
MATTHEW ARNOLD
CULTURE VS. ANARCHY

Matthew Arnold

Culture vs. Anarchy

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MATHEW ARNOLD
(A Biography)

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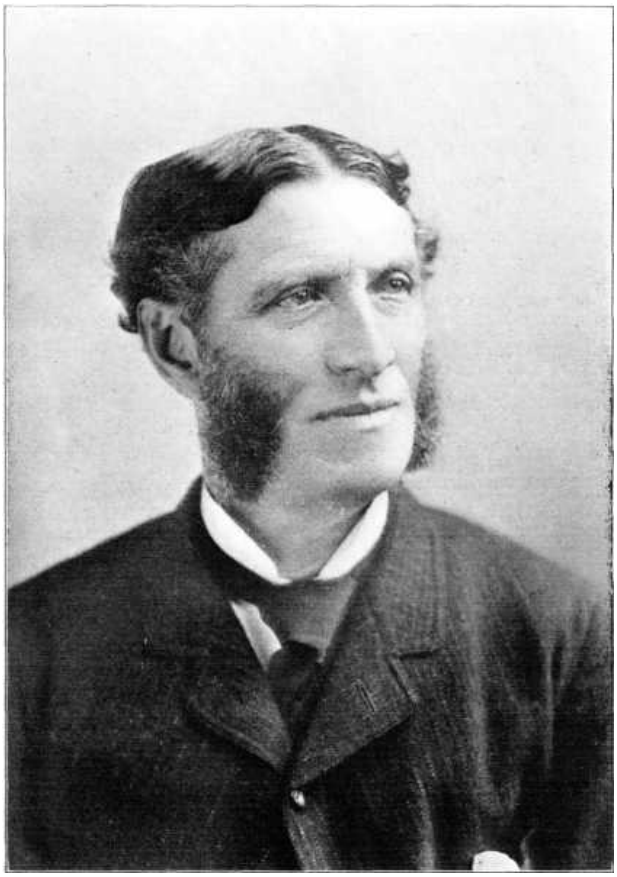

Matthew Arnold
From a Photograph by Sarony

OFFERED TO

MATTHEW ARNOLD'S CHILDREN

WITH AFFECTIONATE REMEMBRANCE

"OF THAT UNRETURNING DAY"

"We see him wise, just, self-governed, tender, thankful, blameless, yet with all this agitated, stretching out his arms for something beyond—*tendentemque manus ripæ ulterioris amore*."—*Essays in Criticism*.

PREFACE

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It may be thought that some apology is needed for the production of yet another book about Matthew Arnold. If so, that apology is to be found in the fact that nothing has yet been written which covers exactly the ground assigned to me in the present volume.

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 that 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. Yet in reality my functions were little more than those of the collector and the annotator. Most of the Letters had been severely edited before they came into my hands, and the process was repeated when they were in proof.

A comparison of the letters addressed to Mr. John Morley and Mr. Wyndham Slade with those addressed to the older members of the Arnold family will suggest to a careful reader the nature and extent of the excisions to which the bulk of the correspondence was subjected. The result was a curious obscuration of some of Arnold's most characteristic traits—such, for example, as his over-flowing gaiety, and his love of what our fathers called Raillery. And, in even more important respects than these, an erroneous impression was created by the suppression of what was thought too personal for publication. Thus I remember to have read, in some one's criticism of the Letters, that Mr. Arnold appeared

to have loved his parents, brothers, sisters, and children, but not to have cared so much for his wife. To any one who knew the beauty of that life-long honeymoon, the criticism is almost too absurd to write down. And yet it not unfairly represents the impression created by a too liberal use of the effacing pencil.

But still, 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 honour of his prose and verse has been done already: conscientiously by Mr. Saintsbury, affectionately and sympathetically by Mr. Herbert 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, as far as possible, unbiassed by previous verdicts.

I do not aim at a criticism of the verbal medium through which a great Master uttered his heart and mind; but rather at a survey of the effect which he produced on the thought and action of his age.

To the late Professor Palgrave, to Monsieur Fontanès, and to Miss Rose Kingsley my thanks have been already paid for the use of some of Arnold's letters which are published now for the first time. It may be well to state that whenever, in the ensuing pages, passages are put in inverted commas, they are quoted from Arnold, unless some other authorship is indicated. Here and there I have borrowed from previous writings of my own, grounding myself on the principle so well enounced by Mr. John Morley—"that a man may once say a thing as he would have it said, δὶς δὲ οὐκ ἐνδέχεται—he cannot say it twice."

G.W.E.R.

Christmas, 1903.

MATTHEW ARNOLD

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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

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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.

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 *simplicité*—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.

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 suitableness 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!

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."

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 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.

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.

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

CHAPTER II.
METHOD

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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. 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 distributer 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.

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 ailest 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—

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,"

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