THE LITERARY CRITICISM OF MATTHEW ARNOLD

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Moral earnestness was fundamental in Matthew Arnold's character. Brought up by that stern old disciplinarian of Rugby, Thomas Arnold, and living all his life in the eminently respectable and almost Pharisaic social milieu of the English upper middle classes, he could not help sharing the Puritanism which so strongly marks, as he himself pointed out, the Anglo-Saxon race. Biographers tell little or nothing about his childhood training, but it is not hard to imagine, if not the particulars, at least the principles which must have governed life in the genteel home at Laleham-on-the-Thames where he was born and given his early education. We read that besides the moral influences of the father and the sweet, chaste, typically English mother, there was the additional moral background in the family of a clerical uncle, a Reverend John Buckland. It would not have been surprising, therefore, had the young Matthew turned out in later life to be a High Church cleric of the most dogmatic variety, - a fine, dignified gentleman full of fine, dignified, English prejudices.

The point which commentators on Arnold have always either missed, or, if noticed, left for others to develop, is this, - why did he, who seemed, both by

birth and by circumstance, destined to live and die a conventional man, become the freethinker whom Dissenters were to brand as an anti-Christ and whom some serious critics of religion, society, and politics were to denounce irritably as an "elegant trifler"? Although the current idea today is that Arnold was a profoundly religious and earnest man, in his day a large number of attacks were published regarding his views, particularly those on theology. Also the accusations of conceit and snobbery levelled against him are surprisingly frequent, especially to those who know him better by his poetry. Where did this man, brought up in the best possible type of home, find these ideas which aroused half of the then existing clergy in anger?

The reason for this is that the influences of training and environment were more than usually successful: they produced in him a far deeper moralist than the average Englishman, and a far finer intellect. He was born, too, with excellent hereditary influences toward these things. It was not only impossible for him, therefore, to accept preconceived ideas uncritically, but impossible for him not to attempt a betterment of the intellectual and social conditions of his time. His morality was not the passive acceptance of life of the mere philosopher. He was too English, too much alive, too urgent to be satisfied with such a life.

He was one of those men who are deeply moved by the evil and ignorance of the world, and who must, therefore, obey the urgent dictates of their conscience to combat them hand to hand. The wisdom of passivity could not give expression to the crusading ardour to which his religious sincerity gave birth. He was the fighting priest of English letters. He fought because he was essentially a man of action. He was a priest because his life was dedicated "ad maiorem gloriam Dei".

The real depth of Arnold's moral nature was not fully recognized until the publication of his Notebooks by his daughter, Mrs. Wodehouse, in 1902. In these Notebooks, the collected thoughts and favorite quotations of over thirty years, we see the true character of the man; we are enabled to know what ideals lay nearest his heart; what interests, what aspirations he nourished. A reading of this irregularly kept, but very complete spiritual journal discloses a tremendous ethical earnestness. No matter what one's moral or literary views may be, it is impossible not to feel a deep respect for the seriousness and reverence of his soul. These are some entries selected at random, no comment on them is necessary: "Secundum propositum nostrum est cursus profectus nostri"(2), "He who re-

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(1) Matthew Arnold's Notebooks (Smith Elder, London, 1902); page 2.

sisteth pleasures crowneth his life"(1), "Soli servi crucis inveniunt viam beatitudinis et vera lucis"(2). One entry occurs again and again: "Semper aliquid certi proponendum est"(3).

There was a strong bond of kinship between Matthew Arnold and Marcus Aurelius. We cannot read Arnold's essay on the Meditations without being reminded of his own Notebooks; "he keeps watch over himself both that the great springs of action may be right in him, and that the minute details of action may be right also"(4). Both were deeply introspective; both were men of action; both were religious in the highest sense of the word; and there is in the characters of both, beautiful as they are, "something melancholy, circumscribed, and ineffectual"(5). The gentle sadness of Arnold's subdued poetry, and the great Roman emperor's sombre sobriety and resignation are closely related.

There have been two opposed lines of criticism against Arnold. The first was brought against him in his own time by those objectors to his Biblical views who called him everything down to an atheist. The second, characteristic of many who follow certain "modern" trends of thought (they always have been,

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(1) Notebooks; page 49. (2) The same; page 81.
(3) The same; pages, 2, 9, 17, 24, etc.
(4) Essays in Criticism (Everyman Edition); page 199.
(5) The same; page 198.

and always will be termed "modern") is voiced by such men as Frank Harris, who said of him, "The Puritan bias and prejudice debase and degrade his work", "the son of a cleric schoolmaster of the strictest set of British Pharisee". Both these types of accusation display a lack of comprehension which is almost unforgiveable. The former is merely ignorant dogmatism. As for the latter criticism, men like Harris fail to see that a man's being moral does not make him necessarily a Puritan, nor that his Puritanism does not imply Phariseeism. Furthermore, on what grounds can he dismiss Dr. Thomas Arnold peremptorily as a Pharisee? He lacked the sympathy which would have shown him that Matthew Arnold's criticism was purposive, and that as such, a moral bias was necessary to it. Nor did he appreciate the fact that Arnold, in the breadth and depth of his morality, not only transcended Phariseeism, but became its avowed enemy. Arnold's morals were lofty and profound, - too lofty for Dissent to recognize as such, and too profound for Harris even dimly to comprehend.

He had a fine intellect; he felt that he knew. And the consciousness of his powers added to

his virile ethical passion, made him, almost inevitably, a teacher. And a teacher, in the highest and noblest sense of the word, he always remained. He served his age, it is true, as public official, essayist, religious and political controversialist, and poet, but throughout all his work, - even in considerable portions of his poetry, - a consciousness of this highest of functions is present. His literary criticism was a definite contributory current to the stream of later nineteenth century thought; his educational work has resulted, due to his conscientious efforts, in many important improvements, particularly in secondary schools; the guns he modelled for his "guerilla warfares with journalism, radicals, theologians, and all devotees of Dagon"(1), though now in some measure obsolete, served in their day to excellent purpose against the enemies of light; his poetry is now established as one of the finer intellectual delights of English literature. But none of these triumphs fully characterize the true Arnold, for he was above all else a missionary. He had a passionate desire to improve the world in which he lived, and he made all his talents subservient to his mission. It can be said truly that his entire career was one of unremitting service to mankind, and that he planned his life and work with this

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(1) Frederic Harrison in the Nineteenth Century Magazine, March, 1896.

end in view. When we have grasped this fundamental trait in Arnold, many things are made clear. We can see why he dealt so often with subjects of transitory interest in spite of his theories to the contrary; why he spent so much time on matters of immediate and practical concern.

It has often been regretted that he did not write more poetry and literary criticism. But those who regret this forget that his time spent in other directions brought excellent fruit, - results for which we today can be thankful. He had a gospel to bring to the public, and there is much to be said for the courage and self-sacrifice of those who, like Arnold and, in Italy, D'Annunzio, have forsaken the pursuit of personal fame when the need arose, in order that they might throw their influence and their idealism into attempts at remedying the pressing evils of their own day. From a purely artistic point of view, this may be deplorable; even from the wider human point of view the poet may be found to have influenced more people in the end by adhering to eternal truths and unalloyed art. But surely the sincere and warm-blooded interest that tempts the artists into conflicts in the practical sphere is rather to be admired than regretted, especially in the case of Arnold whose excursions beyond the literary pale had

so much actual bearing on the problems of his day. He entered these disputes, not as an ineffectual angel with luminous wings, as poets are wont to do, but as a capable, clever, and business-like fighter, a master of gentle irony and rapier play. His dealings with the enemy were not only urbane, just, and gentlemanly; he had a capacity for attacking with singular effectiveness when the occasion arose. And it can always be said to his credit that he fought cleanly. He was out to teach the right whether the public wanted to be taught or not. And his importance lies in the fact that what he taught was, in spirit if not always in letter, right. There has been much criticism of his politics and religion, but whatever his arguments, however weak some of his propositions may have been, he is to be revered for ushering into England a fineness of spirit, a discriminating sense, and an intelligence that were sadly lacking before. He brought to bear a point of view such as had rarely been exhibited by Englishmen in the past.

This didactic enthusiasm manifests itself as well in his literary criticism. He never wrote merely to tell us what he thought. He tried to convince us that what he thought was right, and to convert us to his opinion. He never propounds facts in a dry academic manner, but wrote, rather, in an easy,

conversational, and persuasive manner at all times. He invented or adopted easily remembered phrases and took great care to emphasize them to such an extent that his reader could not possibly forget them. "His work in general", says George Edward Woodberry, "is skeletonized to the memory in watchwords, formulas, and nicknames, which when taken together, made up only a small number of ideas"(1). Whether or not his ideas were few is irrelevant at the present moment, but it is true that Arnold is remembered to most only by such expressions as "sweetness and light", "Hellenism and Hebraism", and "Philistines". "This evangelizing prepossession must be recognized in order to understand his method"(2); not only his method, but his choice of subject matter and his very style are traceable to this cause.

As a teacher, his great lesson to the public was, of course, his gospel of culture. An intelligent spirit applied to problems of religious, political and literary interest, he said, was the real panacea for the evils to which Englishmen were particularly subject. He was alarmed at the "wave of materialism" which flooded the country as a result of commercial prosperity; he deplored the in-

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(1) Literary Essays, G.E.Woodberry (Harcourt Brace and Company, New York); page 75.
(2) The same; page 75.

ability and indifference of the aristocracy; the complacent ignorance of the middle classes who had made money galled him; the condition of the poor, their "brutalization" as he called it, moved him to pity. At a comparatively early age these problems had started to bother him. Among the earliest of his published letters are statements such as these, "I see a wave of American vulgarity, moral, intellectual, and social, preparing to break over us"(1), "the deep ignorance of the middle and upper classes and their feebleness of vision becomes, if possible, daily more apparent"(2), "in conversation, in the newspapers, one is so struck with the fact of the utter insensibility of the people to the number of ideas and schemes that are now ventilated on the continent"(3). This was what hurt him - to him the "idea-moved masses" of France and Germany seemed so much superior to the English. He wanted to bring his own people up to the continental standards. By adding openness and elasticity of mind to the qualities they already possessed, he hoped that they might become worthy of the high esteem in which they held themselves. G. K. Chesterton

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(1) Letters of Matthew Arnold (Macmillan & Company, New York, 1896); Vol. I, page 5.
(2) The same; page 6.
(3) The same; page 10.

has expressed it well: "The weakness of pride lies in this, that oneself is a window.... Matthew Arnold found the window of the English soul opaque with its own purple. The Englishman had painted his own image on the pane so gorgeously that it was practically a dead panel; it had no opening to the world without... His chief of services may be stated thus, that he discovered for the modern English, the purely intellectual importance of humility"(1). Arnold accepted this opaqueness of the English soul as a direct challenge to himself, and dedicated his life to the task of mental window-cleaner. This early dedication of his life affected his entire career. Even his acceptance of the not very remunerative position of school-inspector was, it is certain, influenced as much by a realization of the good he could do there as by his desire to support Miss Lucy Wightman in the capacity of Mrs. Matthew Arnold.

Bearing in mind, therefore, this profoundly Hebraic conviction of the supreme importance of morality and the resultant desire to improve the world, we shall better be able to understand his criticisms of literature.

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(1) Essays Literary and Critical; page ix (introd.)

CHAPTER II

THREE PREFACES AND THE LECTURES ON HOMER.

I

In the preface to the 1853 edition of his poems Arnold makes his first venture into literary criticism. It is somewhat strange that this essay has rarely been reprinted in the various collections that have been made of his works. Saintsbury refers to it as "the most important critical document issued in England for something like a generation, and which as prefixed by a poet to his poetry, admits no competitors in English except some of Dryden's and some of Wordsworth's."(1) It was in this essay that Arnold outlined his position, - a position which he held throughout his career with few divagations and inconsistencies. After Wordsworth and Coleridge, criticism in England had suffered a relapse lasting about four decades. It became a forgotten art, and what samples of it we have in this period are mediocre. Shelley had convinced the public that critics were responsible for the early death of Keats; Byron had made them the subject of his powerful satire in English Bards and Scottish Reviewers; "Kill the dog - he is a reviewer!" the young Goethe had cried, - and popular

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(1) Matthew Arnold, George Saintsbury (Wm. Blackwood and Sons, 1899); page 33.

prejudice held them to be peevish hacks who were attempting to soothe the sores of their failure in creative work by decrying the productions of others. It was at this moment that Arnold came to remind the public of the higher functions of criticism, to theorize on literature and poetry, and to advise and guide poets that they might produce better work. This preface, therefore, along with his subsequent essays, awoke a new interest in criticism, and created a current of thought which has influenced writers right up to the present day.

There is another reason why this preface deserves a greater popularity than it now enjoys. Its style is better than that of any of his other prose works. He is no less didactic, no less eager to convince, no less anxious to have his words remembered, but he relies for the carrying of his message on the strength of his arguments and the beauty of his expression alone. He was addressing a select audience, not the audience of his polemical essays who needed to be tricked into remembering what he had to say, but one to whom scholarly language and sound statements meant more than nicknames and slogans. The style is free, easy, unaffected, and conversational, but it has a dignity not to be found

in much of his later work which is so often injured by repetitions, advertising tricks, and other oratorical and almost propagandist devices by which he impressed his gospel of culture on the public. From a purely artistic point of view this essay is worthy of preservation.

The 1853 edition contained the poems published in the anonymous volumes of 1849 and 1852 along with several important additions including Sohrab and Rustum and The Scholar Gipsy. There was one very important omission, Empedocles on Etna. The main purpose of the preface is to give his reasons for omitting this poem, and the explanation serves as a pretext for introducing some of his theories regarding the art of poetry.

The withdrawal of Empedocles on Etna is due, he says, neither to the antiquity of the subject (to which a certain class of critics will always offer objections), nor to a sense of having failed in the delineation at which he was striving. The subject is not antique to his mind because Empedocles' state of mind is distinctly modern in its sad scepticism. He then goes on to give us Aristotle's conception of art as an accurate and therefore interesting representation of life, from which we can derive enjoyment. The deeper

the tragedy, according to Aristotle, the deeper is the enjoyment. But there are situations which, though accurately represented, cannot give enjoyment. "They are those in which the suffering finds no vent in action; in which a continuous state of mental distress is prolonged, unrelieved by incident, hope, or resistance, in which there is everything to be endured, nothing to be done"(1). The story of Empedocles, he says, belongs to this class of situation and therefore is not one suitable for poetic representation.

He begins again to discuss antiquity of subject matter. He criticizes the critics who think that poets should cease drawing from the "exhausted past" and devote their attention to the present. The influence of Goethe on Arnold's thought already becomes evident. Working on the Aristotelian assumption that great actions are the eternal objects of poetry, he shows us that they are apart from time because of the permanence of human passions. He finds fault with the romantic tendency to make action a peg whereon beautiful phrases and lines may be hung. This is one of his most important critical dicta; he insisted on the predominance of the action over the expression of it. Expression, beautiful as it may be, must ever

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(1) Poems, Matthew Arnold (Longmans, Green and Co., London, 1854); page xii (introd.)

be subordinate to the greater unity of action. Otherwise the poem leaves, not a catharsis, a one satisfying emotion, but many disconnected touches of beauty, pathos, and emotion. The reader or hearer is confused; he may be pleasantly confused, no doubt, but he is confused none the less, and the poem therefore has not achieved its purpose.

Nobility of subject, says Arnold, will beget nobility of expression. He shows us this by telling us of the "grand style", which to his mind is the highest manifestation of the poet's art. When the poet feels with great intensity the situation he is attempting to imitate, it results, provided that the mind is kept on the subject rather than on the expression of it, in what he terms "grand style". Critics of Arnold have considered this to be one of the weakest things in his criticism; he failed to define it, and this has served as a pretext for many remonstrances. The "grand style", said Arnold, "is simple and well subordinated; it draws its force directly from the pregnancy of the matter it conveys".(1)

It has perplexed me that critics should cavil at what they term this lack of definition. Surely it is not difficult to see what he means! Whether consciously

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(1) Poems, Matthew Arnold; page xviii (introd.)

or not, we divide poetic beauty of the highest type into two classes. The first is the pure beauty of rich words, rich phrases, and perfect flow of rhythm, producing enjoyment of the deepest and happiest kind. It has the power of transporting the reader away from himself, - he basks under foreign suns, he shivers in dim weird dungeons, he loses his identity in the greater unity of nature, humanity, and the beauty of the universe. Action is not necessary to this type of poetry, - and some of the finest things in English literature are poems of this type. Under this class come such exquisite creations as that speech of Oberon:

> "That very time I saw but thou couldst not
> Flying between the cold moon and the earth,
> Cupid all arm'd:... "

Or Horace's ode beginning:

> "O fons Bandusia, splendidior vitro"

and Bridges' justly famous poem beginning:

> "Whither, O splendid ship, thy white sails
> crowding..."

Much of the poetry of Keats and of Shelley belongs to this class. An infinite number of quotations could be found to illustrate this type. And the entire poetic literature of Japan, which is <u>never</u> poetry of action, strives, as a rule, for this effect. The diction is ornate; the words are selected for their music; meanings of words need only to harmonize with, or, if poss-

ible, intensify the picture or mood being expressed; it is art pure and simple, and its sole object is to give joy or transport.

But the other class of highest poetic beauty in which the "grand style" occurs implies something more than art. "It derives its force directly from the pregnancy of the matter which it conveys." It implies that the poem deals with actions, and also with emotions. The greatest and deepest emotions are tragic, - the greatest actions for poetry are therefore tragic. And when the poet feels keenly the situation which he is seeking to materialize into words, then the intensity of his emotion transcends thoughts of ornament or beauty; the language becomes simple and direct; each word becomes drenched with tremendous emotional significance. The result of such passages on the reader is not transport, but <u>concentration</u>, - he feels with the poet; and this deep feeling causes in him that moral purgation which Aristotle said was the essential of great poetry. This is obviously what Arnold meant by "grand style"; a high form of expression resulting from such great emotions that it has not only poetic value, but moral value. This is why to Arnold's ethical mind the "grand style" seemed the highest and only form of poetical perfection worth the effort. Critics

who clamoured for definition showed total want of sympathy; a slight attempt to see things from his point of view was all that was necessary to understand him.

Arnold criticized those who made beauty of expression and language an end in itself because mere beauty could never have a moral value. It was not that he did not appreciate beauty, - he was too much of a Hellene for that, - in fact he was severely taken to task by journals such as the Edinburgh Review for being too much the aesthete. But moral values to him were the highest, and he measured everything in terms of its ethical importance.

One error which Arnold makes in his discussion of "grand style", however, is his statement that it arose "because expression was kept in the right degree of prominence"(1). Expression in the classics is, it is true, restrained and lofty, but that alone cannot produce the grand style in the sense in which he has described it. When the poet feels the situation sufficiently, the grand style ought to arise whether the rest of the poem is elaborate and ornate or severely simple. The great beauty of the classics is that the simplicity of all the language brings into greater relief the grandeur and

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(1) Poems, Matthew Arnold; page xviii (introd.)

and force of the noblest passages. Arnold is afraid that the poet who is over-attentive to expression is extremely liable will be so carried away by his rhetoric that he will miss the emotion altogether or else mar it by eclipsing it behind a mass of beautiful but superfluous lines. Arnold is here somewhat over-zealous in his strictures against rhetoric. In great poets we find again and again that ornate as their language may be, when a great emotion presents itself, they do full justice to it. A mountain is a mountain whether covered with trees or not; Shakespearean tragedy is a large, grand, and majestic mountain covered with trees; the tragedy of Greece is no less grand and majestic, but Greeks were content to leave its surface barren satisfied with the impression the mountain alone could produce. Arnold's thesis that restraint can produce or help to produce grand style is equivalent to saying that it is the absence of trees that makes the mountain.

None the less, the idea of the "grand style" is not only valid, but an extremely useful critical conception. Aesthete he was, yet he was strict regarding expression because he did not want it to interfere with the moral purposes of art. His conception of art was highly pragmatic and thoroughly humanistic. Poetry without practical value was never to him poetry in the

full sense of the word. To analyze this idea from a philosophical point of view and to inspect its implications regarding the meaning of life is futile as well as being irrelevant. But even from a purely aesthetic point of view the existence and validity of a "grand style" cannot be denied, since all good poets, including those with strictly un-moral ideas on art, occasionally send out emotional cries which can be described only in this way. It is, after all, the natural manifestation of a heart charged with feeling.

Next Arnold gives us that unforgettable description of Greek tragedy which I quote in full, for it is not only great prose, but it shows us how deep was his aesthetic appreciation in spite of his moral preoccupation. "The terrible mythic story on which the drama was founded stood, before he entered the theatre, traced in bare outlines upon the spectator's mind; it stood in his memory, as a group of statuary, faintly seen, at the end of a long and dark vista; then came the poet, embodying outlines, developing situations, not a word wasted, not a sentiment capriciously thrown in; stroke upon stroke the drama proceeded: the light deepened upon the group: more and more it revealed itself to the rivetted gaze of the spectator: until at last, when the final words are spoken, it stood before him in broad sunlight, a model

of immortal beauty."(1)

Arnold insisted on action as being the essential subject matter of poetry. He objects to romantic tendencies toward self-analysis in poetry, and to the type of criticism which demands "an allegory of the state of one's mind". He exclaims impatiently at this sort of thing. But we are grateful that he forgot his theories sufficiently to allegorize his own mind in Dover Beach , Rugby Chapel, Switzerland, Thyrsis, and quite a few other excellent poems. Putting himself too much into the hands of Aristotle, he failed to see that many poems which are deliberately self-revealing and introspective can have a definite power of purification. The objections which can be raised against his restriction of poetry to the depicting of actions are too obvious to require mention. Such a ban would not only exclude most existing poetry from the demesne of art, but would necessitate the dismissal from all claims to greatness those very efforts of his own muse by which he is best remembered.

On account of the lack of competent criticism in England, the writer must, Arnold continues, turn to models. He shows us that Shakespeare, the most

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(1) Poems, Matthew Arnold; page xix (introd.)

popular English model, has not always been a good influence. The richness of his expression has too often been taken to be his greatest quality, whereas in Arnold's mind, Shakespeare's manner of handling action his ability to make situations stand out in beautiful, bold relief, - his architectonicè, is the real test of his greatness. The Shakespearean tradition of beautiful language has been continued, but his tradition of structure has been forgotten. The result has been poems containing wonderful lines and wonderful music, but failing to produce any unified effect on the reader. He cites as an example Keats' Isabella of which he says: "This one short poem contains, perhaps, a greater number of happy single expressions which one could quote than all the tragedies of Sophocles... The action in itself is an excellent one, but so feebly is it conceived by the poet, so loosely constructed, that the effect produced by it, in and for itself, is absolutely null."(1) Since Shakespeare himself sometimes allowed his rhetoric to obscure the action, the ancients are our best models, for they are, "though infinitely less suggestive than Shakespeare, to the artist, more instructive".(2) We can learn from them three great things, the importance of subject-matter and the principles governing its

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(1) Poems, Matthew Arnold; pages xxvi, xxvii.
(2) The same; page xxix.

choice, restraint of expression, and the art of good construction or architectonice.

He closes the preface with a lecture on intellectual humility as the great necessity of his age. Pride in his own people and in his own times prevents the poet from being able to give men the highest pleasure in poetry. He calls to witness in support of his statement the judgments of Goethe and Niebuhr, and expresses his doubts as to the ability of the age to produce great actions suitable for great poetry because of the lack of moral grandeur in the life of his time, and because of the surfeit of material prosperity. The predominant note in the preface is his insistence on the moral purpose of art. To him religion was morality touched with emotion; poetry was morality touched not merely with emotion, but with beauty.

II

The tragedy of Merope is characteristic of the purposive and missionary Arnold. It was written to illustrate a point and to teach a lesson; it was meant to show the English public the beauties of Greek tragedy; it was an endeavour to raise the literary and artistic standards of his country; it had a mission, and like most things and people with missions, it was not an artistic success; it was typically the work of

the author of the 1853 Preface and of such works as On Translating Homer. In spite of the fact, however, that Merope was inadequate to its purpose, as in the case of his hexameter translations of Homer, his reasons for writing it and his explanations of his method were excellent, and deserve careful consideration. These explanations are set forth in a preface which we shall now examine, - a valuable critical document in that it applies his theories and beliefs more directly to the criticism of drama.

In explanation of his classical point of view he says,(1) "Greek art - the antique - classical beauty - a nameless hope and interest attaches to these words, even in the minds of those who have been brought up among the productions of the romantic school; of those who have been taught to consider classicalism as inseparable from coldness, and the antique as another name for the unreal. So immortal, so indestructible is the power of true beauty, of consummate form: it may be submerged, but the tradition of it survives; nations may arise which know it now, which hardly believe in the report of it; but they, too, are haunted with an undefinable interest in its name, with an inexplicable curiosity as to its nature". Respecting

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(1) The Preface to Merope in the Oxford Edition of the Poems of Matthew Arnold.

the classics as he does, his desire is to make known to the English their glory, to infuse their spirit into contemporary literature, and to give writers loftier and more exacting standards whereby to judge their work.

The method he chooses is to construct a Greek drama in English. In this way he hoped to reproduce, to some extent at least, the grandeur of Sophocles, Euripides, and Aeschylus. He believes it is easier to achieve this effect by producing an original work than by translating existing classics, for the author must be penetrated by his subject and "no man can be penetrated by a subject which he does not conceive independently." This sounds like an obvious truth, but is it? Have not men been penetrated with the works of other men and written great translations which in some cases have equalled the originals? And what is to be said for the occasional phenomenon of a translation which outdoes the original? His statement holds true, however, of the majority of translators. The other alternative - that of treating an existing classical drama independently - seems to him a too difficult task, for the ancients have handled their subjects so well that to treat them differently would be to treat them not as well. The only thing to do then is to select a subject not already dealt with in antiquity and to treat it as nearly as possible as they would have done. And if the author is

sufficiently gifted, sufficiently infused with the classical spirit, he will reproduce on the contemporary reader an effect approximately that of classical tragedy.

The advisability of his project may be questioned. There is no doubt that classical spirit will do the modern author a great deal of good, but it requires genius of expression as well as great erudition in a writer to produce a tragedy such as he wishes to attempt. In fact the requirements are so great that the task is hardly possible to a man living today. However, Arnold's enthusiasm will not permit him to believe the difficulties to be insuperable.

Since the Greeks did not treat all of their mythology in their drama, there is much left for our choice. He chooses Merope not only because he likes the story, involving the great scene of the recognition between the mother and son, but because Aristotle and Plutarch both spoke favorably of its dramatic possibilities. The conclusion to which he comes after discussing the Maffei, Voltaire, and later the Alfieri versions of Merope is that these men have followed traditions when it was better to break from it and broken from it when they should have followed. He believes in following traditions whenever possible, for it gives soundness to the story; to invent and add new material when the

traditional treatment is sufficiently impressive is unnecessary and unartistic. He himself proposes to break from tradition in one important particular. Basing his action on Aristotle's idea that a tragic personage should never be altogether bad, he will represent Polyphontes, the tyrant, not as a thorough villian as his predecessors have done, but as a "mere monster of cruelty and hyprocricy". By making his more human, the play will be more likely to produce pity and terror.

The main difficulty of the story of Merope from a dramatic point of view is that after the recognition the interest wanes, and the death of Polyphontes is not a particularly great event. But if the tyrant is depicted as a very human person who is brought to ruin by some vice of his nature, then we can feel pity to the end. The proposed characterization of Polyphontes has the advantage then of sustaining interest as well as making the tragedy keener. A third advantage is that the triumph of Merope and her son is tinged with awe and terror and the story is ennobled. Furthermore it gives Polyphontes motives of reparation and pacification in his desire to marry Merope, whereas in the other version there were no obvious motives, both parties being elderly. Maffei makes a ridiculous thing of this by causing Polyphontes to address Merope as a romantic and passionate young

man might do.

Arnold then gives us a short history of the development and technique of Greek drama and play production. His descriptions of the Greek stage, compact yet complete are excellent; in two pages he gives a rapid but comprehensive survey of themethods and spirit of classical drama in a manner only possible to one very intimately acquainted with his subject. Concluding his summary he shows that their form of tragedy, though not necessarily the only form, is the logical outgrowth and perfection of the primitive types of dramatic representation found in the worship of Dionysus in the earlier days. "The Greek tragic forms...satisfy in the most perfect manner, certain urgent demands of the human spirit". They convey deep and powerful emotions in the most direct and impressive manner, and produce "a sentiment of sublime acquiescence in the course of fate, and in the dispensations of human life". As for the chorus, it performed the function of an ideal spectator designed to guide the actual spectators and to make them feel their impressions and understand the action more thoroughly. Since the aim of the Greek tragedy was to create a profound moral effect, the chorus was indispensable. Its effect was "to combine, harmonize, to deepen for the spectator the feelings naturally excited in him by the sight of what was passing on the stage." Furthermore it was useful to give relaxation to the spectator from the intensity of the action, just as comedy

is used by Shakespeare in the midst of tragedy to give relief to overwrought feelings. Arnold thinks that the Greeks possessed a finer poetic feeling than Shakespeare because they managed the relaxation in this manner: "The noble and natural relief from the emotion produced by tragic events is the emotion produced by lyric poetry, not in the contrast and shock of a totally different order of feelings." This comparison with Shakespeare is hardly fair, for as he points out himself, there are many kinds of tragedy, and the Greek and Shakespearean belong to different worlds and hence different orders of thought. His conclusion in favor of the Greeks, therefore, can scarcely be considered valid. If we follow out his implication and attempt to draft a Greek chorus of fifteen on Macbeth, the results would be just as disastrous as adding porters , gravediggers, or clowns to Antigone; not only because we are used to Shakespeare and Euripides as they are, but because the respective ways in which they produce this relief from the intensity of action are the natural products of the spirit of their art.

As for metre Arnold intends to avoid what he considers one of the chief faults of all the Elizabethan poets excepting Shakespeare, - the habit of dividing the line in the middle. By this he hopes to attain a smooth oratorical flow such as characterizes

Milton. He is not going to attempt to reproduce the Greek choric measures. "So to adapt Greek measures to English verse is impossible.....I believe that there are no existing English measures which produce the same effect on the ear, and therefore on the mind, as that produced by many measures indispensable to the nature of lyric poetry." (It will be noted that the careful phrasing here leaves room for his theories of treating the epic hexameter.) Realizing with Pope and Dryden that choric odes cannot be reproduced in their original metres, he follows them in inventing a new metre which convey to him approximately the effect of the originals. He believes that they have not succeeded in catching the desired effect.

Saintsbury criticizes Arnold's choice of subject. He believes the story of Merope to be more suitable to Romanticism than to Classicism. He points out its main defect,-"The arresting and triumphant 'grip' of the tragic misfortunes of Oedipus and Orestes, the combination of the course of fate and the amartia of the individual, is totally absent."(1) H. W. Paul brings a charge of finickiness against Arnold for being delicate about the wooing of Merope by Polyphontes. As for the play itself both Paul and Saintsbury are agreed that it is of little value. It fails in its

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(1) Matthew Arnold, G. Saintsbury; page 62.

purpose because it is wooden; it is very Greek, very careful, but lifeless. Arnold was very anxious for its success judging by the number of references he makes to it in his letters.

Merope was written shortly after his appointment to the Oxford Chair of Poetry in 1857, and served more or less as an inauguration piece. As a result it sold well and received considerable attention, not, of course, very favourable. It was, in effect, an official manifesto of the Professor of Poetry, and as such, important. But the play itself need hardly have been written, for it demonstrates a point which had already been demonstrated by others, - that it is impossible to produce modern Greek tragedies.

III

The highest manifestation of great thoughts is great poetry. To Arnold poetry was the great guiding principle of conduct. Philosophy, science, and religion, great as they are, were subordinate to poetry because they are variables from which poetry took ideas of permanent value and transforned into lasting expressions of human experience. Poetry, then, has not only value for its own sake, but it has a divine function. "More and more mankind will discover that we have to turn to poetry to interpret life for us, to console us, to sustain us. Without poetry, our science will appear

incomplete; and most of what now passes with us for religion and philosophy will be replaced by poetry.... Our religion parading evidences such as those on which the popular mind relies now; our philosophy pluming itself on its reasonings about causation and finite and infinite being; what are they but the shadows and dreams and false shows of knowledge? The day will come when we shall wonder at ourselves for having trusted to them, for having taken them seriously; and the more we perceive their hollowness, the more we shall prize the 'breath and finer spirit of knowledge' offered to us by poetry".(1) This is the lofty conception of poetry found in the preface to Ward's English Poets, which we shall now examine.

Arnold insists, therefore, on lofty standards of judgment for poetry. Nothing which is half-true or untrue is for poetry. Poetry must distinguish between the excellent and inferior, for these distinctions are of tremendous importance. Unless poetry has truth it cannot fulfil its noble destinies. Poetry is "a criticism of life under the conditions fixed for such a criticism by the laws of poetic truth and poetic beauty".(2)

This famous definition of poetry has been the object of much attack and question. Because of its weaknesses, it has become more famous than sounder de-

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(1) Essays in Criticism (2nd Series) Matthew Arnold: (Macmillan and Company London 1918); page 3.
(2) The same; page 5.

finitions. "Criticism of life" as applied to poetry is the best known of all the famous Arnoldian slogans.

Before we can dismiss this definition as some critics do with, "Oh, yes, it has an element of truth", we must understand more clearly what Arnold meant by criticism. From reading his essays on literature, it is obvious that literary criticism did not mean to him what they mean to the hack writer or to the critic who interprets in terms of some particular religious or political bias. He has a higher and nobler conception of the critic's function, - it is to stand aside, to take a synoptic view of the entire field of literature, and to interpret individual works and authors in terms of universal and permanent truths. That is what he means by literary criticism. Therefore, criticism of life is not to be understood as a labelling and measuring of life, but as an appreciation of life and all that it implies with the living spirit, with sympathy, and with an understanding mind. Then, poetry can well be defined as a criticism of life. Even the poetry of escape can be included in his definition, for it, too, is negative criticism of life as well as being a positive expression of human idealism, aesthetic or utopian. The want of insight into what Arnold meant by criticism has led to many misunderstandings. A characteristic misinterpretation is that of H. D. Traill who terms the definition: "The

eminently natural utternace of a man who, though he was born both poet and critic, seems to have almost reached maturity in the latter character before he even began to essay his powers in the former." (1)

The definition is, however, decidedly weak. To say that poetry must be "under the conditions of poetic truth and poetic beauty" gets us nowhere. What is poetic beauty, and what poetic truth. We can surmise what the former is by his words on "liquid diction", "grand style", but poetic truth is more difficult. He banished all "charlatanism", - everything which is untrue or half-true from poetry, and what remains must be poetic truth. But how are we to determine what is charlatanism unless he gives us some criterion? What criticism of life is sound, and what unsound? These questions are left unanswered.

Arnold warns us that if we are to derive the fullest satisfaction and solace from poetry, we must make, as nearly as possible, a "real estimate" of what we read. There are two other kinds of estimate which are liable to spoil the real estimate and these are the historical and personal estimates. The former arises thus: "The course of development of a nations language, thought and poetry is profoundly interesting; and by regarding a poet's work as a stage in this course of

(1) Contemporary Review; June, 1888.

development we may easily bring ourselves to make it of more importance as poetry than in itself it really is..."(1). As for the personal estimate; "Our personal affinities, likings, and circumstances, have great power to sway our estimate of this and that poet's work, and to make us attach more importance than in itself it really possesses, because to us it is, or has been, of high importance."(2)

Arnold overstates the dangers of the historical estimate. It is a peril that besets historians, philologists, and other erudite people but rarely troubles the average reader. But the personal estimate is a pit into which all the world can fall very readily. It is profoundly true that we are all prone to exaggerate the importance of certain works and authors merely because they appeal to certain of our prejudices, weaknesses, or peculiarities. He says that the best way to discover what poetry is really excellent and beneficial is "to have always in one's mind lines and expressions of the great masters, and to apply them as touchstones to other poetry."(3) In further illustration of this now famous "touchstone theory" he gives us examples of lines and phrases which he believes can serve as measures whereby to judge other poetry. The quotations he gives

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(1) Essays in Criticism (2nd Series); page 7.
(2) The same; page 7.
(3) The same; pages 16, 17.

are varied in style and subject matter, but he says that they have in common "the possession of the very highest quality.... Both the substance and matter on one hand, and the style and manner on the other, have a mark, an accent, of high beauty, worth, and power."

The touchstone theory doesnot seem at first consistent with the statement in the 1853 preface to the effect that the highest manifestations of poetic genius (e.g. Shakespeare) lay, not in isolated single passages, but in the structure of the whole, - the architectonicè. How are the two apparently opposed standards of criticism to be brought into harmony? The answer lies in the original conception of the grand style. The grand style is a duality; it is a protest against romantic formlessness and also a plea for poetry of moral and practical value. The classical plea involved in the conception led to his insistence on architectonicè as the highest manifestation of art. The moral wisdom lying behind his criticism, his desire to judge literature in terms of life led to his conception of the grand style as an expression of intense emotion. This led to the touchstone method, - profound emotional outcries, - they are great poetry, and their accent is unmistakeable.

Arnold's weakness here is that he did not realize

for himself the duality of the ideas he held. And because he was blind to this duality he led himself into postulating the conflicting standards of architectonicè and the touchstone method. The pompously worded criticism of Arnold in the Edinburgh Review, saying that he had "no philosophy with coherent, interdependent, subordinate and derivative principles" (1) was not without grounds.

In speaking of the charm of Chaucer's movement and diction he says that they "make an epoch and found a tradition. In Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton, Keats, we can follow the tradition of the liquid diction, the fluid movement of Chaucer; at one time it was his liquid diction of which in these poets we feel the virtue, and at another time it is his fluid movement. And the virtue is irresistible". (2) But in spite of the high praise he has for Chaucer he does not place him as one of the great classics, to do so seems to him to be an error of the historical estimate. "He has not their accent. What is wanting to him is suggested by the mere mention of the first great classic of Christendom, Dante. The accent of such a verse as

'In la sua volontade e notra pace'

is altogether beyond Chaucer's reach." (3)

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(1) April, 1869.
(2) Essays in Criticism (2nd Series); page 29.
(3) The same; page 32.

Chaucer falls short of being a great classic, lacking the "high seriousness" that characterizes such men as Dante, Milton, and Shakespeare.

Historical estimates of poetry are also liable to warp our judgment of the age of Dryden which in its own opinion produced genuine classics as good as, if not better than its predecessors. Arnold asks the question, "Are Dryden and Pope poetical classics?" They are considered such in literary history, but Arnold disagrees [redacted], unjustly selecting for his purpose some mediocre quotations. He elaborates he made previously in his preface to Johnson's Selected Lives of the Poets, that the eighteenth century was essentially an age of prose. "We are to regard Dryden as the puissant and glorious founder, Pope as the splendid high priest, of our age of prose and reason, of our excellent and indispensable eighteenth century".(1) Their poetry is the poetry of prose and reason, for the inauguration of the qualities of regularity, uniformity, precision, and balance. But they have not, they cannot have, the "accent" of Dante and Milton, nor even the "large benignity" of Chaucer.

On the question of Burns, personal estimate is rife, and it is very difficult to make a real estimate of

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(1) Essays in Criticism (2nd Series); page 40.

him on account of the idolatry which surrounds his name. As an English poet, he is not important, but in the Scotch language is a tremendous force. Yet Scotchmen overvalue him because he deals with things of their life to which they are accustomed, things about which it is very easy for them to sentimentalize; they do not go to him with clear and open minds. Burns does apply ideas to life powerfully, he is capable of great criticism of life; but Arnold believes that he comes short of real poetic grandeur because he lacks, like Chaucer, that high seriousness. He does touch at times this high poetic note, but in the great majority of his best known works it is not found. "We have not ... a voice from the very inmost soul of the genuine Burns; he is not speaking from these depths, he is more or less preaching."(1) His good qualities are his ironic criticism of life, his energy, his pathos, his rapidity, and power. He believes the Jolly Beggars to be a superb poetic success matched only by Shakespeare and Aristophanes.

This short criticism of Burns is one of the really excellent examples of Arnold's critical style and his insight. The subject is a difficult one, colored as it is even today by national pride and sentiment.

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(1) Essays in Criticism (2nd Series); page 48

He has pointed out the great fault of Burns in his popular poems, - he has not kept a polite silence as to their quality, as we who are not Scotch are so often forced to do. He has accurately analyzed their principal shortcoming, - their lack of that genuine sincerity and depth of feeling which are found in lines like Arnold's own:

"The unplumb'd, salt, estranging sea,"

or like the impassioned cry of Wilde:

"Surely there was a time I might have trod
The sunlit heights, and from life's dissonance
Struck one clear chord to reach the ears of God."

or even the sincerity of Flecker's wistful greeting:

"O friend unseen, unborn, unknown,
Student of our sweet English tongue,
Read out my words at night alone:
I was a poet, I was young."

Arnold does not hesitate to point out Burns' preaching which he analyzes so acutely. He is generous in treating Burns' merits however, and quick to recognize stanzas, passage, and poems of genuine feeling. On Burns' behalf, however, it may be questioned whether or not he is lacking in "high seriousness" because he preaches, - the Scotch are notoriously fond of preaching, - it has been said that it is to them as natural and as important as eating and drinking, and their moments of greatness and highest seriousness are so occupied. But Arnold's praise of the Jolly Beggars is so sincere and high that it would bring blushes of pleasure to the most

ardent and fanatical worshipper of Burns.

His concluding remarks are interesting for time has proved his statements to be correct. "We are often told", he says, "that an era is opening in which we are to see multitudes of a common sort of readers and masses of a common sort of literature." He optimistically states, however, that good literature will never lose its currency and supremacy, "not indeed, by the world's deliberate and conscious choice, but by something far deeper, - by the instinct of self preservation in humanity."(1)

IV

The lectures On Translating Homer which Arnold gave at Oxford in 1860 have not a very high reputation as a scholarly work. His own attempts at translation were a failure; his estimates of other translators were often needlessly cruel; some of his assertions are far from being accurate. In spite of these shortcomings, however, the intelligent spirit which is evident throughout makes this work a valuable one, for by it, he threw much light on a vexed problem. His treatment and his methods were a definite contribution to English criticism though many of his conclusions were unsound. George Saintsbury points out in his book on Arnold that lectures along with those On the Study of

(1) Essays in Criticism (2nd Series); page 55.

Celtic Literature are of tremendous importance because they were probably his most influential works. He gives these reasons; firstly, they "applied the triple shock of lecture at the greatest of English literary centres, of magazine article and of book"(1), secondly because the subjects were of interest to all who cared about literature; thirdly because "for the first time we find the two great ancient and the three or four great modern literatures of Europe taken synoptically, used to illustrate and explain each other, to point each others defects and throw up each others merits. Almost for the first time, too we have ancient literature treated more or less like modern, neither from the merely philological point of view, nor with reference to the stock platitudes or traditions about it."(2)

The first interesting statement Arnold makes is that we can only judge the excellence of a translation by the effect it has on scholars of real authority and poetic feeling. If they react towards it as they do towards the original the translation may be said to be successful. They alone can say most truly whether or not the effect given is that of Homer or something different. The ordinary reader's judgment is not competent of the task. Arnold never made the [redacted] mistake

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(1). Matthew Arnold, G. Saintsbury; page 66.
(2). The Same ; [redacted] page 67,68.

of sentimental critics who claim that the people know best. He saw that public taste is no reliable criterion of excellence, and, here as in his Discourses in American, he advocates the judgments of the "saving remnant".

To Arnold, the four distinguishing qualities of Homer's genius are his flowing rapidity, his directness of syntax, diction, and evolution of thought, his clarity of substance, and lastly his nobility. The Cowper and Wright translations are marred by inattention to the first of these qualities; they are slow. Cowper's Miltonic movement is very fine; it is pregent and concise; but it is not Homer, who is rapid and flowing. Pope and Southy fail because their syntax is involved and intricate; Pope's artificiality and ornate style are admirable but he "intellectualizes" Homer so that we can never forget that it is Pope who is writing. Chapman is rapid but he "torments" Homer's ideas; he is noble and clear, but he gilds his work with conceit and fancies so that we might well imagine that Homer was a contemporary of Raleigh. It is interesting to note in this connection that Arnold compares the directness and simplicity of Homer with that of Voltaire. He treats Homer throughout, as Saintsbury observed, as a modern, and subject to criticism as much as any present-day writer.

We have seen that grand style arises "because

expression is kept in the right degree of prominence" and because it "draws its force directly from the pregnancy of the matter". He now makes the following statement: "Inspite of the perfect plainness and directness of Homer's style, inspite of the perfect plainness and directness of his ideas, he is eminently noble: he works entirely in the grand style."(1) There is a seeming inconsistency here, - in the former statement grand style was because of, in the latter it is inspite of simplicity of expression. Also his latter statement would seem to imply that every line of Homer expresses an emotion or sentiment keen enough to have a force and grandeur of its own, - which is, of course, absurd. Furthermore there is a new idea brought in, that of nobility.

The ideas, however, are not in reality as inconsistent as they would seem. If we look back into Arnold's character, and his purpose in criticism, we shall find an explanation of this seeming conflict of ideas. His criticism was, as we have seen, primarily a plea for art which would be a definite solace and consolation to us; secondly it was a protest against

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(1). "On Translating Homer", in Essays Literary and Critical, Matthew Arnold (Everyman Edition); page 228.

the vagueness and caprice which characterized the lesser and marred the greater poets of the romantic movement. He makes this point clearer in his Last Words on Translating Homer , a reply to Mr. Newman who had expressed his annoyance at Arnold's criticism by publishing an essay, Homeric Translation in Theory and in Practice. In "Last Words" he says of the grand style that it "arises in poetry when a noble nature, poetically gifted, treats with simplicity or severity a serious subject."(1) In this definition are found the two purposes, the moral and the classical, of his literary criticism, He did not mean that grand style was only an expression of intense emotion; grand style implies as well dignity of thought and word arising from the writer's "noble nature"; it implies the dignity of phrase arising from an observance of classic restraint; it implies "architectonicè", or nobility and beauty of construction resulting from the clarity of the writer's conceptions.

The discussion of grand style in the 1853 Preface centred on the lofty heights to which poetry could attain when not weighed down and obscured by romantic vagaries: hence his definition of grand style as a sort of pinnacle of emotional intensity. We defined only part of it here but he adds more in this essay. That is why the term "grand style" itself seemed incongruous; for before he made the rest of his conception clear, the term did not suit the definition. The

(1). Essays Literary & Critical , "Last Words", page 356.

expression of an intense emotion is not "grand" as we commonly understand the terms; it might be couched in the most commonplace colloquialism and still be impressive merely by the power of the emotions expressed. "Style" again is another misnomer; for what he terms "grand style" in the Preface might occur in any author writing in any style if he strikes a genuine and powerful emotion. But when the further limitations on the interpretation of this idea are made in these lectures, we begin to understand why it is "grand"; and to what extent it is a "style".

The dual nature of this critical conception leads him into another inconsistency. "The ballad style", he says, "is natural, and therefore touching and stirring; but the grand style, which is Homer's, is something more than touching and stirring, it can form the character, it is edifying...Homer and the few artistsin the grand style...can refind the raw natural man, they can transmute him."(1) Ballad-style, therefore, will not do to translate Homer. But the grand style of intense emotion is possible to ballad style; he admits this himself in a later work by quoting a poet of ballad-measures in illustrating grand style by example. Nevertheless ballad-poetry can not attain the heights of Homer because even if it shares with Homer the occasional glory of truly great emotional passages, it cannot share its grandeur

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(1). Essays, Literary & Critical; page 248.

because, as he would say hinself, it has not the "accent" of the truly great in the passages where the voice of emotion is not heard.

But, to return to translation Homer, Francis Newman, says Arnold, falls short in nobility, and is therefore inadequate in his translation. In showing the weaknesses of Newman, Arnold holds him up for some needlessly cruel inspection. He not only quotes unhappy passages, but goes on to say that he is deliberately withholding choicer bits in order to save his subject from ridicule. Nevertheless he certainly does not spare him from his own. The vigour of his attack does not suggest the mild, sweet reasonableness of the author of "The Literary Influence of the Academies."

After dealing with Newman's theory of translation, Arnold attacks the use of the expressions quaint, garrulous, prosaic, and low as applied to Homer. His attack on the word "garrulous" is interesting and instructive because it gives a great insight into Arnold's method. Despite his fundamental honesty, his earnestness led him astray at times and we find that many arguments which seem conclusive to him, are, on examination, mere sophisms. Quoting a selection from the mediaeval Romance of Richard Coeur de Lion, to illustrate what garrulity means to him, he asks us to contrast it with Homer to judge whether or not he was garrulous. A most unfair

test, assuredly; "Does Homer's manner make upon you," he asks, "even for one moment, an impression in the remotest degree akin to the impression made by the medival poet?"(1) No, of course; but the effects produced by Mark Twain and Matthew Arnold are not all similiar, yet both may be called garrulous.

In choosing a metrical form best suited to such a translation, Arnold arrives by a process of elimination at the hexameter. It is unnecessary to follow him through this process, but there is a very noticeable strain of sophistry throughout, - especially when he is rejecting the ballad-epic and blank verse as possible metres for the task. The immediate objection to his conclusion, of course, is that hexameters of real worth have never been written in English. He asserts that this objection can be met immediately and effectively by producing good hexameters; for since it has been done very sucessfully in German, there is no reason why it cannot be done equally well, if not better, in English which is the more rapid language. The use of this metre will preserve the movement and require least deviation from the construction and development of thought of the original.

The difficulty, however, that Arnold overlooks is that the hexameter cannot be employed sucessfully because there is no true spondee in the English language.

(1). Essays, Literary & Critical ; page 232.

Although German poetry, like English, depends almost entirely on accent, there is in the former a true spondee which makes a good hexameter possible. The lack of it in English makes it impossible to use it without either monotony or awkwardness or both. Arnold gives two further reasons for sponsoring this measure: first, that the best translation of Homer into English is a short passage by Dr. Hawtrey in hexameters; secondly, Clough's the Bothie of Tober-na-Fuosich has qualities which are quite Homeric. He believes that if one were to reproduce the effect of Clough without his roughness we could achieve something like Homeric movement. It is true of this vacation pastoral of Clough's that it is rapid and direct, and consequently easy to read; but as Arnold asked of the ballad-style, is the English hexameter noble? Clough's hexameters, of course, are not, nor are they meant to be anything but a serio-comic satire. Longfellow's Evangeline is out of the question- Arnold admits that himself. Kingsley's Andromeda is a much finer poem than either The Bothie or Evangeline but it has, although to a lesser degree, that rambling tone about it that characterizes Longfellow's work. Arnold's objections to ballad-measure apply even more aptly to the hexameter; "noble" poetry has never been written in it in English, although it may be possible; it has unfortunate associations with the"tenderly elegant" manner of Evangeline; its rapidity is liable, when not marred

by awkwardness to become jogging; lastly, as he himself pointed out, it has a tendency to become lumbering. He realizes the difficulties of this metre and it is characteristic of his wilfulness that he insisted on it in spite of them. "It is advisable," he adds, "to construct all verses so that by reading them naturally - that is, according to the sense and legitimate accent, - the reader gets the right rhythm; but for English hexameters, that they be so constructed is indispensable." It might be added that it is not only indispensable and difficult; it will be, by this very regularity of accent which he advises, dull and monotonous as even Andromeda is in many spots.

To To achieve the Homeric simplicity and directness, Arnold advises the use of loose and idiomatic grammar, - "a grammar that follows the essential rather than the formal logic of thought."(1) This is a most sound and excellent piece of advice. The model to be followed in this regard, he says, is the English Bible. The result of the observation of Homer's rapidity, diction, and quality of thought in translation will be nobility. He proceeds to illustrate by the example of his own attempts at translation. It is kinder to pass them by without comment.

The great value of these lectures lay not so much in the actual conclusions at which he arrived and the statements which he made as in the splendid criticism of Homer, Milton, and the English translators of

(1) Essays Literary and Critical; page 261

Homer. It was inevitable that he should to a certain extent be influenced by the "stock traditions" regarding Homer, but he laid his fingers on the real points of value with an insight never before shown in English criticism. Whereas the classics were accepted before Arnold's time with little or no attempt at real criticism, he brought to bear upon them a totally different point of view, - he treated them as he did modern writers, he analyzed the reasons for their excellence, - he did not accept them unquestioningly.

There was a novelty to his critical attitude. It was not that of a literary man struggling for a place among other literary men, - he sat apart from the entire panorama of literature and gazed upon it from above. Theoretically the relative importance or unimportance given by the accidents of time and place to writers did not matter. By sitting apart he attempted to see things in their true perspective. Without his width of culture this attitude would have been impossible. He was not consistent, of course, as we have seen by an analysis of these lectures, - he did not keep his own personality out of his work as much as he thought he did. But none the less he made a definite attempt to formulate and adhere to a critical attitude of the truest quality, and this in itself makes this book not only instructive to the individual reader, but of great importance in the history of English letters.

The style in which these lectures were written has not the same dignity of the First Edition Preface. We begin to see traces of that repetition which in later years developed into a vice. But none the less the style is charming, and, as is usual in Arnold, persuasive. So charming is he indeed that we cannot disagree with him without feeling an impulse to apologize for the necessity of questioning his statements. His attacks on Newman are pleasant reading to the disinterested reader, but the sympathetic will feel sorry for the victim. The rapier thrusts, as Arnold's controversial sorties have been often termed, are a little too frequent; it becomes a little more than a duel, - it degenerates into a prodding for the sake of prodding, and it is not surprising therefore to read resentment in Newman's Reply to Matthew Arnold.

CHAPTER III

ESSAYS IN CRITICISM

Arnold was not a complex character, and his criticisms lend themselves readily to classification and division. The essays with which I have dealt so far give in the main his principal critical theses. The remainder of his work, his Essays in Criticism, first and second series, his Mixed Essays, and his Lectures on Celtic Literature are merely expansions, elaborations, and applications of the principles which we have examined. Because of the clarity of his exposition, his straightforwardness and simplicity, he has been accused of having but a small number of ideas. This impression was heightened by the constant repetition we find in his work. On the contrary, however, Arnold was not lacking in ideas. His philosophical habit of mind made him reduce everything he thought into the simplest and most universal terms possible, and as a result, many related ideas which exist separately in less synoptic minds, are, in Arnold, brought together to form one single idea. He was immensely practical. He knew the value of his ideas and wished to give them the widest possible currency. He did not, therefore cloud his thinking with subtle distinctions and hairline interpretations, - we cannot even be sure that he was capable of that kind of cri-

ticism. What he did was to take these sweeping ideas and expound them in such a way as to make the reader remember. He illustrates his ideas as much as necessary, but rarely more. His moral desire to spread his gospel was far greater than any desire he may have felt to be respected as an encyclopaedic and expert scholiast. He endeavoured always to "apply ideas to life", and he invariably took the methods which made the application most effectively.

The Essays in Criticism are excellent examples of his critical aim and method. "Life itself is the one thing round which all the rest must centre. Matthew Arnold asks of Goethe or Wordsworth or Keats how we can today get hold of them to apply them to our lives."(1) The first series of the Essays in Criticism are a collection of nine essays which made their appearance in book form in 1865. They had previously appeared in various magazines during 1863 and 1864. A second edition was brought out in 1869, and a third in 1889. Since that time they have become a standard classic of English prose. Not only to the scholar, but to the general reader, this volume is one of the most interesting of all his works.

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(1) Critic Magazine, November 10, 1883.

The most important essay in this collection is the first, "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time". It is important for his defense of criticism and his theory regarding its place and function in literature. His defense is based on his belief that great literature is the product not only of the man, but of the time in which he lives. If, he says, there is not a large number of ideas current in an age, there will be no great literary genius. "The grand work of literary genius is a work of synthesis and exposition, not of analysis and discovery; its gift lies in the faculty of being happily inspired by a certain intellectual atmosphere, by a certain order of ideas, when it finds itself in them; of dealing divinely with these ideas, presenting them in the most effective and attractive combinations, making beautiful works of them."(1) The work of criticism, therefore, is to furnish the ideas and the intellectual atmosphere whence the poet may derive his inspiration. The lack of these qualities in an age causes genius to be ineffectual. "This makes Byron so empty of matter, Shelley so incoherent, Wordsworth even, profound as he is, yet so wanting in completeness and variety."(2) Pindar, Sophocles, and Shakespeare lived "in currents of ideas in the highest

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(1) Essays Literary and Critical; page 3.
(2) The same; page 5.

degree animating and nourishing to the creative power; society was, in the fullest measure, intelligent and alive."(1) It is criticism which causes this ferment of ideas to be; and without ideas poetry is not of lasting value. Poets are, therefore, not independent of their age as critics like Arthur Symons have claimed.(2) Nor is genius totally a divine gift. To Arnold genius is ineffectual without solid matter with which to work. And this solid matter, it is the duty of criticism to supply.

Because of this tremendously lofty function of criticism, it must be kept pure,- it must not be mixed up with practical and political considerations. As soon as ideas are given immediate practical application, they suffer. Real criticism must "try to know the best that is known and thought in the world" and thereby keep an ever fresh current of ideas in circulation; it must be thoroughly disinterested. It is here that Arnold makes his famous plea for curiosity as the great intellectual necessity, for without it, it is impossible to know the best. Furthermore Englishmen must turn their attention abroad, for a knowledge of the best requires far more than the mere knowledge of the best in English. The result of this acquaintance

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(1) Essays Literary and Critical; page 5.
(2) Modern Book of Criticism (Modern Library, Boni and Liveright, 1919); pages 107-111.

with the noblest ideas will be to keep man from self-satisfaction which not only vulgarizes him, but retards his progress.

Arnold terms an age of national self-criticism and self-culture an epoch of concentration. After the work of criticism is done and the epoch of concentration is over, then we have ages of expansion in which the ideas which have been nourished and strengthened will express themselves in great literature. When criticism accomplishes such a task, there is in it a sense of creative activity which is almost as gratifying as the actual production of masterpieces.

To illustrate the necessity of critical effort in England he tells the story of the contented and proud Mr. Roebuck, and of Wragg who was in custody.(1) Although illustrations such as this detract from the merit of his writings as disinterested critical endeavours, they add greatly to the pleasure of reading him. His scorn for the unintentionally immortalized Mr. Roebuck, his sarcasm at "the best breed in the whole world", and his digression on Wragg are well written. Arnold had the happy faculty of attacking effectively but without bitterness. His severest onslaughts, his most indignant outbursts, cutting as they are, never take entire possession of him; he never

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(1) Essays Literary and Critical; pages 14, 15, 16.

loses control over his emotions; his rhetoric never runs away with him; he is always master of the situation. The result is that even if we cannot altogether sympathize with his arguments at times, we are never wearied.

The nobility of his conception of criticism is best summed up in his own words. "In an epoch like those (of Aeschylus and of Shakespeare) is, no doubt, the true life of literature; there is the promised land, towards which criticism can only beckon. That promised land it will never be ours to enter, and we shall die in the wilderness: but to have desired to enter it, to have saluted it from afar, is already, perhaps, the best distinction among contemporaries; it will certainly be the best title to esteem with posterity."(1)

The second essay of this volume is a plea for intelligence and intellectual conscience, just as the first was one for knowledge and disinterestedness. In "The Literary Influence of the Academies" he establishes the intellectual superiority of the French over the English. The English are characterized by two excellent qualities, energy and honesty. Their moral attributes have led to great works, and their energy

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(1) Essays Literary and Critical; page 25.

has made them greater. English poetry is supreme as a result of the energetic qualities which have resulted in genius. But we lack, he adds, the flexibility, the discrimination, and the quickness of intelligence which characterize the Greeks and the French. He quotes Sainte-Beuve, "In France the first consideration for us is not whether we are amused and pleased with a work of art or mind... What we seek above all to learn is, whether we were right in being amused with it, and in applauding it, and in being moved by it." Arnold admires what he terms the Frenchman's "conscience in intellectual matters".(1)

The Edinburgh Review which was excessively fond of attacking Arnold, took violent exception of this matter of literary conscience and Academies. "Are men who judge by rule and line more infallible than men who judge by intuition? Do not Shakespeare, Milton, Bunyan owe their popularity to the instinct of the multitude asserting itself in defiance of the conventional rules prescribed by authority?"(2) It is an old argument. To draw an analogy from ethics, Dewey says of civil laws that they are the concrete expressions of a nation's moral conscience. The nation's conscience advances and great legislators make concrete

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(1) Essays Literary and Critical; page 30.
(2) Edinburgh Review; April, 1869.

these advances in higher forms of law. So in literature, criticism is an expression of a nation's literary conscience, and with the advance of a nation's ideas which finds expression in newer and more effective literature, criticism advances to include these higher ideas. Law is always a step behind civilization, but that is no reason for anarchy. Similarly when literature transcends prescribed authority, the remedy is not an abolition of criticism, but a widening of the outlook of criticism. Judgment from intuition will be, both in morals as in Aristotle, and in literature as in Arnold, excellent only insofar as the mind is habituated, by the observance of the tenets of moral law in the former, and the tenets of judicial criticism in the latter, to the recognition of excellence.

With regard to the latter part of the criticism of the Edinburgh Review, we need only remind ourselves that Green, Webster, and Beaumont and Fletcher were just as popular in their day as Shakespeare, and that if we are to judge by the "defiance of conventional rules prescribed by authority" we must include among the truly great the pseudo-literary morons such as Fannie Hurst, Elinor Glyn, and Harold Bell Wright, whose simperings are outselling a thousandfold the productions of our de la Mares, our Hardys, and our Masefields.

To continue, because of the predominance of the moral and poetic qualities in English thought, our poetry, Arnold claims, is far above our prose. His defence of academies is in reality another version of the plea for the better employment of the higher functions of criticism which he gave in the previous essay. With such an authoritative critical body as an academy in England, the prose qualities of flexibility and quickness of intelligence would be given more place in English letters. "Shakespeare and our great Elizabethan group were certainly more gifted writers than Corneille and his group; but what was the sequel to this great literature, this literature of genius, as we may call it, stretching from Marlowe to Milton? What did it lead up to in English literature? To our provincial and second-rate literature of the eighteenth century. What, on the other hand was the sequel to this literature of intelligence, as by comparison to our Elizabethan literature, we may call it; what did it lead up to? To the French literature of the eighteenth, one of the most powerful and pervasive intellectual agencies that have ever existed, - the greatest European force of the eighteenth century."(1)

Here is his free, friendly, direct and conversational style which he used with excellent effect

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(1) Essays Literary and Critical; pages 33, 34.

throughout his propagandist writings. There is again that slight strain of sophistry which runs through all his work. The "provincial and second-rate literature of the eighteenth century" is the very movement which he praised so highly in his preface to Johnson's Selected Lives of the Poets as having those very prose qualities of intelligence which he is here advocating. In fact, as he himself pointed out, this epoch of concentration of the eighteenth century was just what was required after the tremendous epoch of expansion which preceded it. English genius was performing wonders in that epoch of expansion, and those not as highly gifted, exuberant in the triumphs of their superiors, were revelling in the unbridled license which their masters had won for them by their excellence. A checking influence of prose and reason was necessary, and Dryden, Pope, and Johnson supplied in a manner quite as good as that of any academy. But none the less his statement is true, that Englishmen are not remarkable for the intellectual sensitiveness and acuteness which the French without doubt have. This deficiency is what makes men like Walter Pater so rare in English literature.

There is, therefore, in prose and minor literature, much vehement and valueless work which too

often sinks into ridiculousness. This fault even creeps into the work of better writers, and the result is a note of provinciality. There is "a want of simplicity, a want of measure, the want of just the qualities that make prose classical."(1) This disturbing note of provinciality, this indulgence in caprice and extravagance, is painfully obvious even in some of the pages of Burke. In Addison, too, while his style is Attic in dignity and simplicity, there is provinciality of thought. The remedy for this suggests itself in an organization such as the French Academy. "Where there is no centre like an academy, if you have genius and powerful ideas, you are apt not to have the best style going; if you have precision of style and not genius, you are apt not to have the best ideas going."(2) After unintentionally supplying an excellent example of provinciality of style in the above, he quotes further examples from other writers.

Great as he believes the advantages of an academy to be, he would not advocate the immediate establishment of one in England. His conclusion is that we ought to check for ourselves the faults to which the absence of such an organization leaves us open. It is not unlikely that Arnold derived a great deal of amuse-

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(1) Essays Literary and Critical; page 39.
(2) The same; page 41.

ment from the attacks which he brought upon himself with this essay, for his detractors, by misconstruing it as a plea for the immediate foundation of an academy, and by making the characteristically provincial and obvious attacks on the one existing in France, proved more effectively than he did himself that such an institution would be of tremendous advantage to the country.

Arnold's choice of subject matter for his next two essays has often been deplored as a mistake in judgment. It is true that too much importance has been attached to two obscure writers who otherwise would not have been remembered; we should have preferred by far to read his remarks, say, on Browning, on Schiller, or on Darwin, rather than on that pathetic couple, Maurice and Eugenie de Guerin. We find, however, an interesting remark on poetry: "The grand power of poetry is its interpretive power; by which I mean, not a power of drawing out in black and white an explanation of the mystery of the universe, but the power of dealing with things as to awaken in us a wonderfully full, new, and intimate sense of them, and of our relations with them."(1) Here again is his application of ideas to life, and his judgment of things by pragmatic standards.

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(1) Essays Literary and Critical; page 51.

The personal estimate enters largely into these two essays. The praise for the Guerins which Saint e-Beuve, who was Arnold's acknowledged master in criticism, gave, brought his attention to them. He was touched deeply by the delicacy of Maurice, - it seems to me that Arnold here mistook his weakness for classic restraint. The domesticity of Eugenie was also attractive to Arnold, as we can see by his own letters from Fox How many years later. Her cats and pidgeons, and all the details of dountry life interested him greatly. He becomes almost sentimental about them.

The first page of the essay on Heinrich Heine which follows contains this excellent statement: "To ascertain the master current in the literature of an epoch, and to distinguish this from all minor currents, is the critic's highest function; in discharging it he shows how far he possesses the most indispensable quality of his office, - his justness of spirit."(1) Following up this thought he finds he disagrees with Carlyle who has found the most important stream of tendency resulting from Goethe to be the romanticism of Tieck, Richter, and Novalis. In Arnold's opinion, Carlyle overvalued these romanticists at the expense of

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(1) Essays Literary and Critical; page 102.

Heine who was destined to destroy their influence. "Heine was noteworthy, because he is the most important German successor and continuator of Goethe in Goethe's most important line of activity. And which of Goethe's lines of activity is this? His line of activity as 'a soldier in the war of the liberation of humanity'".(1) The truth of this statement is somewhat dubious, but it shows again Arnold's tendency as a critic to look rather for human values rather than aesthetic.

Arnold greatly admired the ideals and methods of Goethe's life and work, and he traces the influence of his work on Heine. It is in this essay, too, that the famous discussion of philistinism occurs. Heine was a great anti-Philistine, and as a fellow liberator of humanity Arnold found many points of contact with him. Much of his later work, his Culture and Anarchy, his Friendship's Garland wase dedicated to the crusading cause. This gave him great sympathy for Heine in spite of the things in Heine's character which were unattractive to him.

In spite of the emphasis he places on the ideational side of Heine's life, Arnold was not insensible to the beauty of his lyrics. His prose translations of some of the poetry are sympathetic and charming. His appreciation, too, of the Hebrew element in

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(1) Essays Literary and Critical; page 103.

Heine is beautiful. Arnold was a great admirer of Jewish literature and spirit. His Notebooks are full of quotations from Hebrew scriptures, while his essay on Hellenism and Hebraism , on Spinoza, his long and sincere friendship with the Rothschilds, and his admiration for all Hebrew culture speak for themselves.

In spite of the occasional jarring notes in the style, this essay is a great one. Its critical method is an excellent example of the application of the principles of the first essay in the volume. He neither criticizes Heine unjustly nor exalts him beyond his merits. He looks closely enough at his work to discover its faults and to deplore them, but he maintains a true perspective and sees Heine in his true relation with the spirit and influences of the age in which he lived. His love for Heine in spite of his faults is the unanswerable refutation to those who accuse Arnold of Phariseeism. It is true that an occasional sign of moral squeamishness creeps into his work, but essentially his morality was of a higher, more universal order. There is no more positive proof of this than a comparison of his vigorous and unstinted admiration of what was good in Heine, with the abhorrence in which even now the Pharisee holds Shelley, Keats, and Byron because of the irregularities in their lives.

The next essay, "Joubert, or a French Coleridge", like the one on Heine, introduces an author to the English public practically unknown before. Arnold was a master at the art of condensing biographies into the shortest space, of making them interesting in spite of their brevity, and of avoiding that catalogue effect which is the defect of most attempts of this kind. He does this particularly well with Joseph Joubert, touching lightly on the major factors in the formation of his character and the determination of his philosophy, and giving us a rapid insight into his outstanding qualities.

In comparing Joubert to Coleridge, we get an account of his feelings towards that eccentric English genius. "That which will stand in Coleridge is this: the stimulus of his continual effort, - not a moral effort, for he had no morals, - but of his continual instinctive effort, crowned often with rich success, to get at and to lay bare the real truth of his matter in hand, whether that matter were literary, or philosophical, or political, or religious; and this in a country where at that moment such an effort was almost unknown." (1) There is too much of the Philistine, which Arnold never totally shook off in spite of his endeavours, in his judgment of Coleridge's morals, but the rest of his remarks are sound. Coleridge as a critic had a width of vision and a universality hardly to be found elsewhere in

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(1) Essays Literary and Critical; page 152

English literature. Arnold might have gone much farther than he did in praise of his intellectual qualities.

Arnold overestimates the influence which Joubert had on letters in his time. Joubert was more profound, though less well-informed than Madame de Stael or Chateaubriand, yet these latter had greater influence. This greater depth of Joubert is what Arnold most appreciated, and he brings it out well, both in regard to his religious views and his literary standards. The comparison with Coleridge is an excellent idea, but there are many points of contrast which Arnold might well have brought out to better effect. The subjugation of the main purposes of criticism to his propaganda for intelligence is more obvious in this essay than usual. His quotations from the Pensees are splendidly chosen, and his sketch of his work is charming. On the whole, however, the essay lacks the sparkle and warmth which is found even in those on the Guerins.

But the last paragraph contains a fine dissertation on his favorite idea of literature as a criticism of life. "Only two kinds of authors are safe in the general hovoc. The first kind are the great abounding fountains of truth, whose criticism of life is a source of illumination and joy to the whole human race forever,- the Homers, the Shakespeares. These are sacred person-

ages, whom all civilised warfare (of criticism) respects. The second are those whom the out-skirmishers of the new generation...recognize, though the bulk of their comrades behind them may not, as of the same family and character with the sacred personages, exercising like them an immortal function andlike them inspiring a permanent interest. They snatch them up, and set them in a place of shelter where the oncoming multitude may not overwhelm them. These are the Jouberts."(1) We might add with more justification than in the case of the Jouberts, the Arnolds. The essay closes with a prediction that the rhetorician of the Philistines, Macaulay, will not "outlive the author's transient day".

The last two essays in this volume, "A Word More About Spinoza", and "Marcus Aurelius", are, to a student of character, the most interesting of the series. The manner in which a man reacts to the teachings of great philosophers, the preferences he shows in studying them, the extent to which he absorbs them to his own advantage, these give us an excellent insight into his mental and moral qualities.

Arnold was naturally in sympathy with Spinoza's attempt to find a reality in rational and unchanging laws of which the flux and change of the natural world are the expression. We can see in his defense of Spinoza

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(1) Essays Literary and Critical; page 172.

against charges of atheism a defense of his own views which he expressed later during the ten years "in the wilderness"(1) from 1867 to 1877. With the more technical questions such as the relating of phenomena and nounema, which is one of the most interesting points in Spinoza's metaphysics, he does not deal. But he carries out remarkably well his idea of interpreting a philosophy which is found in the following: "A philosopher's real power over mankind resides not in his metaphysical formulas, but in the spirit and tendencies which have led him to adopt those formulas. Spinoza's critic, therefore, has rather to bring to light that spirit and those tendencies of his author, than to exhibit his metaphysical formulas."(2)

As in the case of Spinoza, Arnold found many things in common with Marcus Aurelius. This essay is scholastically more satisfactory than the former, because Marcus Aurelius is more within Arnold's reach than Spinoza. But it has this defect not found in the other, that it is more given over to the propagation of his own ideas; it is more an exposition of Arnold, with Aurelius as a text, than an exposition of Aurelius himself. Those who love Arnold's work will always entertain a particular regard for these two essays. The moral Philistinism which drove Spinoza out of both Jewish and Christian circles, and which holds Marcus Aurelius in disrepute

(1)MatthewArnold, G. Saintsbury; pages 132 to 166.
(2)Essays Literary and Critical; page 181.

for having persecuted the early martyrs, is attacked, not in his usual anti-Philistine, rapier-thrust manner, but in a fine, impassioned, distinguished and dignified prose which commands not only attention, but deep respect.

This first volume of Essays in Criticism did not, as we have seen by the fact that a second edition did not appear for four years and a third for another twenty, create a sensation. But competent judges of literature were immediately impressed with it. It was the most outstanding work of its kind since Hazlitt, and with the exception of the second series of the same work, there has been nothing since in the nineteenth century to equal it. It is only within the past twenty-five years that the effect ofhis works really begins to be felt, and the vast amount of excellent criticism which appeared in that time is largely attributeable to Arnold's influence.

There is a lapse of over twenty years between the first and second series of the Essays in Criticism, during which time Arnold was engaged mostly in the thankless task of reforming religious and political thought in England. His return to pure literature was a happy occasion for criticism, for after this he did some excellent work. The Mixed Essays which marks the turning point back from politics to literature contains a few good critical pieces. But the chief work of this latter period was the second series of Essays in Criticism.

Here he is much less concerned with practical considerations than in his first series. He has almost swung back to the purely literary point of view of the early prefaces. There is this difference, however, that an occasional echo of his evangelical struggles is heard, and the habits of his crusading have made him even less "disinterested" than he was before. As might be expected, there is greater maturity to his judgment as well as an increased dogmatism.

In style this volume is decidedly better than his polemical writings. He is again addressing the literary audience, and not the general public of his Culture and Anarchy. His habit or repetition has hardened, but he does not allow it to mar his work with the excesses of it which we find elsewhere. We find oftener that limpidity of prose which lends such charm to his writings.

The first essay in this series is one with which we have already dealt, - "On the Study of Poetry". In the next, the essay on Milton, he reminds us first that the great excellence of Milton is his perfection. "In the sure and flawless perfection of his rhythm and diction he is as admirable as Virgil or Dante, and in this respect he is unique among us. No one else in English literature and art possesses the like distinction .... From style really high and pure Milton never de-

parts."(1) He accuses Shakespeare, as in the 1853 preface, of "false and fantastic diction".

I am as much opposed to the deification of Shakespeare as Arnold, but I do not believe that he was always just to his work, - not even in the lofty praise he gives to his architectonicè. It is true that there is at times false and fantastic diction to be found, - it is found in all Elizabethan drama. But whereas it is a positive vice in some writers, it occurs so rarely in Shakespeare that it is hardly sufficient basis for criticism. What Arnold really objected to in his plays was his lawlessness and apparent disorder. Arnold recognized the structural ability, but he did not recognize it fully enough to see that it is in this very lawlessness and conflict that Shakespeare's grand charm lies. The fact that he managed to organiza the disorder and incongruity of characters such as Jacques and Audrey, Caliban and Miranda, Gobbo and Portia, Bottom and Theseus, Sir Toby Belch and Viola, with all their varying humours, that makes him richer, fuller, and more glorious than any other playwright who ever lived. Fàlseness and fantasy fulfil a minor role in the pageantry of his drama even as his loftier moments of "high seriousness" fulfil the major roles of providing the great moral inspiration which gives his work sublimity.

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(1) Essays in Criticism (2nd Series); pages 61, 62.

It is rather difficult to determine exactly what Arnold admired most in Paradise Lost, for whereas he makes a strong case for Milton's structural power in this essay, in "A French Critic on Milton" in the Mixed Essays he quotes with apparent approval Edmond Scherer's opinion that structurally it is unsound, and that, "unlike Dante, who must be read as a whole if we want really to seize his beauties, Milton ought to be read only by passages".(1) Milton apparently satisfied Arnold both from the point of view of architectonice and abundance of "touchstones".

But when Arnold claims that we can derive from Milton alone of all English writers the true spirit of classical poetry, he rather overstates his case. Milton, he says, is so steeped in classical lore, so imbued with the classical spirit, that to the rising thousands of English readers who will be unable to read the classics in the originals, he alone will be able to convey a true idea of antique culture. This is somewhat dubious, for Milton's all-pervading ethical prepossession is hardly Hellenic, in spite of the enormous classical erudition which his works contain. The flow and grand simplicity of Greek narrative poetry is far better felt in Arnold's own Balder Dead and Sohrab and Rustum; the spirit of Greek tragedy, and ancient conceptions of morality, can be

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(1) Mixed Essays, Matthew Arnold (Macmillan and Company, New York, 1879); page 265.

gained through translations of the originals; the classical grace and delicacy of aesthetic feeling is more evident in Keats, Landor, and in the spirit of Pater's work, than in Milton.

The essay on Thomas Gray is a good example of how Arnold occasionally "rendered himself stupid by sprinkling himself with the holy water of Fixed Principles".(1) We have seen how he placed Gray above Chaucer in "The Study of Poetry". Here he endeavours to establish his greatness more firmly, - the task is not an easy one. For by limiting great poetry to those poems which have "high seriousness" he was forced to extol Gray beyond his merits. It is evident throughout that his enthusiasm is artificial, - he is obviously bolstering Grays' reputation.

He quotes six men to support the view that Gray is a classic, but we find that the man who sought to "know the best that is known and thought in the world" is confronting us with the opinions of utterly incompetent judges. He firmly establishes the excellence of Gray's character and the wealth of his erudition. But he cannot explain away the scantiness of his production. He comes, therefore, to the following conclusion: "Gray, a born poet, fell upon an age of prose..... Gray, with the qualities of mind and soul of a genuine poet, was

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(1) Visions and Revisions, John Cowper Powys; page 155.

Gray, one feels, I think, in reading his poetry never quite secure against the false poetical style of the eighteenth century. It is always near at hand, sometimes it breaks in; and the sense of this prevents the security one enjoys with truly classic work.... Therefore, to call his poems 'exquisite examples of perfectly English work wrought in the spirit of classic art' seems to me an exaggeration." This is precisely the exaggeration of which he is himself guilty. (1)

Arnold is hardly enough of an "illuminator of literary twilights" to do justice to Keats. This next essay, while it analyzes some of the more outstanding factors in his life and work, does not show the penetration into the many rich subtleties of his character that more sympathetic critics display. It is interesting in this respect to compare and contrast Arnold's work to that on the same subject by Robert Lynd in Books and Authors. Arnold sufferes by the comparison. The manner in which Lynd relates the various influences in Keats' life, and shows their effect on his poems, and the delicacy of his delineation of Keats' character are somewhat beyond Arnold's range of sympathy. There is something of the Puritan's over-emphasis on Keats' sensuousness in the opening paragraphs.

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(1) Mixed Essays; page 201.

He can see no credit to Keats' in his Fanny Brawne affair, and regrets the publication of his letters to her, although he quotes from them and gives them even wider publicity. He condemns the passion as "underbred and ignoble, as of a youth ill brought up".(1) He does not attempt to discover what effects, good or bad, she had on his work, and leaves her unnoticed. This is not good criticism, for no account of Keats is complete without a recognition, or at least some discussion, of the fact that ~~al~~most of what is immortal in his work was written while he was undergoing the sufferings caused by his excessive love for her. To dismiss this part of his life as the vulgar manifestation of the sensuousness of an ill-bred surgeon's apprentice is both unsympathetic and unintelligent.

But Arnold does not stint his praise of the things in Keats which he admires. He quotes abundantly from letters showing the earnestness, the sincerity, the conscientiousness, and the beauty of Keats' character. He had insight enough to perceive that his worship of beauty was more than a sensuous thing. "'The yearning passion for the beautiful', which was with Keats....the master passion, is not a passion of the sensuous or sentimental man... It is an intellectual and spiritual

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(1) Essays in Criticism (2nd Series); page 103.

passion."(1) Arnold interpreted him as a man with the makings of a tremendous character within him, but who was circumscribed in his development by birth and environment, and halted before his ultimate attainment of spiritual grandeur by early death. "But in shorter things," he adds,"where the matured power of moral interpretation and the high architectonics which go with complete poetic development, arenot required, he is perfect."(2) He was very keenly conscious of the "fascinating felicity" of Keats' expression.

The essay on Wordsworth, after much digression, arrives at the following conclusion: "Dante, Shakespeare, Moliere, Milton, Goethe, are altogether larger and more splendid luminaries in the poetical heaven than Wordsworth, But I know not where else, among the moderns, we are to find his superiors."(3) This estimate is much too high. To put him above Heine, Schiller, Browning, Tennyson, Spenser, Hugo, Shelley, and Keats, is an exhibition of dogmatism totally unjustified by the reasons he gives.

"Wordsworth's poetry is great because of the extraordinary power with which Wordsworth feels the joy offered to us in nature, the joy offered to us in the simple primary affections and duties."(4) As for his

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(1) Essays in Criticism (2nd Series); page 115.
(2) The same; page 120.
(3) The same; page 160.
(4) The same; page 153.

style, "Wordsworth did great things with this nobly plain manner... Nature herself seems...to take the pen out of his hand, and to write for him with her own bare, sheer, penetrating power.... His expression may often be called bald...but it is as the mountain tops are bald, with a baldness which is full of grandeur."(1) These are great points in Wordsworth's favour, - they give him a place of honour and distinction in English letters, - but Arnold's own criticism in a previous essay, which I have quoted, that he was "so wanting in completeness and variety" prevents him from being placed in a position as high as is claimed.Furthermore, Wordsworth did not possess that "sweet ease and liquid movement" which is one of the greatest manifestations of poetic art, - many would claim it to be the highest. But Arnold admits himself content with the grandeur of Wordsworth's baldness. He was not, however, insensitive to beautiful and ornate expression as his remarks on Chaucer and Keats have shown. His high praise of Wordsworth savours somewhat of the attitude of the anti-tobacco pamphleteer whom he condemned in Discourses in America for saying that it is an argument against a thing to say of it that it produces an agreeable sensation.(2) The Puritan rarely feels quite right about enjoying agreeable sensations, - and it is probably something of this feeling

(1) Essays in Criticism (2nd Series); pages 158, 159
(2) Discourses in America, Matthew Arnold (Macmillan and Company, London, 1885); pages 200, 201.

that makes him so fond of Wordsworth.

Another reason Arnold give for his greatness is that while other poets "attain the distinctive accent and utterance of the high and genuine poets," and while they have "treasures of humour, felicity, passion, for which in Wordsworth we shall look in vain", he "deals with more of life than they do; he deals with life, as a whole, more powerfully."(1) Why Wordsworth, with his limited outlook, and his lack of richness and universality of interest, dealt with "more of life" than the other excellent poets he mentions is impossible to understand, especially when he was handicapped by lack of humour, the great essential towards seeing things in their right proportions, by lack of felicity, by virtue of which even inimical ears are persuaded to listen, and by lack of passion, without which poetry can never inspire. But the infrequent best of Wordsworth's poetry and the deep feeling towards nature were tremendously attractive to Arnold. He did truly deal with one aspect of life in a profound and inimitable manner. But Arnold has allowed, it seems, the personal estimate to enter into his judgment.

Byron, Arnold believes, in his next essay, is not sufficient of the artist to produce finished works which can stand as complete poetic wholes. He has no

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(1) Essays in Criticism (2nd Series); page 148.

structural power, and his manner of writing forbade his development in this direction. But he has charm, an additional charm from his method, for it gives him "a wonderful power of vividly conceiving a single incident, a single situation; of throwing himself upon it, grasping it as if it were real and he saw and felt it, and of making us see and feel it too".(1) Therefore, very justly Arnold concludes that Byron is excellently adapted to being published in selections.

In spite of the things in Byron that were naturally repellent to Arnold's nature, his looseness, his carelessness, his morals, and his inordinate self-esteem, he is very generous in his estimate. Arnold was not a bigoted critic; his attitudes toward Keats, Byron, Tolstoi, and even toward Daudet's Sappho, are much more lenient than we would be led to expect. In this essay, he seems to feel the discrepancy of an avowed moralist and religious writer admiring Byron, and he supports his statements with ample quotations from Goethe, his favorite port of refuge.

Underneath was a great crusader against the cant and mental bondage of British Philistinism. And underneath the hypocricy of Byron's constant theatricals Arnold sees a real, vigorous, earnest, and passionate love for an

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(1) Essays in Criticism (2nd Series); pages 169, 170.

unattainable yet glorious ideal. He describes Byron enthusiastically and eloquently, - "This passionate and dauntless soldier of a forlorn hope, who, ignorant of the future and unconsoled by its promises, nevertheless waged against the conservation of the old impossible world so fiery battle; waged it till he fell, - waged it with such splendid and imperishable excellence of sincerity and strength." (1) There is only one point on which he considers Wordsworth superior; whereas Wordsworth found "permanent sources of joy and consolation for mankind", Byron could not. These two, therefore, he believes will be the greatest inheritance the twentieth century will receive from the nineteenth. Arnold never appreciated fully his two great contemporaries, Tennyson and Browning, - he was, it seems, too convinced to the wretchedness of the condition of the England in which he lived to believe that great poets could live in such an atmosphere. This essay on Byron, however, is one of his most interesting. Nowhere else does he forget his somewhat overdelicate moral scruples quite as thoroughly. He penetrates into the dapper Don Juan and discovers behind the manquerade a fellow-giant-killer who had fallen in mortal combat with the Philistine. There is deep sincerity, therefore, and sympathy in his criticism.

(1) Essays in Criticism (2nd Series); page 202

The next essay as literary criticism is highly unsatisfactory. It is a review of Professor Dowden's Life of Shelley, and we look in vain for any comment on the poetry. But Arnold's interpretation of the life of Shelley is interesting, and while it adds little to an understanding of him as a critic, it represents what seems to be a common fallacy about Shelley, a fallacy existing in the minds of many readers who have been bothered by the incongruity between the polygamous, immoral Shelley, and the angelic Shelley.

There are two main ways in which Shelley is interpreted, - the first refuses to believe he was immoral and blackens the characters of the women in his life, especially Harriet Westbrook. The second regretfully accepts his wickedness and wonders what to do with the angel in his composition. Arnold takes an intermediate course; "I propose to mark firmly what is ridiculous and odious in the Shelley brought to our knowledge by the new materials, and then to show that our former beautiful and lovable Shelley nevertheless survives."(1)

This, the accepted tradition about him since the revelation in Professor Dowden's book, is unstatisfactory, - we are put in the position of a Stephano, confronted by a monster that speaks in two different voices from under the one gabardine. Arnold

(1). Essays in Criticism (2nd. Series); page 213.

cannot help regretting that the revelations about Shelley's life were published. The idealized and charming picture of him which Mrs. Shelley had given in her first edition of 1839 of her husband's poems, he feels, has been scarred and stained,

No one has successfully accounted for Shelley, not even André Maurois. Maurois has told his story, in Ariel, charmingly and well, but has left us with no solution. It would be interesting to read an account by such a man as A. L. MacLaurin, - from a pathological point of view.

The key to Shelley's inconsistencies lies, it seems to me, in the fact that he was, to the end of his days, a child. There is ample evidence, even in Arnold's own short sketch, of the mental immaturity of Shelley. In information, in ideas, in reading, in all the acquired qualities, he was a man; but, in mentality his growth was never completed, - everything he did points to this. His tremendous indignation at worldly intolerance when Harriet was estranged from her friends because of her friendship for him, his boyish ardour and confidence that led to his The Necessity of Atheism, his calf-love romance that led to his early marriage, all these are indicative of a childish mentality. His father stopped his allowance, "and Shelley determined to visit 'this thoughtless man'...and to 'try the force of truth' upon him". And when Hogg had tried to make

love to Harriet, "Shelley was shocked, but after a 'terrible day' of explanation from Hogg, he 'fully, freely pardoned him', and promised to retain him still as 'his friend; his bosom friend', and 'hoped soon to convince him how lovely virtue was.'"(1) Again his scheme "to devote himself towards forwarding the great ends of virtue and happiness in Ireland", from which Godwin immediately dissuaded him, and the "enterprise for recovering a great stretch of drowned land from the sea",(2) - all this is the expression of a boyish impressionability and instability, and a child's faith in the goodness and sincerity of the world.

His complicated relations with women which have brought sorrow to so many of his admirers are but further corroborations of this fact. In his childish innocence he idealized every woman who took his fancy. He found in each of them a new and rich personality; he enhanced them by the force of his imagination, and fondly believed that they "understood" him, - that they could share his utopian dreams and live on air. Adult emotions such as jealousy, avarice, conceit, world-weariness, cynicism, personal ambition, were entirely foreign to his nature. When he naively tells Harriet, therefore, of his new and wonderful passion for Mary Wollstonecraft, he is surprised

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(1) Essays in Criticism (2nd Series); page 220.
(2) The same; pages 221, 222.

and hurt that she cannot understand, - that she does not rejoice with him in his new soul-mate. His seemingly callous desertion of her, followed immediately by a letter to her from France asking her to join him and Mary in Switzerland, was not callousness, but the thoughtlessness of a child. His letter could only have been written by whom to whom jealousy was quite inconceivable. Arnold says of this letter that it is bête, and ascribes it to the deficiency of humour in Shelley. Shelley was deficient in humour, but I do not follow Arnold's reasoning here. Throughout this affair Shelley is comparable to a child who leaves a precious and beloved toy abandoned in the street, attracted away by a newer. He loves the newer with the same or perhaps a greater attachment, but he does not see why he cannot keep the old treasure as well.

Taken baldly, the story of Shelley's life may seem disgusting, but when we read of his erratic ways, his wild schemes, his foolish generosity, his impulsiveness, of how, when his grandfather died, he went to Sussex and sat outside the door reading Comus while the will was being read because his irate father would not let him in, of his belief in his own "impassioned pursuit of virtue", of how Mary Wollstonecraft had to keep eternal watch over him, - we cannot feel disgust. We have, in fact, always known he was a child, but have never been able to analyze our feelings. It is his

childishness that has kept us charmed in spite of the cruel things we know about him, and our attitude has always been to excuse him, no matter how severe our disapproval, because we have felt that he was not a responsible being. Again, his lack of humour is the distinct mark of the childish mind. The child has no true humour in the adult sense of the word. He may have an appreciation of the grotesque, of wit, and of the ridiculous, but humour as Arnold meant it, and as we mean it, is purely an adult characteristic. Arnold makes a strong point of Shelley's ability for self- deception. This again is common charactistic of the child mind.

Arnold's description of Shelley as a "beautiful and ineffectual angel, beating in the void his luminous wings in vain"(1) is an excellent summary of Shelley's whole character. He was and always will be beautiful, and an angel, - all children are. They are as well, ineffectual, for the world of the imagination without knowledge and unddrstanding, that is, the world of the childish imagination, is necessarily a "void" insofar as the real world is concerned.

Unsatisfactory as his essay is as literary criticism proper, it is an almost perfect example of the literary causerie in English Literature. Arnold owes much to Sainte-Beuve in this genre, but in this, he outdoes his master. His style is admirably lucid, his

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(1). Essays in Criticism (2nd. Series); pages 203,204.

exposition is charming, his opinions are set forth in an interesting and thoroughly engaging manner. Without creating offence anywhere, treating everyone justly, beautifully contemptuous of those who preserve Shelley's virtue by damning Harriet, urbane and sympathetic, Arnold here has produced a most polished piece of work. It is Arnold at his best, his thought, his feelings, his nuances, are careful and delicate; his prose technique is masterly.

Arnold's opinion on "sexy" literature is particularly interesting today when this question is given so much prominence. In the following essay, which is Count Leo Tolstoi and his Anna Karenine, he tells us the story of the book and adds: "We have been in a world which misconducts itself nearly as much as the world of a French novel palpitating with 'modernity'. But there are two things in which the Russian novel- Count Tolstoi's at any rate- is very advantageously distinguished from the type of novel now so much in request in France. In the first place, there is no fine sentiment, at once tiresome and false. We are not told to believe, for example that Anna is wonderfully exalted and ennobled by her passion for Wronsky. The English reader is thus saved from many a groan of impatience. The other thing is yet more important. Our Russian novelist deals abundantly with criminal passion and with adultery, but he does not seem to feel himself owing any service to the goddess

Lubricity, or bound to put in touches at this goddess's dictation. Much in Anna Karenine is painful, much is unpleasant, but nothing is of a nature to trouble the senses, or to please those who wish their senses troubled"(1).

There is considerable evidence of the influence of Victorian bigotry in his narration of the story, but his principle here is generous and sound. He quite transcends, as I have said before, the narrowness of the Pharisaic morality, - but living in the nineteenth century, and mingling in that social milieu, his application could not always be as just as his theories.

There is an interesting description of Flaubert's method. "Madame Bovary is a work of petrified feeling; over it hangs an atmosphere of bitterness, irony, impotence; not a personage in the book to rejoice or console us; the springs of freshness and feeling are not there to create such personages.....He (Flaubert) is cruel, with the cruelty of petrified feeling, to his poor heroine; he pursues her without pity or pause, as with malignity; he is harder upon her himself than any reader even, I think, will be inclined to be."(2).

The essay on Tolstoi was among Arnold's very last, published almost exactly a year before his

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(1) Essays in Criticism (2nd. Series); pages 274,275.

(2).The Same ; page 276.

death. It is greatly to his credit that at such a late period in his life he should have ventured into an entirely new field, - that of novels and novelists. This, and the following essay on Amiel, like that on Shelley, are excellent causeries, written in a most delightful style.

Speaking of Matthew Arnold, the Critic Magazine(1) says, "It was the German sense of intellectual freedom and the French feeling for grace, superadded to English love of sound essentials that attracted us." Although this second series of Essays in Criticism was not at that time published, these three qualities are more in evidence here than in his preceding works. Furthermore, more than in any other work, Arnold "triumphangly illustrates the fact that literature must be treated with the living mind and the living spirit, that it can neither be labelled nor measured... He set again and again the example of the highest humanism."(2) In these two quotations is the unanswerable reply to those who criticize Arnold for treating works and ideas rather than men. With his English love of sound essentials he draws on his sources and subjects only insofar as

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(1) May 20, 1882.
(2) Cities and Men, Ludwig Lewisohn (Harper and Brothers, New York, 1927); page 34.

they are able to contribute to the better conduct and enjoyment of our own lives. All else is irrelevant for his "evangelizing prepossession" is uppermost. His humanism is the striking factor throughout his work, but nowhere is it as full, benevolent, and rich as in these last essays.

CHAPTER IV

OTHER CRITICAL WORKS

The lectures on The Study of Celtic Literature published in 1867, shortly after the appearance of the first series of the Essays in Criticism stand out for two reasons. First, there is the amplified and full account of his theory of racial characteristics and their effects on literature and national expression. Second, the subjedt itself is highly interesting, and the immediate practical results of this work, followed within a few years by the great Celtic Renascénce leave no doubt whatever as to the effectiveness of his work. Arnold here is frankly beyond his depth in these lectures, and much criticism has been directed against him for his lack of accurate philological information. He is somewhat like "the mediaeval story-teller pillaging an antiquity of which he does not fully possess the secret"(1) to whom he refers in the course of his remarks. But for all his shortcomings, he efficiently awakendd public interest in Celtic literature, and succeeded in making Englishmen feel complacently indulgent by acquainting them with names such as Taleisin, Mabinogion, and Cymris, just as he made them complacently cosmopolitan by familiarizing the Continental names such as Leopardi, Joubert, Heine, and Senancour. This, after all, was the thin edge of the wedge required to open up a more general, more pro-

(1). The Study of Celtic Literature, Matthew Arnold, (Everyman); page 54.

found interest in the lore of the Celts, and the value of his services in this direction can hardly be measured. In spite of all these faults, however, these lectures are very interesting to read, even today when there has been so much good Celtic literature produced that our minds do not need prodding in this direction. The Celtic Renascence was helped tremendously by this series of lectures, for almost immediately after they were given and published in book form, a chair of Celtic Language and Literature was established at Oxford. An interest was aroused in the Celtic influence to a sufficient extent so that when the group of Yeats, "A. E.", Synge, Martyn, George Moore, and Douglas Hyde began to operate in the nineties, their task was made considerably easier.

To write on Celtic Literature without the knowledge of Gaelic, Erse, or Cymric, was a daring venture. He was fortunate in having the scientific and accurate notes of Lord Strangford, the philologist, to eke out his meagre knowledge and to add weight to his statements. Nevertheless, his limitations were bound to result in some highly questionable generalizations. Therefore, as accurate reasoning and on accurate fact, this book is a failure. More than ever he takes recourse to sophistry to strengthen shaky situations. He has not enough philology at his command to establish definitely England as being "a vast obscure Cymric basis with a vast visible Teutonic superstructure." And his endeavours to establish

this by the alleged discovery of "Celtic magic" in English literature is far-fetched, especially when the examples he quotes are Shakespeare and Keats.

The Celts are sentimental, - they are "always ready to react against the despotism of fact. They have too, a love of beauty, and deep spirituality. The Norman genius is notable for its talent in affairs. The Celtic defect is vagueness and ineffectualness; that of the Norman is hardness and insolence."(1) He attempts to discover these in the English genius, which he believes to be a composite of the two. He contrasts the English with the Germans. The Germans have not the Norman ability to grasp what is most germane to the matter immediately on hand nor have they the Celtic sensibility and delicacy of perception. Our relationship with the Germans, therefore, is much more remote that with the Celts. The Germans have not a turn for style which is, he explains "a peculiar recasting and heightening, under a certain condition of spiritual excitement, of what a man has to say, in such a manner as to add dignity and distinction to it"(2) This sensibility is one of our debts to our partially-Celtic origin. Furthermore, there is a melancholy in English literature which is distinctly Celtic. All this is very plausible, especially from his pen, but it is far from being authoritative. It amounts, after all, to a series of conjectures based

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(1). The Study of Celtic Literature; page 91.

(2) The Same; page 107.

on highly debateable statements.

Arnold incidentally enumerates four methods of treating nature, - an excellent classification. The first he calls the conventional method, in which the eye is not on the object, but rather on the treatments of former writers. Then there is the faithful way in which "the eye is on the object, but that is all you can say". The third way is the Greek in which the eye is on the object, but there is added brilliance and lightness. Such a method is often found in Keats. The fourth is the magical way of treating nature, in which the eye is still on the object, but magic and charm are added. This, too, is found in Keats, in passages such as

"White hawthorn and the pastoral eglantine
Fast-fading violets cover'd up in leaves."

The first four essays in Mixed Essays are devoted to religious and political subjects, but the remainder are literary. This volume made its apperance in 1879, and, as I have remarked before, it marks the end of the controversial period in Arnold's life. It has been said that this return to literature was due to a sense of failure in his avowed missionary purposes. Some have suggested that he was disgusted. I cannot believe this was so,- he had too much good-natured urbanity for that. Furthermore,from this date onward, his work is noticeably more generous, more than ever suffused with "sweetness and light". His return to literature

was due, therefore, not to a sense of failure, not to a sense of disgust, but to a realization of the truth of his own teachings in essay on The Function of Criticism, - that immediate and practical application of ideas to life is not the function of the critic, and that "making known the best that is known and thought in the world" is, after all, although slow, the most effective method of bringing about the reforms at which he aimed.

The first essay of literary interest is a review of Stopford Brooke's A Primer of English Literature, in which he gently corrects the errors of judgment made in this volume, and thereby gives expression to some of his own views. His first criticism is on one of his favorite themes, - the weakness of the English to overrate themselves. He sets down some of Stopford Brooke's remarks as being "too much to the tune of Rule Britannia", - this idea has been used in this connection many times since. He lays down the proposition, very justly, that the four requirements of a primer should be clearness, brevity, proportion, and sobriety. Here is his habit of judicial criticism, - he always sets up certain standards whereby to evaluate the work. It is one of Arnold's great virtues that although he makes measuring rods, he never becomes a slave to them. Even when his standards lead him astray to a certain extent as they did in his criticism of Gray and Chaucer, he still retains the ability to treat his subjects with the "living spirit". For in spite of the numerous suggestions he makes for the improvement of the Primer, he does not

stint praise where praise is due.

The essay entitled A French Critic on Milton introduces the senator and writer, M. Edmond Scherer, to the English public by comparing his literary judgments with those of Macaulay. Arnold gives a description of Macaulay's style. "A style to dazzle, to gain admirers everywhere, to attract imitators in multitude: A style brilliant, metallic, exterior; making strong points, alternating invective with eulogy, wrapping in a robe of rhetoric the thing it represents; not, with the soft play of life, following and rendering the thing's very form and pressure."(1) This, he says, accounts not only for the popularity of Macaulay's essays, but for much of what he asserted. Macaulay often sacrificed strict truth of matter for effect. He is a "great civilizer" in that he attracts by his brilliance many undiscriminating minds to take an interest in letters, - many who would otherwise have remained without the slightest appreciation of the world of ideas. When people are in this undiscriminating stage of development, an appeal to their love of rhetoric as in Macaulay, or an appeal to their conventionally held concepts of life and morality such as is found in

(1) Mixed Essays ; page 238.

Addison, are the most successful, But Arnold desires higher truth than this.

As a contrast with the effulgence of Macaulay, Arnold exhibits the soundness and thoroughness of Scherer's critisism, his insight into the real nature of Milton, his analysis of the Greek and the Hebrew elements of Paradise Lost. Here, says Arnold, we have a real critic, - not one who dazzles with glittering praise, nor one who panders to the weaknesses and prejudices of his readers, but, one who disinterestedly attempts to arrive at a correct and lasting estimate of the value of his subject. He advocates again the "man and milieu" method of criticism which he first gave in the essay on "The Function of Criticism" and quotes M. Scherer's words supporting this view. The impression left on us is that Scherer was considerably like Arnold, and we cannot help suspecting that much of his praise is due to the agreement of their critical ideas. Arnold makes a definite attack on purely impressionistic criticism,- "they merely express a personal sensation of like or dislike." But he does not delve into the question of how much impressionism and judicial criticism overlap.

The next essay is also on Edmond Scherer, but deals this time with his treatment of Goethe and contrasts it with that of Carlyle, Mr. Lewes, Schiller, Niebuhr, and of Professor Hermann Grimm. Arnold does

Not agree in many points with the judgments of Scherer, but shows that he had greater insight, that he criticized far more soundly, than any of the others. This essay is again a causerie of the most charming kind, and together with the preceding essay, these two make an excellent introduction of Edmond Scherer to the English reader. His praise is sometimes, though not often, a little too high, - especially when he compares him with Sainte-Beuve. Scherer's judgments may be sound enough, but he never had the delightful style and manner necessary to the good critic. He was too much of a scholar.

To those who criticize Arnold for having too many principles to which he was enslaved, the following is a good refutation. "The systematic judgment is altogether unprofitable," he writes. "Its author has not really his eye upon the professed object of his criticism at all, but upon something else which he wants to prove by means of that object.....All that he tells us is that he is no genuine critic, but a man with a system, an advocate."(1) Unfortunately Arnold himself sometimes let his eye wander from the subject to his system, but in the main he did not err in this respect.

The last essay in the volume is the best. It

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(1). Mixed Essays; page 278.

is a charming obituary notice written exactly one year after the death of George Sand. He had been influenced by her considerably in his youth, as had many others of that age in their period of Sturm und Drang. It was natural therefore, that he should treat her with a certain tenderness and regret. He forgets his prejudices regarding sex morality for a while, and there is even sympathy for her unconventional struggle as an "impassioned seeker of a new and better world". He finds in her that ability to find and to show others how to find comfort and greatest self-realization in nature, - that ability for which he so justly praised Wordsworth. He admires her message that life to be complete must be joyous. He glories with her in the peasant, removed as he usually is from any real sympathy for the masses. He quotes her words, "Poor Jacques Bonhomme! accuse thee and despise thee who will: for my part I pity thee, and in spite of thy faults I shall always love thee!" No, Arnold is not of the people, no more than is George Sand. That greater humanism, the identification of oneself with all humanity, is beyond Arnold. It was beyond all writers in England in the nineteenth century. It manifests itself more truly in men like Homer and Shakespeare.

One of the best illustrations of Arnold's analytic method of criticism is found in his essay on

Emerson in the Discourses on America. He takes the claims advanced on behalf of Emerson, that he was a poet, a philosopher, a great writer, and analyzing all these claims discovers that none of them are valid, - none tenable in the light of the works of acknowledged great men. When he has thus cleared the ground, he makes his positive assertions as to the real value of Emerson. He finds him to be a clear-sighted and optimistic seeker after truth, and a sweet and beautiful character. He was superior to Carlyle in that he found the permanent sources of happiness. "Happiness in labour, righteousness, and veracity; in all the life of the spirit; happiness and eternal hope; - that was Emerson's gospel."(1) Arnold's praise is generous and whole-hearted. He was, he writes, "a clear and pure voice, which to my ear, at any rate, brought a strain as new, and moving, and unforgettable, as the strain of Newman, or Carlyle, or Goethe... He was your Newman, your man of soul and genius visible to you in the flesh, speaking to your bodily ears, a present object for your heart and imagination. That is surely the most potent of all influences! nothing can come up to it."(2) Emerson was a kindred spirit to Arnold, and the closing words sum up the characteristics of both, "To us he shows for guidance his lucid freedom,

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(1) Discourses in America; page 202.
(2) The same; pages 145, 146.

his cheerfulness and hope; to you his dignity, delicacy, serenity, elevation".(1)

In the posthumously collected Letters of Matthew Arnold, we get not only a delightful insight into his great and loveable character, but a charming account of the various events of his life. His travels, his literary adventures, his domestic relations, are given beautifully and simply, totally without the self-consciousness of the man who expects to have his letters published after his death. There are many remarks to be found on literary subjects, but most of them are treated in greater detail in his various essays and lectures. Some, however, did not find their way into more authoritative form. These, not being his official opinions, we shall merely glance over, pausing only at the most interesting.

Some time before he wrote his essay on Heine, in a letter to his mother, he made these remarks which form an interesting contrast to his later eulogy. "He (Heine) has a great deal of power, though more trick; however he has thoroughly disgusted me. The Byronism of a German, of a man trying to be gloomy, cynical, impassioned, moquer, etc., all a la fois, with their honest bonhommistic language and total want of experience of the kind that Lord Byron, an English peer with access everywhere, possessed, is the most ridiculous thing

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(1) Discourses in America; page 207

in the world."(1) These words have often been quoted to Arnold's discredit, but the sincere praise which he gave in Essays in Criticism is never, in such cases, taken into account. Arnold was conscientious enough not to be content with first impressions. Furthermore it is obvious that he never allowed quickly formed prejudices to blind him.

Speaking of Ernest Renan he writes, "There is considerable resemblance between his line of endeavour and mine. The difference is perhaps that he tries to inculcate morality in a high sense of the word upon the French nation as what they most want, while I tend to inculcate intelligence, also in a high sense of the word, upon the English nation as what they most want; but with respect to both morality and intelligence I think we are singularly at one in our ideas, and also with respect both to the progress and the established religion of the present day." Arnold owed much to Renan in criticism; and he realized his debt. But the debt was hardly as great as he thought, for he had the excellent sense to keep to his own interpretation of religion and morality. We have no record of his reactions towards Renan's later developments in moral endeavour, - those works such as Abbesse de Jouarre had not at that time been written, - but they must have been interesting. Renan also wrote on Celtic

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(1) Letters, Matthew Arnold (Macmillan and Company, New York, 1896); vol. I, page 11.

literature, and Arnold received many suggestions from him. These suggestions were, however, not always reliable, and resulted in many dangerous generalizations. But it is undeniable that there was considerable resemblance between the two men. Arnold was the superior, however, in possessing greater consistency and sanity.

His opinion of Tennyson is expressed often. The Idylls of the King, he says, are wanting in the "peculiar charm and aroma of the Middle Ages".(1) Furthermore, in the same letter, Tennyson "with all his temperament and artistic skill, is deficient in intellectual power". A few years later he adds, "I do not think Tennyson a great and powerful spirit in any line - as Goethe was in the line of thought, Wordsworth in that of contemplation, Byron even in that of passion."(2) Arnold instinctively felt those weaknesses of Tennyson which Paul Elmer More pointed out so well more recently(3) - his Victorian habit of intellectual and artistic compromise which makes so much of his work lacking in strength and virility.

On Goethe Arnold writes often in his letters. "I have been returning to Goethe's life," he says, "and think more highly of him than ever. His thorough sincerity and writing about nothing that he had not experienced -

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(1) Letters; vol. I, page 147.
(2) The same; vol. I, page 278.
(3) Shelburne Essays (7th Series).

is in modern literature almost unrivalled. Wordsworth resembled him in this respect; but the difference between the range of their two experiences is immense, and not in the Englishman's favour."(1) Helen C. White points out Arnold's debt to Goethe and thesimilarity in many respects of their ideas. Arnold's description of the modern spirit in his Essay on the Modern Element takes Goethe as the great example of modernity. They were both sceptics with that "active scepticism" which "constantly aims at overcoming itself". They both endeavoured to "see the object as in itself it really is", as well as to take the grand view of life, "to see life steadily and see it whole". Goethe was, as well as Arnold, a great advocate of culture, and Arnold found the essentials of his idea of culture in Goethe. He was further indebted to Goethe for the most important of his literary ideals: "In the principle that all literary effort should be directed and judged by the standard of the excellent, in the conception of that excellent, in the teaching that that ideal was best to be found in the masterpieces of classical antiquity, Arnold found his literary program in Goethe."(2)

Goethe liberated mankind in that he awakened in them the modern spirit. He made people realize the

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(1) Letters; vol. I, page 11.
(2) Publications of the Modern Language Association, "Goethe and Arnold" by Helen C. White.

discrepancies between existing facts and existing beliefs, - "between the new wine of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and the old bottles of the eleventh and twelfth centuries". His large humanism, his tremendous and all-embracing view of art and science and life, the grandeur and sublimity of his world-philosophy in which all things were regarded in that mellow and just sense of proportion possible only to the truly great - his disinterestedness, the sign of the highest type of interestedness - these things Arnold strived to emulate as a brother humanist. He had too many limitations to reach the lofty heights of his master, but he was fundamentally of the same noble race.

Of "poor Charlotte Bronte's" Villette he writes: "Why is Villette disagreeable? Because the writer's mind contains nothing but hunger, rebellion, and rage, and therefore that is all she can put into her book. No fine writing can hide this thoroughly and it will be fatal to her in the long run."(1) Of Lockhart's Life of Scott he is enthusiastic, "What a book - what a man!"(2) Bulwer Lytton fares better than Bronte: "I have read it (My Novel) with great pleasure, though Bulwer's nature is by no means a perfect one either, which makes itself felt in his book; but his gush, his bitter humour, his abundant materials, and his mellowed constructive skill - all these are

(1) Letters; vol I, page 34.
(2) The same; vol. I, page 12.

great things."(1) He was never very kind to Ruskin - he does not seem to have appreciated the points of similarity in their endeavours: "The man and the character are too febrile, irritable and weak to allow him to possess the ordo concatenatioque veri."(2) On John Stuart Mill he is in a happier mood: on his Liberty he says, "It is worth reading attentively being one of the few books that inculcate tolerance in an unalarming and inoffensive way."(3) From France, on one of his official tours, he writes of his meeting with Sainte-Beuve - it seems they enjoyed each other's company greatly. In spite of his own importance as a man of letters, Arnold shows something of a naive joy at meeting the great French critic. "I think he likes me,"(4) he writes with charming ingenuousness. He admired Macaulay's erudition: "It is said he has left no more history ready," he writes on the occasion of Macaulay's death, "which is a national loss."(5) But he points out with singular insight that "dash of intellectual vulgarity" which marred his work.(6) Thackeray he did not like. In fact Arnold was never very happy with novelists until towards the very end of his career when he read Tolstoi. We have seen his treatment of Villette and My Novel. Thackeray is not, in his mind, a great writer either. In spite of his personal admiration

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(1) Letters; vol. I, page 34.
(2) The same; vol. I, page 58.
(3) The same; vol. I, page 111.
(4) The same; vol. I, page 123.
(5) The same; vol. I, page 131.
(6) The same; vol. II, page 155.

for Disraeli, he never mentions his novels. He does not treat Dickens at all. A most interesting criticism is one on Swinburne. On first meeting him he put him down flatly as a "pseudo-Shelley"; later on, after his poetic fame was established he refers to his "fatal habit of using a hundred words where one would suffice".(1) Swinburne offended both against Arnold's insistence on soundness of subject matter and his creed that expression must not be allowed too great license.

Perhaps the most valuable words in the Letters are his estimate of his own poetry. "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 perhaps more of a fusion of them and have more regularly applied thatfusion to the main lines of modern development, I am likely to have my turn, as they have had theirs."(2)

He underestimated the extent to which the

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(1) Letters; vol. II, page 232.
(2) The same; vol. II, page 10.

vigour of Browning would affect posterity, as well as the depth of Tennyson's poetic sentiment. And he was wrong to say that he would have his turn, if by turn he meant popularity in the sense in which Browning and Tennyson have enjoyed it. His poetry is such that it will never have such a turn. But it will last always, and in every age there will be at least the few who will appreciate him. Arnold was never in doubt thathis fame as a poet would be secure.

The extent to which Arnold was really permeated with "sweetness and light", the number of ideas he earnestly nourished for the betterment both of himself and his public, the depth and reality of his moral endeavour, the genuineness of his culture, these are always evident throughout his letters. We find too, the true secret of his greatness, - his constant dissatisfaction with himself and his constant desire to improve himself as a result, even when he was past middle age. On New Year's Day, 1882, he wrote, "The importance of reading, not slight stuff to get through the time, but the best that has been written, forces itself upon me more and more every year I live; it is living in a good company, the best company, and people are generally quite keen enough, or too keen, about doing that, yet they will not do it in the simplest and most innocent manner by reading."(1) Words such as these which are

(1) Letters; pages 227, 228.

found throughout the two volumes of his Letters without the vast evidence of his Notebooks denote beyond all doubt the fineness of his character.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

There are many who assert that Matthew Arnold will live in the minds of future generations as a poet alone, and that his work in criticism will be gradually forgotten and rendered obsolete. Others overvalue his critical excellence at the expense of his poetry, until they go as far as to assert that most of his poetry is merely criticism in verse form. But there are great possibilities of error in attempting to classify him definitely as either the one or the other. The better critics, those who are not too anxious to label and pidgeon-hole their subjects, are they who give him an important position in both these functions.

There are many limitations to Arnold as a poet. His poetry lacks spontaneity and verve. He is undoubtedly lacking in that vivacity of imagination which characterizes sensitive and powerful genius. There are some poets who are such "children of nature" that, to use his own expression, nature takes their pens out of their hands, and writes for them. Here again Arnold is wanting, - he had too much intellectual command ever to let the pen out of his own hand. In passion too, he is deficient. Trenchant, soul-stirring expression is not the result of intellect alone: the mind must be electrified by passion before poetry possesses that

élan which makes the work of great genius dynamic and intense.

But there is that in Arnold's poetry which commands the respect and admiration of everyone possessing a sensitive and cultivated poetic taste. For it expresses better, probably than the work of any other English poet, the impulses and thou ghts of the scholarly, cultured, and contemplative mind. It is the poetry of Il Penseroso, the poetry of the professor's study-table, and of the hours when the school-inspector, the lecturer, the official, and the family man have retired for the night, and he is nothing more than the disciple and humble follower in the footsteps of the mighty men whom he strove to emulate. And this atmosphere of thoughtful quiet is the mood that runs throughout his poetry, and to all who are at all contemplative, it is a perpetual fountain of inspiration and guidance. Without the natural gift of poetry, Arnold, by the depth and genuineness of his poetic feeling, and by the thoroughness with which he shared the spirit of the ancients, wrote great poetry. Stedman has said truly of him that he "almost falsified the adage that a poet is born".

The melancholy which characterizes his poetic work throughout is not a fault. It is true that it be-

comes monotonous after reading large quantities of him, but Arnold is not a man to be read in large quantities. The actual world is forever disheartening to the man of thought, and out of this melancholy has risen much of the world's greatest poetry, all of its religion, and all its philosophy. Melancholy is the first step towards the attainment of a sound conception of life, but it in itself is not satisfactory, - it leads to pessimism, - it must be followed by a discovery of some form of permanent reality. The majority of poets have found this reality intuitionally, and the greater poets are those who have expressed this intuitional transcending of pessimism and this discovery of reality in definite and tangible ways, and have charged their expression with the impetus of genius. Arnold's poetic powers were too limited to attain these heights, and his intellectual powers and his intuition were hardly great enough to arrive at any clear and consistent idealism. His philosophy in his poetry is at best a vague sort of transcendentalism. Yet the thoughtfulness, the groping, the vague yet certain hope which buoys him up from despair, - the earnest inquiry and scepticism which are part of the experience of every honest thinker who refuses to offer to his mind the palliatives of unreasoned belief, - these are the great things which Arnold has expressed.

As a critic, up to the time of the publi-

cation of the lectures On the Study of Celtic Literature, Arnold sought to reach the public by preaching to authors and the educated people. He makes critics, too, part of his audience. In his first two prefaces, that of 1853 and the preface to Merope, and in his Essays in Criticism he urges them to find "the best that is known and thought in the world", and to make an "application of ideas to life". He reformulated the classical standards in the hope that literature would be improved. The public, unfortunately, did not immediately take his excellent advice, but blundered on in the same old way. The seeming ineffectiveness of his work made him impatient, - it was the righteous impatience of a man who, knowing he is right, finds to his despair that his auditors are indifferent.

He proceeded, therefore, during the next ten years, to make his ideas known, and to set the example in the application of ideas to life. He went into political, religious, and social criticism to show the people exactly what might be done, how much more intelligible, how much more sweet the world could be if they would act. The books he wrote in this period lie today in our libraries, and the soft dust that covers them remains undisturbed. But the ideas which he taught in them are a part of us, - we have absorbed them into our thought to such an extent that we no longer realize their source.

His work in this direction, therefore, bore immense fruit. Even in his own day, it has been estimated that his teaching was a source of great help. "When the secret history of inner lives is unrolled," wrote the Westminster Review, "many will be found who acknowledge Matthew Arnold as their father. He it was who in the dissolution of supernatural religion enabled them to keep steadily by faith and hope and love. The pure beauty of his poetry and the revealing light of his criticism are nothing compared with the personal and intimate service which he rendered to the youth of a generation whose faith was quenched in scepticism."(1)

When he saw the optimistic dreams of his youth unrealized, and humanity still unimproved, he reached, after his polemical period, a maturer decision. He returned to the activities of his younger days, - he again addressed his educated public, who, if they did not give him entire support, would at least sympathize with his aims. By permeating the best minds of the nation with the idealism which he professed, he saw that he could ultimately do the most good. His later works were, therefore, dedicated again to literature, where his ideas could ferment, and eventually seep into the public consciousness to such an extent that life would at some time be improved. He realized that this after all is the only way in which real and lasting reform could be

brought about, - for it has been the method of all the really great benefactors of mankind, - the humanistic effort. The fruits of such labour are not to be gathered within a lifetime, - disciples and continuators of the tradition often get the credit for the progress made, - but the contributions made by humanistic endeavour are none the less of tremendous importance and benefit.

It was natural that his literary criticism should be didactic. He was not as greatly concerned with "seeing the object as it really was" as with seeing what good the object was to us, with correcting the opinions and paths of others, and with spreading the gospel of his inquiring and critical method. His superiority to other literary missionaries lies not only in the charm and distinction of his style, nor in the excellence of his judgments, but in the great fact that he taught not merely what was right, but placed his greatest emphasis on what was most urgent and necessary. To have urged aestheticism in defiance the Anglo-Saxon moral tradition of literature, and to have harmonized his aesthetic and moral ideals, - these are almost unique in English criticism. Typical Britishers have censured his emphasis on form, on Hellenism, and have extolled the rugged austerity of Carlyle. And this want of intellectual, moral, and aesthetic balance is precisely what Arnold tried to correct. Had he done as Carlyle, as his moral nature might easily have led him to do, his

work would have been more popular, but it would nave been fruitless, for it would merely have been a repetition on the eternal themes of English genius. But even when he did preach in a moral vein, apart from his advocacy of Hellenism, his morality was far removed from the narrowness of the British, - it was wide and sweeping, not in the sense of an immense and empty formalism, but in the sense that it was truly human, generous, and universally applicable.

While utterly opposed to impressionistic criticism, Arnold was not a formal, judicial critic. He is pragmatic, and as such, utterly modern in spirit. He held things up to the light of his ideas - thus far he was judicial - but the broadness and elasticity of his ideas were such that instead of arriving at the dry husks of appreciation which are the result of unsympathetic, and therefore uncomprehending judgment by standard, he lights up his subject with a searching but kindly brilliance, until we are able to see opened gloriously before us, its real values, no matter how deep our prejudices against its defects may be. The most rabid haters of Byron or Keats cannot deny the truth of Arnold's estimate of their excellences, - nor can the most enthusiastic advocate of pure art undefiled by moral considerations help seeing the reasons for the permanence and power of Wordsworth's poetry.

Arnold's attacks on caprice have been criticized on the grounds that unless the individual is given free play, his work will become emasculated. The accusation is that Arnold was an enemy of personality. On the contrary, however, he was a great worker on behalf of the individual. He merely wished, by destroying the discordant notes of licensed capriciousness, to make the work of the individual acceptable to a greater public. Literature, to be of greatest force, he affirmed, must be free from reasonless idiosyncracy. For such wilfulness leads to gaucheries, grotesques, and imperfections which mar the beauty of the whole; and, in consequence, the ideas which the art is meant to convey lose not only the purity and aptness of expression they deserve, but the hearing they merit from those whom the capriciousness has driven away.

It has been claimed that the Hellenism which Arnold preached, and the culture which he advocated would result in over-fastidiousness, in delicacy without strength, and general squeamishness. It is true that a certain effeminacy is liable to follow certain of his doctrines; the aestheticism of Pater and the decadence of the nineties has been traced to Arnold's influence. But the fault is not of Arnold; for there is a ruggedness and virility to his purpose such Neo-Arnoldians

totally overlook. Beneath the delicacy of his critical touch and the urbanity of his style there the firmness of a practical and purposive mind, while beneath that again is a strong, masculine, austere code of morality which gives solidity to his entire work. The development of effeminacy from Arnold implies a deliberate ignoring of his fundamental and basic masculinity.

Arnold succeeded in bringing the French spirit into English literature. His work was not in vain for we continue to this day to gather the fruits of his endeavours. Nor was his campaign for culture destitute of results. His work on Culture and Anarchy, along with such essays as that by Newman on The Idea of a University Education, has been a source of inspiration to young students in all English-speaking countries ever since. Even Professor Sidgwick, famous for his attack on Arnold and the figure of the pouncet-box, in 1897 delivered a lecture to students at the University College of Wales at Aberystwith on the necessity of culture. Today Arnold is not much read, except under compulsion. But those who seek solidity and purity in matters of taste, those who find that rich as the aesthetic standard is, it does not satisfy from the human point of view, those who are desirous of the fullest culture, both personally and socially, still discover

in his work the answers to the more fundamental questions regarding literature and life.

"Sweetness and light", "to make reason and the will of God prevail", "to know and make known the best that is known and thought in the world", "to apply ideas to life", - it is true of Arnold that his entire significance can be skeletonized into a short list of his favorite catch-words and phrases. But what a philosophy there is in a total of his formulae! They imply the social, individual, moral, and aesthetic ideals of the noblest minds the world has known. I have mentioned the accusation brought against him of poverty in ideas. On the contrary he is remarkably rich in them, more so than almost any other Englishman in his age. And it is his very excellence of mind that caused him to reduce his variegated ideas to their common terms so that they might be better remembered and propagated. He was not bothered with formal criticism or any form of mental activity which was removed from life; but what was essential to the highest type of living was of tremendous interest to him, and all such subjects he analyzed with his brilliant critical faculties. He marshalled his materials always so that his fundamental ideas would be brought into greatest possible relief. It is this manner of construction, as well as his powers of rationalization and reduction, which has led to the illusion

of his poverty of ideas. On the careful reading of any of his books the fallacy of this becomes immediately evident.

"Though I be well disposed toward you, O Athenians," said Socrates, "and your friend, yet I shall obey the gods rather than you, and as long as I breathe and am able I shall not cease searching out truth and admonishing and persuading whomever among you I meet in my wonted way." Quoting these words, Ludwig Lewisohn compares Matthew Arnold to that first of the great Greek philosophers. Paul Elmer More says the same thing: "Matthew Arnold's criticism is not an isolated product of the nineteenth century, but he belongs to one of the great families of human intelligence which begins with Cicero and passes through Erasmus and Boileau and Shaftesbury and Sainte-Beuve. These are the discriminators between the false and the true."(1)

"If there is quiet about his name today, it is because his thought and teaching have been so absorbed in the very current of our age that we are no more consciously aware of them than we are of our pulses and our blood. We all talk Arnold, think Arnold, preach and propagate Arnold"; "It was Arnold who diagnosed the central Philistine heresy of substituting means for ends"; "He dis-

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(1) "Criticism", in Shelburne Essays (7th Series), Paul Elmer More.

covered Main Street; he discovered Babbitt; he discovered Mr. Mencken's neo-Puritans, reformers, hundred percenters".(1) Arnold's influence then has been tremendous. He is virtually the father of the vast amount of social criticism in literature which is attracting so much attention, particularly on the North American continent. But the Philistinism which he fought so determinedly has been aggravated to an enormous degree since his day, and the temples of Dagon grow daily "bigger and better" and acquire larger numbers of devotees. His sound precept to use the experience of the past to bear light on problems of today is counteracted by assertions that "history is bunk"; his attacks on the "over-preponderance of single elements", which is the greatest enemy of culture, and which leads almost always to the substitution of means for ends, is counteracted by increased demands for specialization.

Men of true culture, discriminators between the false and the true, disciples of the humanistic ideal, men of enlightened intelligence, and possessors of the critical sense of the highest and most generous kind, such men are invaluable to any age, any civilization. The

"darkling plain
Where ignorant armies clash by night"

is darker than ever, while the armies are, if possible,

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(1) Cities and Men, Ludwig Lewisohm; page 31, 32.

more ignorant and more confused, for standards are even harder to discern than before, so great is the universal turmoil. Men like Arnold, therefore, who "see life clearly and see it whole" are in this age a crying and urgent necessity.

The End.

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