On Coleridge, critic, poet, philosopher, his judgment was that he “had no morals,” and that his character inspired “disesteem, nay, repugnance.” Bulwer-Lytton he thought a consummate novel-writer, but “his was by no means a perfect nature”—“a strange mixture of what is really romantic and interesting with what is tawdry and gimcracky.” *Villette* he pronounced “disagreeable, because the writer’s mind contains nothing but hunger, rebellion, and rage, and therefore that is all she can put into her book.” Of Harriet Martineau, the other of the “two gifted women,” whose exploits he had glorified in *Haworth Churchyard*, he wrote in later years that she had “undeniable talent, energy, and merit,” but “what an unpleasant life and unpleasant nature!”

And, so everywhere the moral element—the sense for Conduct—mingles itself with his literary judgment. But it was in his attack on Shelley, written within four months of his own death, that he most vigorously displayed his detestation of moral shortcomings, and his sense of their poisonous effect on the performances of genius. “In this article on Shelley,” he wrote, “I have spoken of his life, not his poetry. Professor Dowden was too much for my patience.”[33] It can hardly be questioned that the publication of that biography did a signal disservice to the memory of the poet whom Professor Dowden idolized. The lack of taste, judgment, and humour which pervades the book, and its complete, though of course unintended, condonation of heinous evil, deserved a severe castigation, and Arnold bestowed it with a vigour and a thoroughness which show how deeply his moral sense had been shocked. “What a set! what a world! is the exclamation that breaks from us as we come to an end of this history of ‘the occurrences of Shelley’s private life.’ ... Godwin’s house of sordid horror, and Godwin preaching and holding the hat, and the green-spectacled Mrs. Godwin, and Hogg the faithful friend, and Hunt the Horace of this precious world!”

Fresh from pursuing, step by step, Professor Dowden’s grim narrative of seduction and suicide, with its ludicrous testimony to Shelley’s “conscientiousness,” Arnold says, with honest indignation, “After reading his book, one feels sickened for ever of the subject of irregular relations.... I conclude that an entirely human inflammability, joined to an inhuman want of humour and a super-human power of self-deception, are the causes which chiefly explain Shelley’s abandonment of Harriet in the first place, and then his behaviour to her and defence of himself afterwards.”



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In spite of all this abomination, which he so clearly saw and so strongly reprehended, he still stands firm in his admiration of the “ideal Shelley,” “the delightful Shelley,” “the friend of the unfriended poor,” the radiant and many-coloured poet, with his mastery of the medium of sounds, and the “natural magic in his rhythm.” But then he adds this salutary caution: “Let no one suppose that a want of humour and a self-delusion such as Shelley’s have no effect upon a man’s poetry. The man Shelley, in very truth, is not entirely sane, and Shelley’s poetry is not entirely sane either.” In poetry, as in life, he is “a beautiful and ineffectual angel.”

And just as, in Arnold’s view, moral defects in an author were apt to mar the perfection of his work, so an author’s moral virtues might ennoble and enlarge his authorship. Hear him on his friend Arthur Clough: “He possessed, in an eminent degree, these two invaluable literary qualities: a true sense for his object of study, and a single-hearted care for it. He had both; but he had the second even more eminently than the first. He greatly developed the first through means of the second. In the study of art, poetry, or philosophy, he had the most undivided and disinterested love for the object in itself, the greatest aversion to mixing up with it anything accidental or personal. His interest was in literature itself; and it was this which gave so rare a stamp to his character, which kept him so free from all taint of littleness. In the saturnalia of ignoble personal passions, of which the struggle for literary success, in old and crowded communities, offers so sad a spectacle, he never mingled. He had not yet traduced his friends, nor flattered his enemies, nor disparaged what he admired, nor praised what he despised. Those who knew him well had the conviction that, even with time, these literary arts would never be his. His poem, *The Bothie of Toper-na-Fuosich*, has some admirable Homeric qualities—out-of-doors freshness, life, naturalness, buoyant rapidity. Some of the expressions in that poem ... come back now to my ear with the true Homeric ring. But that in him of which I think oftenest is the Homeric simplicity of his literary life.”

We have seen more than once that, according to Arnold, poetry was a criticism of life; but he always maintained that this was true of poetry only because poetry is part of literature, and all literature was a criticism of life. One may demur to the statement as greatly too unguarded in its terms, but certainly he was true to his own doctrine, and in practice, from first to last, he used literature as a medium for criticising the life and conduct of his fellow-men. In the last year of his life he produced with approbation “a favourite saying of Ptolemy the astronomer, which Bacon quotes in its Latin version thus:—*Quum fini appropinquas, bonum cum augmento operare*”—“As you draw near to your latter end, redouble your efforts



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to do good.” And this redoubled effort was in his case all of a piece with what had gone before. In 1863 he wrote to a friend: “In trying to heal the British demoniac, true doctrine is not enough; one must convey the true doctrine with studied moderation; for, if one commits the least extravagance, the poor madman seizes hold of this, tears and rends it, and quite fails to perceive that you have said anything else.”

All his literary life was spent in trying to convey “true doctrine with studied moderation.” And in his true doctrine nothing was more conspicuous than his insistence, early and late, on the supreme importance of character and conduct. The first object of life was to realize one’s best self, and this endeavour required not merely cleverness or information: even genius would not of itself suffice; still less would adherence to any particular body of opinions. If a man was *dis-respectable*, “not even the merit of not being a Philistine could make up for it.” Character issuing in Conduct—this was the true culture which we must all ensue, if by any means we were to attain to our predestined perfection; and, if that were once secured, all the rest—talent, fame, influence, length of days, worldly prosperity—mattered little. Thus he wrote of his friend Edward Quillinan

I saw him sensitive in frame,
I knew his spirits low:
And wish’d him health, success, and fame—
I do not wish it now.

For these are all their own reward,
And leave no good behind;
They try us, oftenest make us hard,
Less modest, pure, and kind.

Alas! yet to the suffering man,
In this his mortal state,
Friends could not give what fortune can—
Health, ease, a heart elate.

But he is now by fortune foil’d
No more; and we retain
The memory of a man unspoil’d,
Sweet, generous, and humane—

With all the fortunate have not,
With gentle voice and brow.
—Alive, we would have changed his lot,
We would not change it now.



When his eldest boy died he wrote to a friend: “He is gone—and all the absorption in one’s own occupations which prevented one giving to him more than moments, all one’s occasional impatience, all one’s taking his ailments as a matter of course, come back upon one as something inconceivable and inhuman. And his mother, who has nothing of all this to reproach herself with, who was everything to him and would have given herself for him, has lost the occupation of sixteen years, and has to begin life over again. The one endless comfort to us is the thought of the *sweet, firm, sterling character* which the darling child developed in and by all his sufferings and privations. Of that we can think and think.”

When his second boy died he said that his “deepest feeling” was best expressed by his own *Dejaneira*—



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But him, on whom, in the prime Of life, with vigour undimm'd, With unspent mind, and a soul *Unworn, undebased, undecay'd*, Mournfully grating, the gates Of the city of death have for ever closed— *Him*, I count *him* well-starr'd.

In teaching the high lesson of Character and Conduct, he dealt sparingly in words, even words of “studied moderation.” He taught principally, he taught conspicuously, he taught all his life long, by Example. In regarding that example, as it stands clear across the interspace of fifteen years, we are reminded of Tertullian’s doctrine concerning the *anima naturaliter Christiana*. A more genuinely amiable man never lived. His sunny temper, his quick sympathy, his inexhaustible fun, were natural gifts. But something more than nature must have gone to make his constant unselfishness, his manly endurance of adverse fate, his noble cheerfulness under discouraging circumstances, his buoyancy in breasting difficulties, his unremitting solicitude for the welfare and enjoyment of those who stood nearest to his heart. The secret of his life was that he had taken pains with his own character. While he was still quite young we find him bewailing the “worldly element which enters so largely into his composition,” and which threatens to make a gulf between him and the strict, almost Puritanical, associations of his youth. “But,” he says in writing to his sister, “as Thomas a Kempis recommended, *frequentur tibi violentiam fac* ... so I intend not to give myself the rein in following my natural tendency, but to make war against it till it ceases to isolate me from you, and leaves me with the power to discern and adopt the good which you have and I have not.”

The result of this self-discipline and self-culture was to produce in him all the virtues which are supposed to be specifically and peculiarly Christian. “Christianity,” said Bishop Creighton, “impressed the Roman world by its power of producing men who were strong in self-control, and this must always be its contribution to the world.” Arnold’s self-control was absolute and unshakable; and to self-control he added the characteristically Christian virtues of surrender, placability, readiness to forgive injuries, perfect freedom from envy, hatred, and malice. He revered the “method and secret of Jesus”; he did all honour to His “mildness and sweet reasonableness.” “Christianity,” he said, “is Hebraism aiming at self-conquest and rescue from the thrall of vile affections, not by obedience to the letter of a law, but by conformity to the image of a self-sacrificing example. To a world stricken with moral enervation Christianity offered its spectacle of an inspired self-sacrifice; to men who refuse themselves nothing it showed one who refused himself everything.” Following this example, Arnold preached “Grace and peace by the annulment of our ordinary self,” and what he preached he practised. “Kindness and

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Pureness,” he said, “Charity and Chastity. If any virtues could stand for the whole of Christianity, these might. Let us have them from the mouth of Jesus Christ Himself. ‘He that loveth his life shall lose it; a new commandment give I unto you, that ye love one another.’ There is charity. ‘Blest are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.’ There is purity.” Charity was indeed the law of Arnold’s life. He loved with a passionate and persistent love. He loved his wife with increasing devotion as years went on, when she had become “my sweet Granny,” and they both felt that “we are too old for separations.” He loved with equal fondness his mother (whom in his brightness, fun, and elasticity he closely resembled), the sisters who so keenly shared his intellectual tastes, his children living and departed. “Dick[34] was a tower of strength.” “Lucy[35] is such a perfect companion.” “Nelly[36] is the dearest girl in the world.” “That little darling[4] we have left behind us at Laleham; and he will soon fade out of people’s remembrance, but we shall remember him as long as we live, and he will be one more bond between us, even more perhaps in his death than in his sweet little life.” “It was exactly a year since we had driven to Laleham with darling Tommy[38] and the other two boys to see Basil’s[37] grave; and now we went to see *his* grave, poor darling.” “I cannot write Budge’s[39] name without stopping to look at it in stupefaction at his not being alive.”

Outside the circle of his family, his affection was widely bestowed and faithfully maintained. He had the true genius of friendship, and when he signed himself “affectionately” it meant that he really loved. Enmities he had none. If ever he had suffered injuries they were forgiven, forgotten, and buried out of sight. Even in the controversies where his strongest convictions were involved, he steadily abstained from bitterness, violence, and detraction. “Fiery hatred and malice,” he said, with perfect truth, “are what I detest, and would always allay or avoid if I could.”

In the preface to his *Last Essays on the Church and Religion*, he takes those two great lessons of the Christian Gospel—Charity and Chastity—and goes on to show how they illustrate “the *natural truth* of Christianity,” as distinct from any considerations of Revelation or Law. “Now, really,” he says, writing in 1877, “if there is a lesson which in our day has come to force itself upon everybody, in all quarters and by all channels, it is the lesson of the *solidarity*, as it is called by modern philosophers, of men. If there was ever a notion tempting to common human nature, it was the notion that the rule of ‘every man for himself’ was the rule of happiness. But at last it turns out as a matter of experience, and so plainly that it is coming to be even generally admitted—it turns out that the only real happiness is in a kind of impersonal higher life, where the happiness of others counts with a man as essential to his own. He that loves his life does really turn out to lose it, and the new commandment proves its own truth by experience.”



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And then he goes on to what he justly calls “the other great Christian virtue, Pureness.” When he was thirty-two, he had written—“The lives and deaths of the ‘pure in heart’ have, perhaps, the privilege of touching us more deeply than those of others—partly, no doubt, because with them the disproportion of suffering to deserts seems so unusually great. However, with them one feels—even I feel—that for their purity’s sake, if for that alone, whatever delusions they may have wandered in, and whatever impossibilities they may have dreamed of, they shall undoubtedly, in some sense or other, see God.” And now, twenty-three years later, he returns to the same theme. Science, he says, is beginning to throw doubts on the “truth and validity of the Christian idea of Pureness.” There can be no more vital question for human society. On the side of *natural truth*, experience must decide. “But,” he says, “finely-touched souls have a presentiment of a thing’s natural truth, even though it be questioned, and long before the palpable proof by experience convinces all the world. They have it quite independently of their attitude towards traditional religion.... All well-inspired souls will perceive the profound natural truth of the idea of pureness, and will be sure, therefore, that the more boldly it is challenged the more sharply and signally will experience mark its truth. So that of the two great Christian virtues, charity and chastity, kindness and pureness, the one has at this moment the most signal testimony from experience to its intrinsic truth and weight, and the other is expecting it.”

Again, in *God and the Bible*, he has a most instructive passage on the relation of the sexes. “Here,” he says, “we are on ground where to walk right is of vital concern to men, and where disasters are plentiful.” He speculates on that relation as it may be supposed to have subsisted in the first ages of the human race, and tries to trace it down to the point of time “where history and religion begin.” “And at this point we first find the Hebrew people, with polygamy still clinging to it as a survival from the times of ignorance, but with the marriage-tie solidly established, strict and sacred, as we see it between Abraham and Sara. Presently this same Hebrew people, with that aptitude which characterized it for being profoundly impressed by ideas of moral order, placed in the Decalogue the marriage-tie under the express and solemn sanction of the Eternal, by the Seventh Commandment: *Thou shalt not commit adultery.*” And again: “Such was Israel’s genius for the ideas of moral order and of right, such his intuition of the Eternal that makes for righteousness, that he felt without a shadow of a doubt, and said with the most impressive solemnity, that Free Love was—to speak, again, like our modern philosopher—fatal to progress. *He knoweth not that the dead are there, and that her guests are in the depths of hell.*”



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The fact, already stated, that in the last years of his life, Arnold declared that his *Discourses in America* was the book by which, of all his prose-writings, he most wished to be remembered, gives to whatever he enounced in those Discourses a special authority, a peculiar weight, for his disciples; and nowhere is his testimony on behalf of Virtue and Right Conduct more earnestly delivered.

When the odious Voltaire urged his followers to “Crush the Infamous,” he had in mind that virtue which is specially characteristic of Christianity.[40] A century later Renan said: “Nature cares nothing for chastity.” *Les frivoles out peutetre raison*—“The gay people are perhaps in the right.” Against this doctrine of devils Arnold uttered a protesting and a warning voice. He was—heaven knows!—no enemy to France. All that is best in French literature and French life he admired almost to excess. His sympathy with France was so keen that Sainte-Beuve wrote to him—“Vous avez traverse notre vie et notre litterature par une ligne interieure, profonde, qui fait les inities, et que vous ne perdrez jamais.” But in spite of, perhaps because of, this sympathy with France, he felt himself bound to protest and to warn.

Addressing his American audience in November, 1883, he pointed out the dangers which England, Ireland, America, and France incur through habitual disregard, in each case, of some virtue or grace without which national perfection is impossible. He used, as a kind of text for his discourse, the famous passage from the Philippians. “Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are elevated, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are amiable, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, have these in your mind, let your thoughts run upon these.”

Whatsoever things are pure. [Greek: *osa hagua*]—thus the teacher of Culture moralized on this pregnant phrase.

[Illustration: The Union Rooms, Oxford

At the Jubilee of the Union, 1873, Matthew Arnold responded to Dr. Liddon’s speech proposing ‘Literature’

Photo H.W. Taunt]

“The question was once asked by the Town Clerk of Ephesus: ‘What man is there that knoweth not how that the city of the Ephesians is a worshipper of the great goddess Diana?’ Now really, when one looks at the popular literature of the French at this moment—their popular novels, popular stage-plays, popular newspapers—and at the life of which this literature of theirs is the index, one is tempted to make a goddess out of a word of their own, and then, like the Town Clerk of Ephesus, to ask: ‘What man is there that knoweth not how that the city of the French is a worshipper of the great goddess Lubricity?’ Or rather, as Greek is the classic and euphonious language for

names of gods and goddesses, let us take her name from the Greek Testament, and call her the goddess



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Aselgeia. That goddess has always been a sufficient power amongst mankind, and her worship was generally supposed to need restraining rather than encouraging. But here is now a whole people, law, literature, nay, and art too, at her service! Stimulations and suggestions by her and to her meet one in it at every turn.... 'Nature,' cries M. Renan, 'cares nothing about chastity.' What a slap in the face to the sticklers for 'Whatsoever things are pure'!... Even though a gifted man like M. Renan may be so carried away by the tide of opinion in France where he lives, as to say that Nature cares nothing about chastity, and to see with amused indulgence the worship of the great goddess Lubricity, let us stand fast and say that her worship is against nature—human nature—and that it is ruin. For this is the test of its being against human nature, that for human societies it is ruin. And the test is one from which there is no escape, as from the old tests in such matters there may be. For, if you allege that it is the will of God that we should be pure, the sceptical Gallo-Latins will tell you that they do not know any such person. And in like manner, if it is said that those who serve the goddess Aselgeia shall not inherit the Kingdom of God, the Gallo-Latin may tell you that he does not believe in any such place. But that the sure tendency and upshot of things establishes that the service of the goddess Aselgeia is ruin, that her followers are marred and stunted by it, and disqualified for the ideal society of the future, is an infallible test to employ.

"The saints admonish us to let our thoughts run upon whatsoever things are pure, if we would inherit the Kingdom of God; and the divine Plato tells us that we have within us a many-headed beast and a man, and that by dissoluteness we feed or strengthen the beast in us, and starve the man; and finally, following the divine Plato among the sages at a humble distance, comes the prosaic and unfashionable Paley, and says in his precise way: that 'this vice has a tendency, which other species of vice have not so directly, to unsettle and weaken the powers of the understanding; as well as, I think, in a greater degree than other vices, to render the heart thoroughly corrupt.' True; and, once admitted and fostered, it eats like a canker, and with difficulty can ever be brought to let go its hold again, but for ever tightens it. Hardness and insolence come in its train; an insolence which grows till it ends by exasperating and alienating everybody; a hardness which grows until the man can at last scarcely take pleasure in anything, outside the service of his goddess, except cupidity and greed, and cannot be touched with emotion by any language except Fustian. Such are the fruits of the worship of the great goddess Aselgeia.

"So, instead of saying that Nature cares nothing about chastity, let us say that human nature, *our* nature, cares about it a great deal.... The Eternal has attached to certain moral causes the safety or the ruin of States, and the present popular literature of France is a sign that she has a most dangerous moral disease."



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In the following year, he thus commented on the Festival of Christmas and its spiritual significance:

“When we are asked, What really is Christmas, and what does it celebrate? We answer, the birthday of Jesus. What is the miracle of the Incarnation? A homage to the virtue of Purenness, and to the manifestation of this virtue in Jesus. What is Lent, and the miracle of the temptation? A homage to the virtue of self-control, and to the manifestation of this virtue in Jesus.”

“That on which Christmas, even in its popular acceptation, fixes our attention, is that to which the popular instinct in attributing to Jesus His miraculous Incarnation, in believing Him born of a pure virgin, did homage—purenness. And this, to which the popular instinct thus did homage, was an essential characteristic of Jesus and an essential virtue of Christianity, the obligation of which, though apt to be questioned and discredited in the world, is at the same time nevertheless a necessary fact of nature and eternal truth of reason.”

So much I have quoted in order to show that, in relation to the most important department of human conduct, Arnold’s influence, to use his own phrase, “made for righteousness,” and made for righteousness unequivocally and persistently. So keen was his sense of the supreme value of this characteristically Christian virtue that he framed what old-fashioned theologians would have called a “hedge of the law.”[41] In season and out of season, whether men would bear or whether they would forbear, he taught the sacredness of marriage. For the Divorce Court and all its works and ways he had nothing but detestation. He ranked it, with our gin-palaces, among the blots on our civilization. From Goethe, perhaps a curious authority on such a subject, he quotes approvingly a protest against over-facility in granting divorce, and an acknowledgment that Christianity has won a “culture-conquest” in establishing the sacredness of marriage. Man’s progress, he says, depends on his keeping such “culture-conquests” as these; and of all attempts to undo these conquests, give back what we have won, and accustom the public mind to laxity, he was the unsparing foe.

It may help to remind us that, in spite of all our shortcomings, we have travelled a little way towards virtue, or at least towards decency, if we recall that in 1863 Lord Palmerston, then in his eightieth year and Prime Minister of England, figured in a very unseemly affair which had the Divorce Court for its centre. Arnold writes as follows: “We had —— with us one day. He was quite full of the Lord Palmerston scandal, which your charming newspaper, the *Star*—that true reflection of the rancour of Protestant Dissent in alliance with all the vulgarity, meddlesomeness, and grossness of the British multitude—has done all it could to spread abroad. It was followed yesterday by the *Standard*, and is followed to-day by the *Telegraph*. Happy people, in spite of our bad climate and cross tempers, with our penny newspapers!”



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The admirable satire of *Friendship's Garland* is constantly levelled against national aberrations in this direction. In the year 1870 there was a fashionable divorce-case, more than usually scandalous, and the disgusting narrative had been followed with keen interest by those who look up at the Aristocracy as men look up at the stars. In reference to this case, he quotes to his imaginary friend Arminius the noble sentiment of Barrow: "Men will never be heartily loyal and submissive to authority till they become really good; nor will they ever be very good till they see their leaders such." To which Arminius replies, in his thoughtful manner: "Yes, that is what makes your Lord C——s so inexpressibly precious!" A certain Lord C——, be it observed, having figured very conspicuously in the trial.

With reference to the enormous publicity given in England to such malefic matter, Arnold says to Arminius: "When a Member of Parliament wanted to abridge the publicity given to the M—— case, the Government earnestly reminded him that it had been the solemn decision of the House of Commons that all the proceedings of the Divorce Court should be as open as the day. When there was a suggestion to hear the B—— case in private, the upright magistrate who was appealed to said firmly that he could never trifle with the public mind in that manner. All this was as it should be. So far, so good. But was the publicity in these cases perfectly full and entire? Were there not some places which the details did not reach? There were few, but there were some. And this, while the Government has an organ of its own, the *London Gazette*, dull, high-priced, and of comparatively limited circulation! I say, make the price of the *London Gazette* a halfpenny; change its name to the *London Gazette and Divorce Intelligencer*; let it include besides divorce news, all cases whatever that have an interest of the same nature for the public mind; distribute it *gratis* to mechanics' institutes, workmen's halls, seminaries for the young (these latter more especially), and then you will be giving the principle of publicity a full trial. This is what I often say to Arminius; and, when he looks astounded, I reassure him with a sentence which, I know very well, the moment I make it public will be stolen by the Liberal newspapers. But it is getting near Christmas-time, and I do not mind making them a present of it. It is this: *The spear of freedom, like that of Achilles, has the power to heal the wounds which itself makes.*"

In *Friendship's Garland*, from the very structure of the book, his serious judgments have to be delivered by the mouth of his Prussian friend; and here is his judgment on our public concessions to prurency—"By shooting all this garbage on your public, you are preparing and assuring for your English people an immorality as deep and wide as that which destroys the Latin nations."



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But his “hedge of the law” had other thorns besides those with which he pierced the Divorce Court and its hideous literature. He had shrewd sarcasms for all who, by whatever method, sought to gratify “that double craving so characteristic of our Philistine, and so eminently exemplified in that crowned Philistine, Henry the Eighth—the craving for forbidden fruit and the craving for legality.” He poured scorn on the newspapers which glorified “the great sexual insurrection of the Anglo-Teutonic race,” and the author who extolled the domestic life of Mormonism. “Mr. Hepworth Dixon may almost be called the Colenso of Love and Marriage—such a revolution does he make in our ideas on these matters, just as Dr. Colenso does in our ideas on religion.” He thus forecasts the doings of a Philistine House of Commons in 1871. “Mr. T. Chambers will again introduce that enfranchising measure, against which I have had some prejudices—the Bill for enabling a man to marry his deceased wife’s sister. The devoted adversaries of the Contagious Diseases Act will spread through the length and breadth of the land a salutary discussion of this equivocal measure and of all matters connected with it; and will thus, at the same time that they oppose immorality, enable the followers of even the very strictest sects of Puritanism to see life.” All these various attempts to break down the “hedge of the law” received in turn their merited condemnation; but always we are brought back from the consideration of kindred evils, to the proposal to legalize marriage with a wife’s sister. Thus the imaginary leader-writer of the *Daily Telegraph* summarizes the controversy: “Why, I ask, is Mr. Job Bottles’ liberty, his Christian liberty, as our reverend friend would say, to be abridged in this manner? And why is Protestant Dissent to be diverted from its great task of abolishing State Churches for the purpose of removing obstacles to the ‘sexual insurrection’ of our race? Why are its poor devoted ministers to be driven to contract, in the interests of Christian liberty, illegal unions of this kind themselves, *pour encourager les autres*? Why is the earnest Liberalism and Nonconformity of Lancashire and Yorkshire to be agitated on this question by hope deferred? Why is it to be put incessantly to the inconvenience of going to be married in Germany or in the United States, that greater and better Britain

Which gives us manners, freedom, virtue, power?

Why must ideas on this topic have to be incubated for years in that ‘nest of spicery,’ as the divine Shakespeare says, the mind of Mr. T. Chambers, before they can rule the world? For my own part, my resolve is formed. This great question shall henceforth be seriously taken up in Fleet Street. As a sop to those toothless old Cerberuses the bishops, who impotently exhibit still the passions of another age, we will accord the continuance of the prohibition which forbids a man to marry his grandmother.



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But in other directions there shall be freedom. Mr. Chambers' admirable Bill for enabling a woman to marry her sister's husband will doubtless pass triumphantly through Committee to-night, amidst the cheers of the Ladies' Gallery. The Liberal Party must supplement that Bill by two others: one enabling people to marry their brothers' and sisters' children, the other enabling a man to marry his brother's wife."

There is perhaps no social mischief which Arnold attacked so persistently as the proposal to legalize marriage with a wife's sister. The most passionate advocates of that "enfranchising measure" will scarcely think that his hostility was due to what John Bright so gracefully called "ecclesiastical rubbish." Councils and Synods, Decrees and Canons, were held by him in the lightest esteem. The formal side of Religion—the side of dogma and doctrine and rule and definition—had no attractions for him, and no terrors. He never dreamed that the Table of Kindred and Affinity was a Third Table of the Divine Law. His appeal in these matters was neither to Moses nor to Tertullian, but to "the genius of the race which invented the Muses, and Chivalry, and the Madonna." And yet he disliked the "enfranchising measure" quite as keenly as the clergyman who wrote to the *Guardian* about incest, though indeed he expressed his dislike in a very different form. Here, as always and everywhere, he betook himself to his "sinuous, easy, unpolemical" method, and thereby made his repugnance to the proposed change felt and understood in quarters which would never have listened to arguments from Leviticus, or fine distinctions between *malum per se* and *malum prohibitum*. The ground of his repugnance was primarily his strong sense, already illustrated, that the sacredness of marriage, and the customs that regulate it, were triumphs of culture which had been won, painfully and with effort, from the unbridled promiscuity of primitive life. To impair that sacredness, to dislocate those customs, was to take a step backwards into darkness and anarchy. His keen sense of moral virtue—that instinctive knowledge of evil which, as Frederick Robertson said, comes not of contact with evil but of repulsion from it, assured him that the "great sexual insurrection" was not merely a grotesque phrase, but a movement of the time which threatened national disaster, and to which, in its most plausible manifestations, the stoutest resistance must be offered. Here again his love of coherence and logical symmetry, his born hatred of an anomaly, his belief in Reason as the true guide of life, made him intolerant of all the palpably insincere attempts to say *Thus far and no farther*. He knew that all the laws of Affinity must stand or fall together, and that no ground in reason can be alleged against marriage with a husband's brother which does not tell against marriage with a wife's sister. Yet again he regarded the proposed changes as betraying the smug viciousness of the more full-blooded Philistines—



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Men full of meat whom wholly He abhors,[42]—

who, trying to keep a foot in each world of legality and indulgence, sought patronage from the rich and deceived and exploited the poor.

Certainly not the least of his objections to the “enfranchising measure” was that, in breaking down the hedge of the law, it invaded Delicacy; and whatever invaded delicacy helped to precipitate gross though perhaps unforeseen evils. Unfortunately there are great masses—whole classes—of people to whom delicacy, whether in speech or act, means nothing. To eat, drink, sleep, buy and sell, marry and be given in marriage, is for those masses the ideal and the law of life. These things granted, they desire no more: any restriction on them, any refinement of them, they dislike and resent. In another place[43] we have cited the mysterious effect produced upon the Paris Correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph* by the sudden sound of the word “Delicacy.” And that word was uttered in connexion with the “enfranchising measure.” “If legislation on this subject were impeded by the party of bigotry, if they chose not to wait for it, if they got married without it, and if you were to meet them on the boulevard at Paris during their wedding tour, should you go up to Bottles and say: ‘Mr. Bottles, you are a profligate man!’ Poor Mr. Matthew Arnold, upon this, emerged suddenly from his corner, and asked hesitatingly: ‘But will any one dare to call him a man of delicacy?’ The question was so utterly unpractical that I took no note of it whatever, and should not have mentioned it if it had not been for its extraordinary effect upon our Paris Correspondent.... My friend Nick, who has all the sensitive temperament of genius, seemed inexplicably struck by this word *delicacy*, which he kept repeating to himself. ‘Delicacy,’ said he—‘delicacy—surely I have heard that word before! Yes, in other days,’ he went on dreamily, ‘in my fresh enthusiastic youth; before I knew Sala, before I wrote for that infernal paper, before I called Dixon’s style lithe and sinewy—’ ‘Collect yourself, my friend,’ laying my hand on his shoulder; ‘you are unmanned. But in mentioning Dixon you redouble my strength; for you bring to my mind the great sexual insurrection of the Anglo-Teutonic race, and the master-spirit which guides it.’”[44]

But in matters far outside the region of marriage, that word “delicacy,” which so powerfully affected the Paris correspondent, is the key to a great deal of what Arnold felt and wrote. In the sphere of conduct he set up, as we have seen, two supreme objects for veneration and attainment: Chastity and Charity. He practised them, he taught them, and he used them as decisive tests of what was good and what was bad in national life. But plainly there are large tracts of existence which lie outside the purview of these two virtues. There is the domain of honesty, integrity, and fair dealing; there is a loyalty to truth, the pursuit of conscience at all costs and hazards; there is all that is contained in the idea of beauty, propriety, and taste. None of these are touched by charity or chastity. For example, a man may have an unblemished life and a truly affectionate heart; and yet he may be incorrigible in money-matters, or be ready to sacrifice principle to convenience, or, like our great Middle Class generally, may be serenely content with hideousness and bad manners.



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Now in all these departments of human life, less important indeed than the two chiefest, but surely not unimportant, Arnold applied the criterion of delicacy. "A finely-touched nature," he said, "will respect in itself the sense of delicacy not less than the sense of honesty.... The worship of sharp bargains is fatal to delicacy; nor is that missing grace restored by accompanying the sharp bargain with an exhibition of fine sentiments." Then, again, as regards loyalty to conviction, he knew full well that, in Newman's phrase, he might "have saved himself many a scrape, if he had been wise enough to hold his tongue." "The thought of you," he wrote to Mr. Morley, "and of one or two other friends, was often present to me in America, and, no doubt, contributed to make me hold fast to 'the faith once delivered to the Saints.'" The slightest deviation from the line of clear conviction—the least turning to left or right in order to cocker a prejudice or please an audience or flatter a class, showed a want of delicacy—a preference of present popularity to permanent self-respect—which he could never have indulged in himself, and with difficulty tolerated in others. He had nothing but contempt for "philosophical politicians with a turn for swimming with the stream, and philosophical divines with the same turn." And then, again, in the whole of that great sphere which belongs to Beauty, Propriety, and Taste, his sense of delicacy was always at work, and not seldom in pain. "Ah," he exclaimed, quoting from Rivarol, "no one considers how much pain any man of taste has to suffer, before ever he inflicts any." To inflict pain was not, indeed, in his way, but to suffer it was his too-frequent lot. From first to last he was protesting against hideousness, rawness, vulgarity, and commonplace; craving for sweetness, light, beauty and colour, instead of the bitterness, the ugliness, the gloom and the drab which provided such large portions of English life. "The [Greek: euphnes] is the man who turns towards sweetness and light; the [Greek: aphnes] on the other hand is our Philistine." "I do not much believe in good being done by a man unless he can give *light*." "Oxford by her ineffable charm keeps ever calling us nearer to the true goal of all of us, to the ideal, to perfection, to *beauty*." In his constant quest for these glorious things—beauty, colour, sweetness, and light,—his sense of delicacy had much to undergo; for, in the class with which he was by the work of his life brought in contact, they were unknown and unimagined; and the only class where "elegance and refinement, beauty and grace" were found, was inaccessible to Light. In both classes he found free scope for his doctrine of Delicacy, one day remonstrating with a correspondent for "living in a place with the absurd, and worse, name of 'Marine Retreat'"; another, preaching that "a piano in a Quaker's drawing-room is a step for him to more humane life;" and again "liking and respecting polite tastes



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in a grandee,” when Lord Ravensworth consulted him about Latin verses. “At present far too many of Lord Ravensworth’s class are mere men of business, or mere farmers, or mere horse-racers, or mere men of pleasure.” That was a consummation which delicacy in the Aristocratic class would make impossible. To cultivate in oneself, and apply in one’s conduct, this instinct of delicacy, was a lesson which no one, who fell under Arnold’s influence, could fail to learn. He taught us to “liberate the gentler element in oneself,” to eschew what was base and brutal, unholy and unkind. He taught us to seek in every department of life for what was “lovely and of good report,” tasteful, becoming, and befitting; to cultivate “man’s sense for beauty, and man’s instinct for fit and pleasing forms of social life and manners.” He taught us to plan our lives, as St. Paul taught the Corinthians to plan their worship, [Greek: *euschmnonos kai kata taxin*],—in right, graceful, or becoming figure, and by fore-ordered arrangement.”[45] Alike his teaching and his example made us desire (however imperfectly we attained our object) to perceive in all the contingencies and circumstances of life exactly the line of conduct which would best consist with Delicacy, and so to make virtue victorious by practising it attractively.

[Illustration: Matthew Arnold, 1880

From the Painting by G.F. Watts, R.A.

Photo F. Hollyer]

[Footnote 33: *The Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, by Edward Dowden, LL.D. 1886.]

[Footnote 34: His third son.]

[Footnote 35: His elder daughter.]

[Footnote 36: His younger daughter.]

[Footnote 37: His fourth son.]

[Footnote 38: His eldest son.]

[Footnote 39: His second son.]

[Footnote 40: “Chastity was the supreme virtue in the eyes of the Church, the mystic key to Christian holiness. Continence was one of the most sacred pretensions by which the organized preachers of superstition claimed the reverence of men and women. It was identified, therefore, in a particular manner with that Infamous, against which the main assault of the time was directed.”—Morley’s *Voltaire*.]



[Footnote 41: “*Rules of Cautions; or, Helps to Obedience*: called by some the Hedge of the Law.”—Bishop Andrews.]

[Footnote 42: F.W.H. Myers.]

[Footnote 43: Page 15.]

[Footnote 44: The allusion is to the late Mr. W. Hepworth Dixon, and his writings on the Polygamous Sects of America.]

[Footnote 45: W.E. Gladstone, *The Church of England and Ritualism*.]

CHAPTER VI

THEOLOGY



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Samuel Wilberforce, Bishop of Oxford, after hearing a sermon by Dr. Howson, Dean of Chester, wrote thus in his diary: "One good bit—that the emptying Christianity of dogma would perish it, like Charlemagne's face when exhumed." It was a striking simile, and if well worked out by a rhetorician, say of Dr. Liddon's type, it might have powerfully clinched some great argument for the necessary place of dogma in Christian theology. But the sermon has vanished, and we can only conjecture from the date of the entry—October 5, 1869—that the good Dean's ire had been excited by Matthew Arnold's first appearance in the field of theological controversy. Six years before, indeed, Arnold had touched that field, when in *The Bishop and the Philosopher* he quizzed Colenso, "the arithmetical bishop who couldn't forgive Moses for having written a Book of Numbers,"[46] about his "jejune and technical manner of dealing with Biblical controversy." "It is," he wrote, "a result of no little culture to attain to a clear perception that science and religion are two wholly different things. The multitude will for ever confuse them.... Dr. Colenso, in his first volume, did all he could to strengthen the confusion, and to make it dangerous." "Let us have all the science there is from the men of science; from the men of religion let us have religion."

But in that earlier essay he had merely criticised a critic; he had not originated criticisms of his own. So he had touched the field of theological controversy, but had not appeared on it as a performer. That now he so appeared was probably due to the success which attended *Culture and Anarchy*. The publication of that book had immensely extended the circle of his audience. Those who care for literature are few; those who care for politics are many. And, though the politics of *Culture and Anarchy* were new and strange, hard to be understood, and running in all directions off the beaten track, still the professional politicians, and that class of ordinary citizens which aims at cultivation and seeks a wider knowledge, took note of *Culture and Anarchy* as a book which must be read, and which, though they might not always understand it, would at least show them which way the wind was blowing. The present writer perfectly recalls the comfortable figure of a genial merchant, returned from business to his suburban villa, and saying: "Well, I shall spend this Saturday afternoon on Mat Arnold's new book, and I shall not understand one word of it." It had never occurred to the good man that he was either a Hebraizer or a Hellenizer. He had always believed that he was a Liberal, a Low Churchman, and a silk-mercant.



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For Arnold to find that he was in possession of a pulpit—that he had secured a position from which he could preach his doctrine with a certainty that it would be heard and pondered, if not accepted—was a new and an invigorating experience. He at once began to make the most of his opportunity. While the Press was still teeming with criticisms of *Culture and Anarchy*, he began to extend his activities from the field of political and social criticism to that of theological controversy. The latter experiment seems to have grown spontaneously out of the former. In *Culture and Anarchy* he had charged Puritanism with imagining that in the Bible it had, as its own special possession, a *unum necessarium*, which made it independent of Sweetness and Light, and guided it aright without the aid of culture. “The dealings,” he said, “of Puritanism with the writings of St. Paul afford a noteworthy illustration of this. Nowhere so much as in the writings of St. Paul, and in that apostle’s greatest work, the Epistle to the Romans, has Puritanism found what seemed to furnish it with the one thing needful, and to give it canons of truth absolute and final.”

This reliance of Puritanism on Holy Scripture, or certain portions of it, seems to have set him on the endeavour to ascertain how far the Puritans had really mastered the meaning of the writers on whom they relied; and more particularly of St. Paul. And this particular direction seems to have been given to his thoughts by a sentence, then recently published, of Renan: “After having been for three hundred years, thanks to Protestantism, the Christian doctor *par excellence*, Paul is now coming to an end of his reign.”

Arnold, as his manner was, fastened on these last words, and made them the text of his treatise on *St. Paul and Protestantism*, which began to appear in October, 1869. “*St. Paul is now coming to an end of his reign*. Precisely the contrary, I venture to think, is the judgment to which a true criticism of men and of things leads us. The Protestantism which has so used and abused St. Paul is coming to an end;... but the real reign of St. Paul is only beginning.”

In *Culture and Anarchy* he had shown how “the over-Hebraizing of Puritanism, and its want of a wide culture, so narrow its range and impair its vision that even the documents which it thinks all-sufficient, and to the study of which it exclusively rivets itself, it does not rightly understand, but is apt to make of them something quite different from what they really are. In short, no man, who knows nothing else, knows even his Bible.” And he showed how readers of the Bible attached to essential words and ideas of the Bible a sense which was not the writer’s. Now, he said, let us go further on the same path, and, “instead of lightly disparaging the great name of St. Paul, let us see if the needful thing is not rather to rescue St. Paul and the Bible from



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the perversion of them by mistaken men.” Although he calls the treatise in which he addresses himself to this endeavour *St. Paul and Protestantism*, therein following Renan’s phraseology, in the treatise itself he speaks rather of *St. Paul and Puritanism*; and this he does because here in England Puritanism is the strong and special representation of Protestantism. “The Church of England,” he says, “existed before Protestantism and contains much besides Protestantism.” Remove the Protestant schemes of doctrine, which here and there show themselves in her documents, “and all which is most valuable in the Church of England would still remain”; whereas those schemes are the very life and substance of Puritanism and the Puritan bodies. “It is the positive Protestantism of Puritanism with which we are here concerned, as distinguished from the negative Protestantism of the Church of England.” Leaving, then, the Church of England on one side, we fix our gaze on Puritanism, and we see that “the conception of the ways of God to man which Puritanism has formed for itself” has for its cardinal points the terms *Election* and *Justification*. “Puritanism’s very reason for existing depends on the worth of this its vital conception”; and, when we are told that St. Paul is a Protestant doctor whose reign is ending, “we in England can best try the assertion by fixing our eyes on our own Puritans, and comparing their doctrine and their hold on vital truth with St. Paul’s.”

Entering upon this endeavour, he divides Puritanism into Calvinism, and Arminianism or Methodism. The foremost place in Calvinistic theology belongs to Predestination; in Methodist theology to Justification by Faith. Calvinism relies most on man’s fears; Methodism most on his hopes. Both Calvinism and Methodism appeal to the Bible, and above all to St. Paul, for the proof of what they teach. Very well then, says Arnold, we will enquire what Paul’s account of God’s proceedings with man really is, and whether it tallies with the various representations of the same subject which Puritanism, in its two main divisions, has given. We will also, he says, follow Puritanism’s example and take the Epistle to the Romans as the chief place for finding what Paul really thought on the points in question.

He illustrates his argument freely by citations from the other undoubtedly Pauline epistles, but he characteristically attributes the Epistle to the Hebrews to Apollos, as being “just such a performance as might naturally have come from ‘an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures,’ and in whom the intelligence, and the powers of combining, type-finding, and expounding somewhat dominated the religious perceptions.” While he thus appeals unreservedly to St. Paul, he is careful to point out that we must retranslate him for ourselves if we wish to get rid of the preconceived doctrines of Election and Justification which the translators have read into him. A strong example

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of their method was to be found in the word *atonement* in Romans v. II, which has disappeared from our Revised Version, being replaced by *reconciliation*. The other point to be borne in mind is that Paul wrote about Religion “in a vivid and figured way”—not with the scientific and formal method of a theological treatise; and that, being a Jew, “he uses the Jewish Scriptures in a Jew’s arbitrary and uncritical fashion”; quoting them at haphazard and applying them fantastically.

With these cautions duly noted, Arnold goes to the order in which Paul’s ideas naturally stand, and the connexion between one and another. Here the unlikeness between Paul and Puritanism at once appears. “What sets the Calvinist in motion seems to be the desire to flee from the wrath to come; and what sets the Methodist in motion, the desire for eternal bliss. What is it which sets Paul in motion? It is the impulse which we have elsewhere noted as the master-impulse of Hebraism—*the desire for righteousness.*” How searching and keen and practical was Paul’s idea of righteousness is shown by his long and frequent lists of moral faults to be avoided and of virtues to be cultivated. This zeal for righteousness marks the character of Paul both before and after his conversion. Nay, it explains his conversion. “Into this spirit, so possessed with the hunger and thirst for righteousness, and precisely because it was so possessed by it, the characteristic doctrines of Christ, which brought a new aliment to feed this hunger and thirst—of Christ, whom he had never seen, but who was in every one’s words and thoughts, the Teacher who was meek and lowly in heart, who said men were brothers and must love one another, that the last should often be first, that the exercise of dominion and lordship had nothing in them desirable, and that we must become as little children—sank down and worked there even before Paul ceased to persecute, and had no small part in getting him ready for the crisis of his conversion.” As soon as that conversion was accomplished, as soon as Paul found himself a teacher and a leader in the new community, he resumed, with all his old vigour, though in an altered fashion, his labours for righteousness. In all his teaching he harps upon the same string. If he leaves the enforcement of the law even for a moment, it is only to establish it more victoriously. “This man, out of whom an astounding criticism has deduced Antinomianism, is in truth so possessed with horror of Antinomianism, that he goes to grace for the sole purpose of extirpating it, and even then cannot rest without perpetually telling us why he is gone there.”



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Righteousness then, as St. Paul conceives it, stands in keeping the law and so serving God. But to serve God, “to follow that central clue in our moral being which unites us to the universal order, is no easy task.... In some way or other, says Bishop Wilson, ‘every man is conscious of an opposition in him between the flesh and the spirit.’” No one is more keenly conscious of this opposition than St. Paul himself. How is he to bring the evil and self-seeking tendencies of his composite nature into conformity with the law and will of God? “Mere commanding and forbidding is of no avail, and only irritates opposition in the desires it tries to control.... Neither the law of nature nor the law of Moses availed to bind men to righteousness. So we come to the word which is the governing word of the Epistle to the Romans—the word *all*. As the word *righteousness* is the governing word of St. Paul’s entire mind and life, so the word *all* is the governing word of this his chief epistle. The Gentile with the law of nature, the Jew with the law of Moses, alike fail to achieve righteousness. ‘All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.’ All do what they would not, and do not what they would; all feel themselves enslaved, impotent, guilty, miserable. ‘O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?’ Hitherto we have followed Paul in the sphere of morals; we have now come with him to the point where he enters the sphere of religion.” Paul is profoundly conscious of his own imperfections, of the tendencies in his nature which war against righteousness; of his inability, in common with all the human race, to follow perfectly the law of God. He has now come to know Christ’s mind and life. Christ has, in his own phrase, apprehended him—laid hold on him; and he is persuaded that Christ so laid hold upon him in order to lead him into perfect, not partial, righteousness—into entire conformity with the will of God. In coming to know Christ, he had come to know perfect righteousness, and he desired to attain to it himself, believing that Christ had laid hold on him for that very purpose.

And when we come to the vision of that perfect Righteousness, and Paul’s desire to attain to it, we are seasonably reminded of the order in which his ideas come. “For us, who approach Christianity through a scholastic theology, it is Christ’s divinity which establishes His being without sin. For Paul, who approached Christianity through his personal experience, it was Christ’s being without sin which established His divinity. The large and complete conception of righteousness to which he himself had slowly and late, and only by Christ’s help, awakened, in Christ he seemed to see existing absolutely and naturally. The devotion to this conception which made it meat and drink to carry it into effect, a devotion of which he himself was strongly and deeply conscious, he saw in Christ still stronger, by far,

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and deeper than in himself. But for attaining the righteousness of God, for reaching an absolute conformity with the moral order and with God's will, he saw no such impotence existing in Christ's case as in his own. For Christ, the uncertain conflict between the law in our members and the law of the spirit did not appear to exist. Those eternal vicissitudes of victory and defeat, which drove Paul to despair, in Christ were absent; smoothly and inevitably He followed the real and eternal order in preference to the momentary and apparent order. Obstacles outside there were plenty, but obstacles within Him there were none. He was led by the spirit of God; He was dead to sin, He lived to God; and in this life to God He persevered even to His cruel bodily death on the cross. As many as are led by the spirit of God, says Paul, are the sons of God. If this is so with even us, who live to God so feebly and who render such an imperfect obedience, how much more is He who lives to God entirely and who renders an unalterable obedience, the unique and only son of God?" This, says Arnold, is undoubtedly the main line of movement which Paul's ideas respecting Christ follow; and so far we have no quarrel with our guide. But he hastily goes on to an assertion which seems arbitrary and controvertible. He is forced to admit that Paul, who saw perfect righteousness in Christ and believed in His Divinity because of it, also identified Him with that Eternal Word or Wisdom of God, which, according to Jewish theology, had been with God from the beginning, and through which the world was created. He also has to admit that Paul identified Christ with the Jewish Messiah who will some day appear to terminate the actual kingdoms of the world and establish His own. But in both these cases he treats St. Paul's idea as a kind of afterthought, due to his training in the scholastic theology of Judaism, and quite subsidiary to his paramount belief. That belief was that, if we would fulfil the law of God and live in righteousness, we must learn from the All-Holy Christ to die as He died to all moral faults, all rebellious instincts, and live with Him in ever-increasing conformity to His high example of moral perfection.

For the power which drew men to admire this sanctity and follow this example Paul had his own name. "The struggling stream of duty, which had not volume enough to bear man to his goal, was suddenly reinforced by the immense tidal wave of sympathy and emotion"; and to this new and potent influence Paul gave the name of *faith*. So vital is this word to Paul's religious doctrine that all Pauline theology and controversy has centred in it and battled round it. "To have faith in Christ means to be attached to Christ, to embrace Christ, to be identified with Christ"—but how? Paul answers, "By dying with Him." All his teaching amounts to this, and it is enough. We must die with Christ to the law of the flesh, live with Christ to the law of the mind. To live with



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Christ after death is to rise with Him. It implies Resurrection. Here again Arnold is constrained to admit the validity of Catholic interpretation. He cannot deny that Paul believed absolutely in the physical, literal, and material fact of Christ's bodily Resurrection. But he insists that, while accepting this fact, Paul lays far more stress upon the spiritual interpretation of it. For Paul, death is living after the flesh; life is mortifying the flesh by the spirit; "resurrection is the rising, within the sphere of our earthly existence, from death in this sense to life in this sense."

But, though St. Paul so often uses the word Resurrection in this spiritual and mystical sense, it cannot be denied that he uses it also, uses it primarily, in its physical and literal sense. In that sense, it implies a physical and literal Death of Christ. And on that Death, what is St. Paul's teaching? Not that it was a substitution, or a satisfaction, or an appeasement of wrath or an expiation of guilt—but that in it and by it "Christ parted with what, to men in general, is the most precious of things—individual self and selfishness; He pleased not Himself, obeyed the spirit of God, died to sin and to the law in our members, consummated upon the Cross this death"; in all this seeking to show His followers that whosoever would cease from sin and follow Righteousness must be prepared to "suffer in the flesh."

Arnold thus sums up his general contention: "The three essential terms of Pauline theology are not, therefore, as popular theology makes them—*calling, justification, sanctification*; they are rather these: *dying with Christ, resurrection from the dead, growing into Christ.*" And thus he concludes his controversy with the theologians who have misinterpreted their favourite Apostle: "It is to Protestantism, and its Puritan Gospel, that the reproaches thrown on St. Paul, for sophisticating religion of the heart into theories of the head about election and justification, rightly attach. St. Paul himself, as we have seen, begins with seeking righteousness and ends with finding it; from first to last the practical religious sense never deserts him. If he could have seen and heard our preachers of predestination and justification, they are just the people he would have called 'diseased about questions and word-battlings.' He would have told Puritanism that every Sunday when in all its countless chapels it reads him and preaches from him, the veil is upon its heart. The moment it reads him right, a veil will seem to have been taken away from its heart; it will feel as though scales were fallen from its eyes.... The doctrine of Paul will arise out of the tomb where for centuries it has lain covered; it will edify the Church of the future; it will have the consent of happier generations, the applause of less superstitious ages. All, all, will be too little to pay half the debt which the Church of God owes to this 'least of the apostles, who was not fit to be called an apostle, because he persecuted the Church of God.'"



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[Illustration: Pains Hill Cottage, Cobham, from the Lawn]

The articles of which the foregoing pages give the substance were published in the *Cornhill Magazine* for October and November, 1869. On November 13, Arnold wrote with glee that the organs of the Independent and the Baptist Churches showed that he had “entirely reached the special Puritan class he meant to reach.” “Whether,” he said, “I have rendered St. Paul’s ideas with perfect correctness or not, there is no doubt that the confidence with which these people regarded their conventional rendering of them was quite baseless, made them narrow and intolerant, and prevented all progress. I shall have a last paper at Christmas, called *Puritanism and the Church of England*, to show how the Church, though holding certain doctrines like justification in common with Puritanism, has gained by not pinning itself to those doctrines and nothing else, but by resting on Catholic antiquity, historic Christianity, development, and so on, which open to it an escape from all single doctrines as they are outgrown.”

That “last paper” appeared in due course, and it stated the position of the Church of England as the historical and continuous Church in this land, with an uncompromising directness which would have satisfied Bishop Stubbs or Professor Freeman. With equal directness, it affirmed that Protestantism, “with its three notable tenets of predestination, original sin, and justification, has been pounding away for three centuries at St. Paul’s wrong words, and missing his essential doctrine.” It traced, briefly but very clearly, the history and development of the Universal Church, justified the Church of England in separating from Rome on account of Rome’s moral corruptions, condemned the Nonconformists for separating on the mere ground of opinion, extolled the comprehensiveness and simplicity of Anglican formularies, and suggested to the Dissenters that, if they would only swallow their objections to Episcopacy and rejoin the Church of England, they might greatly strengthen the national organization for promoting Religion. In doing this they would only obey the natural instinct which bids all Christians worship together. “*Securus colit orbis terrarum*”—those pursue the purpose best who pursue it together. For, unless prevented by extraneous causes, they manifestly tend, as the history of the Church’s growth shows, to pursue it together.”

The two papers on *St. Paul and Protestantism* together with that on *Puritanism and the Church of England* were published in 1870 in a single volume bearing the former title, and to this volume Arnold prefixed a preface, enforcing his doctrine with some vigorous hits at a dissenting Member of Parliament called Winterbotham, for glorying in an attitude of “watchful jealousy”; at Mill for his “almost feminine vehemence of irritation” against the Church of England, at Fawcett for his “mere blatancy and truculent hardness.” He concluded by re-affirming his main object in this theological controversy. “To disengage the religion of England from unscriptural Protestantism, political Dissent, and a spirit of watchful jealousy, may be an aim not in our day reachable, and still it is well to level at it.”



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The book produced a strong and immediate effect. As *Culture and Anarchy* first obtained for its author a hearing from politicians and social reformers, so *St. Paul and Protestantism* obtained him a hearing from clergymen, religious teachers, and amateurs of theology. Dr. Vaughan, then just appointed Master of the Temple, was moved to preach a sermon,[47] pointing out—what indeed was true enough—that Arnold omitted from St. Paul's teaching all reference to the Divine Pardon of Sin, or, as theologians would say, to the Atonement. But on the other hand, Bishop Fraser seems to have approved. "The question is," wrote Arnold, "is the view propounded *true*? I believe it is, and that it is important, because it places our use of the Bible and our employment of its language on a basis indestructibly solid. The Bishop of Manchester told me it had been startlingly new to him, but the more he thought of it, the more he thought it was true." [48]

He himself was delighted with this success. He hoped to exercise a "healing and reconciling influence" in the troubled times which he saw ahead; "and it is this which makes me glad to find—what I find more and more—that I *have* influence." He delighted in finding that the "May Meetings" abounded in comments on *St. Paul and Protestantism*. "We shall see," he exclaims gleefully, "great changes in the Dissenters before long." "The two things—the position of the Dissenters and the right reading of St. Paul and the New Testament—are closely connected; and I am convinced the general line I have taken as to the latter has a lucidity and inevitableness about it which will make it more and more prevail." The book soon reached a second edition, and he wrote thus about it to his friend Charles Kingsley: "I must have the pleasure of sending you, as soon as it is reprinted, a little book called *St. Paul and Protestantism*, which the Liberals and physicists thoroughly dislike, but which I had great pleasure and profit in thinking out and writing."

And now he was fairly embarked, for good or for evil, on his theological career. He had exalted the Church of England as the historic Church in this land: he had poured scorn on "hole-and-corner religions" of separatism; he had advised the Dissenters to submit to Episcopal government and return to the Church and strengthen its preaching power: and he had re-stated, in terminology of his own, what he conceived to be St. Paul's teaching on Religion. This work was completed in 1870, and in 1871 he began to publish instalments of a book which appeared in 1873 under the title *Literature and Dogma*. The scope and purpose of this book may best be given in his own words. It deals with "the relation of Letters to Religion: their effect upon dogma, and the consequences of this to religion." His object is "to reassure those who feel attachment to Christianity, to the Bible, and who recognize the growing discredit befalling miracles and the super-natural."



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“If the people are to receive a religion of the Bible, we must find for the Bible some other basis than that which the Churches assign to it, a verifiable basis and not an assumption. This new religion of the Bible the people may receive; the version now current of the religion of the Bible they will not receive.”

He sets out on this enterprise by repeating what he had said in *St. Paul and Protestantism* about the misunderstandings which had arisen from affixing to certain phrases such as *grace*, *new birth*, and *justification*, a fixed, rigid, and quasi-scientific meaning. “Terms which with St. Paul are *literary* terms, theologians have employed as if they were *scientific* terms.” In saying this he goes no further than several of his predecessors and contemporaries on the Liberal side in theology. Even so orthodox a divine as Dr. Vaughan laid it down that “Nothing in the Church’s history has been more fertile in discord and error than the tendency of theologians to stereotype metaphor.”[49] Bishop Hampden’s much-criticised Bampton Lectures had merely aimed at stating the accepted doctrines in terms other than those derived from schoolmen and mataphysicians. Dean Stanley’s unrivalled powers of literary exposition were consistently employed in the same endeavour. To call Abraham a Sheikh was only an ingenious attempt at naturalizing Genesis. But in *Literature and Dogma* Arnold applies this method far more fundamentally. According to him, even “God” is a literary term to which a scientific sense has been arbitrarily applied. He pronounces, without waiting to prove, that there is absolutely no foundation in reason for the idea that God is a “Person, the First Great Cause, the moral and intelligent Governor of the Universe.” We are not to dream that He is a “Being who thinks and loves”; or that we can love Him or address our prayers to Him with any chance of being heard. What then, according to Arnold, is God? and here he answers with his celebrated definition. God is a “stream of tendency, not ourselves, which makes for Righteousness,” or good conduct. Because this power works eternally and unchangeably, it is called “The Eternal,” which thus becomes a sort of nickname for God. And as for our relations with God, called by most people Religion, well—“Religion is morality touched by Emotion.” This, and nothing more.

For the beginnings of religious history, he goes to the House of Israel. The Israelites, as he was always insisting, had a strong sense for Righteousness, or Conduct; and they found happiness in pursuing it. The idea of Righteousness was their God, and the enjoyment of Righteousness their religion. This simple conception held its own for generations; but, by the time of the Maccabees, the Israelites had become familiar with the idea of a resurrection from the dead and a final judgment. “The phantasmagories of more prodigal and wild imaginations have mingled with the product of Israel’s austere spirit.”



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“Israel, who originally followed righteousness because he felt that it tended to life, might and did naturally come at last to follow it because it would enable him to stand before the Son of Man at His coming, and to share in the triumph of the Saints of the Most High.” This, says Arnold, was *Extra-belief*, “Aberglaube,” belief beyond what is certain and veritable. “*Extra-belief* is the poetry of life.” The Messianic ideas were the poetry of life to Israel in the age when Jesus Christ came. When He came, Israel was looking for a Messiah; and, when He began to preach, the better conscience of Judaism recognized in His teaching a new aspect of religion which it had desired. National Righteousness had been the idea of the older Judaism. Personal righteousness was the idea of the New Teaching. “Jesus took the individual Israelite by himself apart, made him listen for the voice of his conscience, and said to him in effect: ‘If every *one* would mend *one*, we should have a new world.’” A Teacher so winning, so acceptable, so in unison with Israel’s higher aspirations must surely be the Messiah whom earlier generations had expected; and so, in virtue of the purity and nobility of His teaching, Jesus Christ attained His unique position. He became, in popular acceptance, the Great, the Unique Man, in some sense the Son of God, Prophet and Teacher of the new and nobler morality. So there grew up “a personal devotion to Jesus Christ, who brought the doctrine to His disciples and made a passage for it into their hearts.” And almost immediately after “Aberglaube” regathered; and devotion to Jesus took the form of an *Extra-belief* of some future advent in splendour and terror, the destruction of His enemies, and the triumphs of His followers. And this process of development, begun while Christ was still on earth, extended with great rapidity after His death. “As time went on, and Christianity spread wider and wider among the multitude, and with less and less of control from the personal influence of Jesus, Christianity developed more and more its side of miracle and legend; until to believe Jesus to be the Son of God meant to believe other points of the legend—His preternatural conception and birth, His miracles, His bodily resurrection, His ascent into heaven, and His future triumphant return to judgment. And these and like matters are what popular religion drew forth from the records of Jesus as the essentials of belief.”

From this account, strangely inadequate indeed, but not positively offensive, of the origin and development of Christianity, he passes on to the attempts made by current theology to prove the truth of Christianity from Prophecy and Miracle. With regard to prophecy, he has little difficulty in showing that predictions have often miscarried, and that passages in the Old Testament have been interpreted as relating to Christ, which probably had no such reference. Thus the first disciples clearly expected the Second Advent



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to occur in their own life-time; and it has not occurred yet. "The Lord said unto my Lord" is better rendered "The Eternal said unto my lord the King"; and is "a simple promise of victory to a royal leader." So, in something less than four pages, he dismisses the proof from Prophecy, and goes on to the proof from Miracles. "Whether we attack them or whether we defend them, does not much matter. The human mind, as its experience widens, is turning away from them. And for this reason: *it sees, as its experience widens, how they arise.*" Our duty, then, if we love Jesus Christ and value the New Testament, is to make men see that the claim of Christianity to our allegiance is not based upon Miracles, but rests on quite other grounds, substantial and indestructible. The good faith of the writers of the New Testament—the "reporters of Jesus," as Arnold oddly calls them—is admitted; but, if we are to read their narratives to any profit, we must convince ourselves of their "liability to mistake." Excited, impassioned, wonder-loving disciples surrounded the simplest acts and words of Christ with a thaumaturgical atmosphere, and, when He merely exercised His power of moral help and healing, the "reporters" declared that He cured the sick and drove out evil spirits. In brief, when the "reporters" narrated miracles wrought by Christ, they were deceived; but, in spite of that, they were excellent men, and our obligations to them are great. "Reverence for all who, in those first dubious days of Christianity, chose the better part, and resolutely cast in their lot with 'the despised and rejected of men'! Gratitude to all who, while the tradition was yet fresh, helped by their writings to preserve and set clear the precious record of the words and life of Jesus!"

And yet that record, as they wrote it, is, according to Arnold, brimful of errors, both in fact and in interpretation; and the Church, which has preserved their written tradition, and kept it concurrently with her own oral tradition, has fallen into enormous and fundamental delusion about those "words" and that "life." "Christianity is immortal; it has eternal truth, inexhaustible value, a boundless future. But our popular religion at present conceives the birth, ministry, and death of Christ as altogether steeped in prodigy, brimful of miracles—and *miracles do not happen.*"

The fact that, in the preface to the popular edition of *Literature and Dogma*, he italicized those last words would appear to show that he attached some special, almost "thaumaturgical," value to them. *Miracles do not happen.* It has been justly observed that any man, woman, or child that ever lived might have said this, and have caused no startling sensation. But when Arnold uttered these words, emphasized them, and seemed to base his case against the Catholic creed upon them, it behoved his disciples to ponder them, and to enquire if, and how far, they were true.



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As far as we know, there never was but one human being to whom they proved overwhelming, and he is a character in a popular work of fiction. "Miracles do not happen" broke the bruised reed of the Rev. Robert Elsmere's faith. That long-legged weakling, with his auburn hair and "boyish innocence of mood," and sweet ignorance of the wicked world, went down, it will be remembered, like a ninepin before the assaults of a sceptical squire who had studied in Germany. "A great creed, with the testimony of eighteen centuries at its back, could not find an articulate word to say in its defence.... What weapons the Rector wielded for it, what strokes he struck, has not even in a single line been recorded." [50]

A happily-conceived picture—was it in *Punch*?—represented the Rector on his knees before the Squire, ejaculating, with clasped hands, "Pray, pray, don't mention another German author, or I shall be obliged to resign my living." However, the ruthless Squire persisted; and Elsmere apparently read *Literature and Dogma*, and, when he came to "Miracles do not happen" he resigned; threw up his Orders, and founded what Arnold would have called "a hole-and-corner" religion of his own.

Well, but, it may be urged, Elsmere is after all only a fictitious character, taken from a novel purporting, as Bishop Creighton said, to describe a man who once was a Christian and ceased to be one, but really describing a man who never was a Christian, and eventually found it out. This, of course, is true, but it must be presumed that the Reverend Robert is not absolutely the creature of a vivid imagination, but stands for some real men and women who, in actual life, came under the author's observation. If that be so, we must admit that Arnold's dogma about Miracles had a practical effect upon certain minds. An Elsmere of a different type—a flippant Elsmere, if such a portent could be conceived—might have answered that, if miracles happened, they would not be miracles; in other words, that events of frequent occurrence are not called miracles; and that it belongs to the idea of a miracle that it is a special and signal suspension of the Divine Law, for a great purpose and a great occasion. If, again, Robert, eschewing flippancy, had retired on abstract theory, he might have said that an event so unique and so transcendent as the assumption of human nature by Eternal God seems to demand, in the fitness of things, a method of entry into the material world, and a method of departure from it, wholly and strikingly dissimilar to the established order—in common parlance, miraculous. Answers conceived in these two senses—some rough and popular and declamatory, some learned and argumentative and scientific—appeared in great numbers. "Grave objections are alleged against the book.... Its conclusions about the meaning of the term *God*, and about man's knowledge of God, are severely condemned; strong objections are taken to our view of the Bible-documents in general,



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to our account of the Canon of the Gospels, to our estimate of the Fourth Gospel." To these criticisms Arnold might have added one yet more cogent. It was felt by many of his readers, and even by some of his most attached disciples, that the "sinuous, easy, unpolemical method" which he vaunted, and which he applied so happily to criticism of books and life, was not grave enough, or cogent enough, when applied to the criticism of Religion. From first to last his method was arbitrary. [Greek: Hantos hepha]—the Master said it. This was excellent when he criticised literature. To say that a verse of Macaulay's was painful, or a line of Francis Newman's hideous, was well within his province. To say that one author wrote in the Grand Style and that another showed the Note of Provinciality—that also was his right. To pronounce that a passage from Sophocles was religious poetry of the highest and most edifying type,[51] whereas the Eternal Power was displeased by "such doggerel hymns as

Sing Glory, Glory, Glory, to the Great God Triune,"

this again was all very well; for matters of this kind do not admit of argument and proof. But, when it comes to handling Religion, this arbitrary method—this innate and unquestioning claim to settle what is good or bad, true or false—provokes rebellion. No one was more severe than Arnold on the folly of Puritanism in founding its doctrine of Justification on isolated texts borrowed from St. Paul; yet no one was more confident than he that man's whole conception of God could be safely based on the fact that at a certain period of their history the Jews took to expressing God by a word which signifies "Eternal." "Rejoice and give thanks," "Rejoice evermore," are certainly texts of Holy Writ; but he seems to think that, by merely quoting them, he has abrogated all the sterner side of the Bible's teaching about human life and destiny. An even more curious instance of literary self-confidence may be cited from his treatment of the Lord's commission to the Apostles. "It is extremely improbable that Jesus should ever have charged his Apostles to 'baptize all nations in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.'" But "He may perfectly well have said: 'Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted; whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained.'" The one formula seems to Arnold anachronistic and unlikely, the other perfectly natural. This is all very interesting and may be very true; but it is too dogmatic to be convincing. In such a case one may respectfully cry out that Letters are overstepping their province; and that one man's sense of fitness, style, and literary likelihood is not sufficient warrant for discrediting a well-tested and established document.

[Illustration: Matthew Arnold, 1884

Photo Elliott & Fry]



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Yet, after all, documents, however well-tested and established, are not the backbone of the Christian religion. It may well be that to minds inured from infancy to the worship of the letter; to believers in “the Bible and the Bible only” as the ground of their religion; Arnold’s solvent methods and free handling of the sacred text were alarming and revolutionary. But they fell harmless on the minds which had long schooled themselves in the Christian tradition; which took the Bible from the Church, not the Church from the Bible; and which realized that what had sufficed for the life of Christians before the Canon was contemplated would suffice again, even if every book contained in the Canon were resolved into mere literature.

Yet again, a criticism brought freely and justly against his biblical disputations was that in his appeal to Letters and to what he conceived to be human nature, he overlooked the at least equally important appeal to History. He seems indeed to have avoided coming to close quarters with the historical defenders of the Christian Creed. It was easy enough to poke fun at Archbishop Thomson, Bishop Wilberforce, and Bishop Ellicott; Mr. Moody, and the Rev. W. Cattle, and the clergymen who write to the *Guardian*. But Bishop Lightfoot he left severely alone, with Bishop Westcott and Dr. Sanday and students of the same authority; and he would probably have justified his neglect of their contentions by saying, as he had said twenty years before, in his light and airy fashion, that “it was not possible for a clergyman to treat these matters satisfactorily.”

But, though clergymen are thus put quietly out of court, a layman may still be heard; and one could almost wish that he had lived to handle, in some fresh preface to *Literature and Dogma*, such a confession of faith as that which Lord Salisbury gave in 1894—

“To me, the central point is the Resurrection of Christ, which I believe. Firstly, because it is testified by men who had every opportunity of seeing and knowing, and whose veracity was tested by the most tremendous trials, both of energy and endurance, during long lives. Secondly, because of the marvellous effect it had upon the world. As a moral phenomenon, the spread and mastery of Christianity is without a parallel. I can no more believe that colossal moral effects can be without a cause, than I can believe that the various motions of the magnet are without a cause, though I cannot wholly explain them. To any one who believes the Resurrection of Christ, the rest presents little difficulty. No one who has that belief will doubt that those who were commissioned by Him to speak—Paul, Peter, Mark, John—carried a Divine message. St. Matthew falls into the same category. St. Luke has the warrant of the generation of Christians who saw and heard the others.”

So far the testimony of a layman. Arnold, as we know, loved and elegized one Dean of Westminster. Would he have tolerated the testimony of another?



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“The Church believes to-day in the Resurrection of Christ, because she has always believed in it. If all the documents which tell the story of the first Easter Day should disappear, the Church would still shout her Easter praises, and offer her Easter sacrifice of thanksgiving; for she is older than the oldest of her documents, and from father to son all through the centuries she has passed on the message of the first Easter morning—‘The Lord is risen indeed.’ The Church believes in the Resurrection because she is the product of the Resurrection.”[52]

But, in spite of varied criticism, *Literature and Dogma* was well received. Three editions were published in 1873; a fourth in 1874; a fifth in 1876, and the “popular edition” in 1883. As usual, he was serenely pleased with his handiwork. In 1874 he wrote to his sister: “It will more and more become evident how entirely religious is the work which I have done in *Literature and Dogma*. The enemies of religion see this well enough already.” Ten years later, he wrote from Cincinnati: “What strikes me in America is the number of friends *Literature and Dogma* has made me, amongst ministers of religion especially—and how the effect of the book here is conservative.”

To the various criticisms of the book he began replying in the *Contemporary Review* for October, 1874. In November of that year he wrote to Lady de Rothschild: “You must read my metaphysics in this last *Contemporary*. My first and last appearance in the field of metaphysics, where you, I know, are no stranger.” The completed reply was published as *God and the Bible* in 1875. This reply, which contained, as he thought, “the best prose he had ever succeeded in writing,” was a reassertion and development of the previous work, and was written, as the preface said, “for a reader who is more or less conversant with the Bible, who can feel the attraction of the Christian religion, but who has acquired habits of intellectual seriousness, has been revolted by having things presented solemnly to him for his use which will not hold water, and who will start with none of such things even to reach what he values. Come what may, he will deal with this great matter of religion fairly. It is the aim of the present volume, as it was the aim of *Literature and Dogma*, to show to such a man that his honesty will be rewarded.... I write to convince the lover of religion that by following habits of intellectual seriousness he need not, so far as religion is concerned, lose anything.”

It was, we must suppose, with the same benign intention that in 1877 he addressed himself to the task of persuading the Edinburgh Philosophical Institution that Bishop Butler was an untrustworthy guide in that mysterious region which lies between Philosophy and Religion. For this task, as Mr. Gladstone justly observed: he “was placed, by his own peculiar opinions, in a position far from auspicious with respect to



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this particular undertaking. He combined a fervent zeal for the Christian religion with a not less boldly avowed determination to transform it beyond the possibility of recognition by friend or foe. He was thus placed under a sort of necessity to condemn the handiwork of Bishop Butler, who in a certain sense gives it a new charter." Over Butler's grave stands a magnificent inscription, from the pen of Southey, which well illustrates the estimation in which for upwards of a century he was held by the serious mind of England—

Others had established
the Historical and Prophetical grounds
of the Christian Religion,
and that sure testimony of its truth
which is found in its perfect adaptation
to the heart of man.
It was reserved for him to develop
its analogy to the Constitution
and Course of Nature;
and, laying his strong foundations
in the depth of that great argument,
there to construct
another and irrefragable proof:
thus rendering Philosophy
subservient to Faith,
and finding in outward and visible things
the type and evidence
of those within the veil.

In his lectures on Butler, Arnold set out to prove that the Philosophy was as unsound as the Faith to which it was subservient; and that it could not hold its own against Atheism or Agnosticism, but only against a system which conceded a Personal Governor of the Universe. This is the argument against the Deists which he puts into Butler's mouth: "You all concede a Supreme Personal First Cause, the almighty and intelligent Governor of the Universe; this, you and I both agree, is the system and order of nature. But you are offended at certain things in revelation.... Well, I will show you that in your and my admitted system of nature there are just as many difficulties as in the system of revelation." And on this, says Arnold, he does show it, "and by adversaries such as his, who grant what the Deist or Socinian grants, he never has been answered, he never will be answered. The spear of Butler's reasoning will even follow and transfix the Duke of Somerset,[53] who finds so much to condemn in the Bible, but 'retires into one unassailable fortress—faith in God.'"[54] Butler's method, then, is allowed to be potent enough to crush all such half-believers as still clung to the idea of a Personal God and Intelligent Ruler; but it had no force or cogency against such as, following Arnold,



attenuated the idea of God into a Stream of Tendency. This theme he elaborated with great ingenuity and characteristic dogmatism in his *Bishop Butler and the Zeitgeist*; and, inasmuch as no task can be more distasteful than to attack the teaching of a man whose genius and character one recognizes among the formative influences of one's life, I will leave the upshot of this ill-starred endeavour to be summarized by Butler's great champion, Mr. Gladstone—



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“Various objections have been taken from various quarters to this point and that in the argument of Butler; but Mr. Arnold’s criticisms, as a whole, remain wholly isolated and unsupported. It is impossible to acquit him of the charge of a carelessness implying levity, and of an ungovernable bias towards finding fault.... Mr. Arnold himself will probably suffer more from his own censures than the great Christian philosopher who is the object of them. And it is well for him that all they can do is to effect some deduction from the fame which has been earned by him in other fields, as a true man, a searching and sagacious literary critic, and a poet of genuine creative genius.”[55]

It is now time to enquire what practical effect he produced by all this writing (and a good deal which followed it in the same sense) on the religious thought of his time. This is a question which, in the absence of any clear or general testimony, one can only answer by the light of one’s own experience. The present writer can aver that, so far as his own personal knowledge goes, the strange case of Robert Elsmere was a unique instance. He has, of course, known plenty of people to whom, alas! revealed Religion—the accepted Faith of the Church and the Gospel—was a tale of no meaning, which they regarded either with blank indifference or with bitter and furious hostility. But, in all these cases, dissent from the Christian creed depended upon negations far deeper than “Miracles do not happen.” It depended on a stark incapacity to conceive the ideas of God, of permitted evil, of sin, its consequences and its remedy, and of life after death. Where there was the capacity to conceive these mysteries, men were not troubled by the minor questions of miracle, prophecy, and textual research. To use an illustration which the present writer has used elsewhere, they were not shaken by *Robert Elsmere*, not confirmed by *Lux Mundi*. Still less were they agitated by the literary dogmatism of Matthew Arnold. Many people disliked his style, his methods, his illustrations; and, not knowing the man, disliked him also. But, as he justly observed, if he had written as these objectors wished him to write, no one would have read him; so he went on in his “sinuous, easy, unpolemical” way; and the people who disliked him closed their ears, and “flocked all the more eagerly to Messrs. Moody and Sankey.”

Mr. Gladstone wrote in 1895—“It is very difficult to keep one’s temper in dealing with M. Arnold when he touches on religious matters. His patronage of a Christianity fashioned by himself is to me more offensive and trying than rank unbelief.”



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But then again there were those—and we should hope the great majority—who, whether they knew the man or not, loved his temper, admired his methods, and found no more difficulty in detaching what was good from what was bad in his teaching, than he himself found in the case of his master, Wordsworth. A Catholic priest, ministering formerly in the Roman and now in the English Church, thus describes the help which he gained from Arnold at a time of distress and transition. “That I held to any sort of Christianity, and continued to use and enjoy the Bible, I owe entirely to Matthew Arnold. I began to read him in 1882; first his prose, and then his verse. For several years I read him over, and over, and over again with growing delight and profit; until, so far as I was able, I understood something of his mind and methods. He taught me how to think, and how to write. He undoubtedly saved me from leaving the Papal Church a dulled and blank materialist, thoroughly and violently anti-Christian; and his gentle influence tended me through the next few years, until I was mellowed for the process of reconstruction.”[56]

This is a fine tribute to all that was best and most characteristic in his teaching. Beyond doubt, by his insistence on the relation of Letters to Religion, he helped many young men to read their Bibles with better understanding and keener appreciation; and enabled them that are without to enter for the first time into the spirit and attractiveness of the Christian ideal. Not only so, but men established in age, position, and orthodoxy, felt and acknowledged his helpfulness. When he delivered an address on “The Church of England” to a gathering of clergy at Sion College, he tells us that “Clergyman on clergyman turned on the Chairman” (who had scented heresy), “and said they agreed with me far more than with him.” A divine so profoundly Evangelical as Bishop Thorold larded his sermons and charges with extracts from Arnold’s prose and verse. In 1893 Arnold dined with Archbishop Benson, and “thought it a gratifying marvel, considering what things I have published”; but the marvel was of such frequent occurrence that it had almost ceased to be marvellous. That this was so was due, no doubt, in great measure to the charm of his character and conversation. It was not easy for any one who knew him to take serious offence at what he wrote. Just as Coleridge’s metaphysics were said by a friend to be “only his fun,” so Arnold’s theology was regarded by his admirers as part of his playfulness. It was difficult to disentangle what he really wished to teach from his jokes about the hangings of the Celestial Council-Chamber; “Willesden beyond Trent”; “Change Alley and Alley Change”; Professor Birks, “his brows crowned with myrtle,” going in procession to the Temple of Aphrodite; the Duke of Somerset “running into the strong tower” of Deism, and thinking himself “safe” there from further questionings. This method of illustration threw an air of comedy over the theme which it illustrated; and, if the criticism failed to disturb faith in Biblical theology, the critic had only himself to thank.



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Another element in the satisfaction with which dignitaries and clergymen came to regard him was the fact that he was so definitely a supporter of the Church of England. To the principle of Established Churches, as part of the wider principle of extending everywhere the scope of the State, he was always friendly; but he felt the difficulty of maintaining them where, as in Scotland, they had nothing to show except “a religious service which is perhaps the most dismal performance ever invented by man,” and a theology shared by all the non-established bodies round about. No such difficulty appeared in the case of the Church of England, with its historic claim, its seemingly worship, its distinctive doctrine; so of that Church as by law established he was the consistent defender. Towards ugliness, hideousness, rawness, whether manifested in life or in letters, he was always implacable; and this sentiment no doubt accounts for much of his hostility to Dissent. Margate was, in his eyes, a “brick-and-mortar image of English Protestantism, representing it in all its prose, all its uncomeliness—let me add, all its salubrity.” When criticising the proposal to let Dissenters bury their dead with their own rites in the National Church-yards, he likened the dissenting Service to a reading from Eliza Cook, and the Church’s Service to a reading from Milton, and protested against the Liberal attempt to “import Eliza Cook into a public rite.” He even was bold enough to cite his friend Mr. John Morley as secretly sharing this repugnance to Eliza Cook in a public rite. “*Scio, rex Agrippa, quia credis*. He is keeping company with his Festus Chamberlain and his Drusilla Collings, and cannot openly avow the truth; but in his heart he consents to it.”

For the beauty, the poetry, the winningness of Catholic worship and Catholic life Arnold had the keenest admiration. “The need for beauty is a real and ever rapidly growing need in man; Puritanism cannot satisfy it, Catholicism and the Church of England can.” He dwelt with delighted interest on Eugenie de Guerin’s devotional practices, her happy Christmas in the soft air of Languedoc, her midnight Mass, her beloved Confession. On the Mass itself no one has written more sympathetically, although he disavowed the fundamental doctrine on which the Mass is founded. “Once admit the miracle of the ‘atoning sacrifice,’ once move in this order of ideas, and what can be more natural and beautiful than to imagine this miracle every day repeated, Christ offered in thousands of places, everywhere the believer enabled to enact the work of redemption and unite himself with the Body whose sacrifice saves him?”



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In truth he had a strong sense, uncommon in Protestants, of Worship as distinct from Prayer—of Worship as the special object of a religious assembly. When he gave a Prayer-book to a child, he wrote on the flyleaf: “We have seen His star in the East, and are come to worship Him.” “In religion,” he said, “there are two parts: the part of thought and speculation, and the part of worship and devotion.... It does not help me to think a thing more clearly, that thousands of other people are thinking the same; but it does help me to worship with more devotion, that thousands of other people are worshipping with me. The connexion of common consent, antiquity, public establishment, long-used rites, national edifices, is everything for religious worship.” He quotes with admiration his favourite Joubert: “Just what makes worship impressive is its publicity, its external manifestation, its sound, its splendour, its observance, universally and visibly holding its sway through all the details both of our outward and of our inward life.”

“Worship,” he says, “should have in it as little as possible of what divides us, and should be as much as possible a common and public act.”

Again he quotes Joubert: “The best prayers are those which have nothing distinct about them, and which are thus of the nature of simple adoration.”

“Catholic worship,” he said, “is likely, however modified, to survive as the general worship of Christians, because it is the worship which, in a sphere where poetry is permissible and natural, unites most of the elements of poetry.” And again, “Unity and continuity in public religious worship are a need of human nature, an eternal aspiration of Christendom. A Catholic Church transformed is, I believe, the Church of the future.”

His speculations on that future are interesting and, naturally, not always consistent. In 1879 he writes to Sir Mountstuart Grant-Duff: “Perhaps we shall end our days in the tail of a return-current of popular religion, both ritual and dogmatic.” In 1880 he sees a great future for Catholicism, which, by virtue of its superior charm and poetry, will “endure while all the Protestant sects (amongst which I do not include the Church of England) dissolve and perish.” In 1881 he seemed to apprehend the return to Westminster Abbey, after “Wisdom’s too short reign,” of—

Folly revived, re-furbish’d sophistries,
And pullulating rites externe and vain.

In the last autumn of his life he wrote to M. Fontanes—a friend whose acquaintance he first made over *St. Paul and Protestantism*—



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“Your letter has reached me here (Ottery St. Mary), where I am staying with Lord Coleridge, the Lord Chief Justice, who is a grand-nephew of the poet. He loves literature, and, being a great deal richer than his grand-uncle, or than poets in general, has built a library from which I now write, and on which I wish that you could feast your eyes with me.... The Church Congress has just been held, and shows as usual that the clergy have no idea of the real situation; but indeed the conservatism and routine in religion are such in England that the line taken by the clergy cannot be wondered at. Nor are the conservatism and routine a bad thing, perhaps, in such a matter; but the awakening will one day come, and there will be much confusion. Have you looked at Tolstoi’s books on religion: in French they have the titles *Ma Religion, Ma Confession, Que Faire?* The first of these has been well translated, and has excited much attention over here; perhaps it is from this side, the socialist side that the change is likely to come: the Bible will be retained, but it will be said, as Tolstoi says, that its true, socialistic teaching has been overlooked, and attention has been fixed on metaphysical dogmas deduced from it, which are at any rate, says Tolstoi, secondary. He does not provoke discussion by denying or combating them; he merely relegates them to a secondary position.

[Illustration: The Grave in Laleham Churchyard

Where Matthew Arnold, his wife, and three sons are buried

Photo Ralph Lane]

And now that we have enquired into Arnold’s influence on theology, it is, perhaps, proper to ask what he himself believed. His faith seems to have been, by a curious paradox, far stronger on the Christian than on the Theistic side. “A Stream of Tendency” can never satisfy the idea of God, as ordinary humanity conceives it. It is not in human nature to love a stream of tendency, or worship it, or ask boons of it; or to credit it with powers of design, volition, or creation. A prayer beginning “Stream” would sound as odd as Wordsworth’s ode beginning “Spade.”[57]

But he had, as we have already seen, an unending admiration—a homage which did not stop far short of worship—for the character and teaching of Jesus Christ; and he placed salvation in conformity to that teaching, as it is explained by St. Paul. And this meant death to sin; the abrogation and annulment of bad habits and tendencies; resurrection with Christ to the higher life which He taught us to pursue. *The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.* He would have allowed no antithesis between the two halves of the text, but would have taught that the eternal welfare of man consisted in obeying the Law, receiving the Grace, and pursuing the Truth.



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Nothing more dogmatic than this could safely be put forward as representing his theology; but, though not dogmatic, his mind was intensely ecclesiastical. His contempt for individual whims and fancies, his love of corporate action and collective control, operated as powerfully in the religious as in the social sphere. He admired and clave to the Church of England because it was not, like Miss Cobbe's new religion and the British College of Health, the product of an individual fancy, setting out to make all things new on a plan of its own. The Church of England, whether it could theologically be called "Catholic" or not, was certainly "the continuous and historical Church of this country." In 1869 he praised his friend Temple, afterwards Archbishop, for "showing his strong Church feeling, and sense of the value and greatness of the historic development of Christianity, of which the Church is the expression." It was the National organ for promoting Righteousness and Perfection by means of Culture and for diffusing Sweetness and Light. In the last year of his life he wrote to Mr. Lionel Tollemache: "I consider myself, to adopt your very good expression, a Liberal Anglican; and I think the times are in favour of our being allowed so to call ourselves."

As regards differences of opinion inside the Church, he saw no harm in them. He held that the Church must maintain Episcopacy as a matter of historical development, and as "its link with the past—its share in the beauty and the poetry and the charm for the imagination," which belong to Catholicism. This being so, the "latitudinarianism of the Broad Churchmen" who wished to entice the Dissenters into the Church was "quite illusory" so long as opposition to Episcopacy was one of the main tenets of Nonconformity. But he thought that the Church was likely before long to get rid of the Athanasian Creed and the Thirty-nine Articles; and he urged that, as no one could enforce belief in such doctrines as the Real Presence, Apostolic Succession, and Priestly Absolution, Churchmen who rejected these could quite comfortably remain in the Church, side by side with others who accepted them.

The Church, then, as historically descended and legally established, ought to be maintained, honoured, and frequented; and, so far, his practice accorded with his belief. He had indeed no more sympathy with hysterical devotions than with fanatical faiths. He saw with amused eye the gestures and behaviour of the "Energumens" during the celebration of Holy Communion in a Ritualistic church—"the floor of the church strewn with what seem to be the dying and the dead, progress to the altar almost barred by forms suddenly dropping as if they were shot in battle, the delighted adoption of vehement rites, till yesterday unknown, adopted and practised now with all that absence of tact, measure, and correct perception in things of form and manner, all that slowness to see when they are making themselves ridiculous, which belongs to the people of our English race."



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This was a perfectly just criticism on the nascent ritualism of thirty years ago. Time and study have pruned this devotional exuberance, but he rightly described what he saw. With such performances he had no sympathy; but he loved what he had been accustomed to—the grave and reverend method of worship which was traditional in our cathedrals and college chapels. He communicated by preference at an early service. He revelled in the architecture of our great churches, and enjoyed, though he did not understand, their fine music. And he added one or two little mannerisms of his own, which were clearly intended to mark his love of ecclesiastical proprieties. Thus the present writer remembers that he used, with great solemnity and deliberation, to turn to the east at the Creed in Harrow School Chapel, where the clergy neglected to do so. It was the traditional mode of the Church of England, and that was enough for him. Again, we all know that he described the Athanasian Creed as “Learned science with a strong dash of temper”; yet I remember him saying, with an air of stately admiration, after Service on Ascension Day, “I always like to hear the Athanasian Creed sung. BUT ONE GOD sounds so magnificently, with that full swell of the organ. It seems to come with the whole authority of the Church.”

Then again the list of his favourite writers on religious subjects shows exactly the same taste and temper as was shown by his devotional practices—St. Augustine, that “glorious father of the Catholic Church”; “the nameless author of the *Imitatio*”; Bishop Thomas Wilson, whose *Maxims* and *Sacra* he so constantly quoted; Isaac Barrow, whose sermons he used to read to his family on Sunday evenings; Cardinal Newman, to whom he had listened so delightedly in undergraduate days.[58]

To pass from an account of a man’s religious sentiment to that of his daily life would in too many cases be an abrupt and even a painful transition; but in the case of Arnold, it is the easiest and most natural in the world. That which he professed he practised, and, as he taught, so he lived. From first to last he was true to his own doctrine that we must cultivate our best self in every department of our being, and be content with nothing less than our predestined perfection. In his character and life, “whatsoever things are lovely” were harmoniously blent.

Before all else he was a worshipper of nature, watching all her changing aspects with a lover-like assiduity, and never happy in a long-continued separation from her. Then his manifold culture and fine taste enabled him to appreciate at its proper value all that is good in high civilization, and yet the unspoilt naturalness of his character found a zest in the most commonplace pleasures of daily existence. Probably Art, whether in music or painting, affected him less than most men of equal cultivation; but there never lived a human being to whom Literature and Society—books



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and people—taking each word in its most comprehensive sense, yielded a livelier or more constant joy. “Never,” as Mr. John Morley said, “shall we know again so blithe and friendly a spirit.” As we think of him, the endearing traits come crowding on the memory—his gracious presence, his joy in fresh air and bodily exercise, his merry interest in his friends’ concerns, his love of children, his kindness to animals, his absolute freedom from bitterness, rancour, or envy; his unstinted admiration of beauty, or cleverness, his frank enjoyment of light and colour, of a happy phrase, an apt quotation, a pretty room, a well-arranged dinner, a fine vintage; his childlike pleasure in his own performances—“Did I say that? How good that was!”

But all these trifling touches of character-painting, perhaps, tend to overlay and obscure the true portraiture of Matthew Arnold. He was pre-eminently a good man, gentle, generous, enduring, laborious, a devoted husband, a most tender father, an unfailing friend. Qualified by nature and training for the highest honours and successes which the world can give, he spent his life in a long round of unremunerative drudgery, working even beyond the limits of his strength for those whom he loved, and never by word or gesture betraying even a consciousness of that harsh indifference to his gifts and services which stirred the fruitless indignation of his friends. His theology, once the subject of such animated criticism, seems now a matter of little moment; for, indeed, his nature was essentially religious. He was loyal to truth as he knew it, loved the light and sought it earnestly, and by his daily and hourly practice gave sweet and winning illustration of his own doctrine that conduct is three-fourths of human life.

We who were happy enough to fall under his personal influence can never overstate what we owe to his genius and his sympathy. He showed us the highest ideal of character and conduct. He taught us the science of good citizenship. He so interpreted nature that we knew her as we had never known her before. He was our fascinating and unfailing guide in the tangled paradise of literature. And, while for all this we bless his memory, we claim for him the praise of having enlarged the boundaries of the Christian Kingdom by making the lives of men sweeter, brighter, and more humane.

[Footnote 46: A saying attributed to Bishop Wilberforce.]

[Footnote 47: See the Introduction to his *Romans*, 3rd edition, 1870.]

[Footnote 48: See the Introduction to his *Romans*, 3rd edition, 1870.]

[Footnote 49: *University and other Sermons*, p. 175.]

[Footnote 50: W.E. Gladstone: *Later Gleanings*.]

[Footnote 51: *Essays in Criticism*. “Pagan and Mediaeval Religious Sentiment.”]



[Footnote 52: J. Armitage Robinson, D.D., *Easter Day*, 1903.]

[Footnote 53: Edward, 12th Duke of Somerset (1804-1885). Author of *Christian Theology and Modern Scepticism*.]



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[Footnote 54: *Literature and Dogma.*]

[Footnote 55: *Studies Subsidiary to the Works of Bishop Butler*, pt. i. ch. iii.]

[Footnote 56: *Rome and Romanizing.* By Arthur Galton.]

[Footnote 57: "Spade! with which Wilkinson hath tilled his lands," etc.]

[Footnote 58: See p. 61.]

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Matthew Arnold

By G.W.E. RUSSELL

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Extract from Preface:

"It was Arnold's express wish that he should not be made the subject of a Biography. This rendered it impossible to produce the sort of book by which an eminent man is usually commemorated—at once a history of his life, an estimate of his work, and an analysis of his character and opinions. But, though a biography was forbidden, Arnold's family felt sure he would not have objected to the publication of a selection from his correspondence; and it became my happy task to collect, and in some sense to edit, the two volumes of his letters which were published in 1895. The letters, with all their editorial shortcomings (of which I willingly take my full share), constitute the nearest approach to a narrative of Arnold's life which can, consistently with his wishes, be given to the world; and the ground so covered will not be retraversed here. All that literary criticism can do for the honor of his prose and verse has been done already, conscientiously by Mr. Saintsbury, affectionately and sympathetically by Mr. Paul, and with varying competence and skill by a host of minor critics. But in preparing this book I have been careful not to re-read what more accomplished pens than mine have written, for I wished my judgment to be unbiased by previous verdicts.

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EXTRACT

“In one thing Newman far surpassed Wesley: he was a man of letters equal to the greatest writers of prose his native country had brought forth. The Catholic Reaction of the Nineteenth Century claims its place in literature, thanks to this incomparable talent, side by side with the German mysticism of Carlyle, the devout liberalism of Tennyson, the lyric Utopias of Shelley, and the robust optimism of Browning. Newman is an English classic.”

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