

MATTHEW ARNOLD.

A FEW years ago it was a maxim with critics that, in writing about the productions of a man of genius, it was necessary to take into account the circumstances of his parentage, country, education, and all the more important facts of his environment. Lately there seems to have begun a reaction against this doctrine. We are told that it is only a man's work which should interest us—that we have no concern with his life. This is a hard saying, and yet it must be owned that the practice of looking into a writer's personal history may be carried too far. What should be a criticism may develop or degenerate into a chapter of social gossip, or a collection of casual anecdotes. This is one danger, and there is another danger lest, in getting together facts, we may suppose ourselves to be accounting for such an unaccountable thing as genius. M. Taine, the famous French historian of English literature, is rather apt to fall into this trap, and to think that, when he knows all about the water-sheds, rain-fall, climate, and vegetables of a country, he can explain the genius of a country's poets. Now, millions of us live under virtually identical conditions of climate, scenery, and so forth, but poets are rare in twenty millions of men. Yet even after making these deductions from what may be called the personal and historical method of literary criticism, that method has great advantages. In the first place, it is readable. As long as we are human beings, we are likely to care about the personality and the fortunes of people who have given us great thoughts and noble pleasures. Again, a man's environment does, to a distinct and obvious extent, affect his productions. Take the subject of this essay, Mr. Matthew Arnold. The earnestness of his morality would not be exactly what it is if he had not been at Rugby when "moral thoughtfulness was the chief characteristic of Rugby boys," as one of them is said to have confessed. The airy petulance of his manner, his "educated insolence," as Aristotle defined wit, would not be what it is, but for his training in that great school of this kind of humor, Oxford. Lastly, his poems, in a hundred places, plainly confess the feelings of a child of the mountains, of one whose years have often been spent in the shadows of Wordsworth's hills, and by the margins of his lakes. For this reason, because so much of the outer world in which he has lived

lives again, and immortally, in his verse and prose, I venture to write of Mr. Arnold in what may be called a personal and historical manner. There is this further excuse, that the method is the method of one whom Mr. Arnold has often called his master—the French critic, Sainte-Beuve. Once more: Mr. Arnold has always been himself a writer who introduced the personal element into his criticism. He has not spared "the cock of Lord Elcho's hat, one of the finest things we possess." He has described Dr. Russell, the "Times" correspondent, mounting his horse at Versailles during the Franco-German War, with the old Emperor holding the beast's head, and the Crown Prince at the stirrup. He has chaffed Mr. Frederick Harrison about his patent guillotine, and Mr. G. A. Sala about a presumed alcoholic anodyne against the painful reflection that life is a dream. He has spared neither bishops, nor peers, nor dissenters, neither Mr. Newman, nor Mr. Cattell, nor the Bishop of Gloucester, nor my Lord Shaftesbury. Hence, it may be inferred that he, at least, does not consider men and their work as two quantities irreconcilably apart. And there is little risk that a critic who has derived much pleasure from Mr. Arnold's verse, and much instruction from his prose, will venture on statements or researches of an impertinent kind. So with this apology for the method of our essay, we may go on to examine Mr. Arnold's writings and career.

Mr. Matthew Arnold, the son of the famous Dr. Arnold, head-master of Rugby, was born at Laleham, on the Thames, in 1822. Dr. Arnold was of a Suffolk family, and Suffolk is not a district that has produced many poets. But though the world knows Dr. Arnold best as a moralist, a historian,—above all, a disciplinarian,—the vein of poetry, of delight in the beauty of heroic actions and passions, and in the charm of nature, was very strong in his character. Laleham itself, which Dr. Arnold calls "this dear place," where the first six years of his son's life were passed, is no unfit cradle for the childhood of a poet. It lies, surrounded by trees, on a green bank of the Thames, opposite the old town of Chertsey, to which Abraham Cowley, the poet, withdrew from the bustling little London of the seventeenth century. The ancient Chertsey bridge, the great pool with its lasher, always foaming, and fresh, and cool on the shady side where the willows dip to the stream,—these, with the

clear back-waters, the trailing green water-weeds, the cool-rooted irises, the purple loosestrife, make the Thames very beautiful at Laleham. The banks are bordered here and there with poplars of great age and height, and from a boat in the streams of the back-waters you have a glimpse of low blue hills, such as are rare in the lowlands of England. Whether the influence of this country helped to make the boy who was born in it a poet (and an angler), it is not possible to say. But the Arnolds soon went from the pleasant Thames (1828) to Rugby, where the country is by no means so varied and beautiful. Laleham, said Dr. Arnold, was "like a place of premature rest." Rugby was a place of labor and of matter-of-fact. Dr. Arnold, though not precisely a sentimentalist, felt the necessity for something more of natural beauty than the midland flats could give, and made a home for summer and the holidays at Fox Howe, in Westmoreland. We may quote the Doctor's description of the place,—of a country so gracious and sweet that it seems the natural home of grave and pastoral poets:

"Our Westmoreland house [this was written in 1833] is rising from its foundation, and, I hope, rearing itself tolerably in *auras æthereas*. It looks right down into the bosom of Fairfield—a noble mountain which sends down two long arms into the valley, and keeps the clouds reposing between them, while he looks on them composedly with his quiet brow; and the Rotha, *purior electro* [more clear than amber], winds round our fields just under the house. Behind we run up to the top of Loughrigg, and have a mountain pasture in a bason on the summit of the ridge, the very image of those *saltus* [glades] on Cithæron where *Œdipus* was found by the Corinthian shepherd. The Wordsworths' friendship is certainly one of the greatest delights of Fox Howe, the name of our little estate."

Here, then, was a very proper home for a boy who was to be a poet, and whose poetry is haunted by the music of Rotha,—that stream clearer than amber,—and by the influence of Wordsworth, his father's friend. That poet was now, it may be said, beyond the reach of sneers and mockery, and was declining into a serene and peaceful age, in which poetry, nature, affection, were a threefold thread of happiness. Dr. Arnold says (1833):

"As far as scenery goes, I would rather have heath and blue hills all the year than mountains for three months and Warwickshire for nine, with no hills either blue or brown, no heaths, no woods, no clear streams, no wide plains for lights and shades to play over; nay, no banks for flowers to grow upon, but one monotonous undulation of green fields, and hedges, and very fat cattle."

Yet, at Rugby, among the green hedges, and fields, and fat cattle, Dr. Arnold's sons received most of their education. The out-of-door aspect of the school life; the cricket and

foot-ball in the close; the bird-nesting, bathing, and fishing; the enmities and friendships; the serious shadow which religion threw, now and then, across the merriment of boyhood, have been described, for the delight of all boys, in Mr. Hughes's "Tom Brown's School-days." It is enough to refer to "Tom Brown" for that section of Mr. Arnold's biography, and to Mr. Clough's letters for the state of mind of at least one school-boy who was, and remained, the friend of Mr. Arnold.

Mr. Arnold, on leaving school, where he won the prize-poem, was elected to a scholarship at Balliol. Under the mastership of Dr. Jenkins, an eccentric and despotic but practical man, Balliol had become the hardest-working college in the University. The scholarships were thrown open to general competitions, and were the first prizes which attracted ambitious boys from the public schools. Even now the Balliol scholarships are the most difficult to win. But, in 1840-44, they were held by a really remarkable set of young men, whom Principal Shairp, himself a Balliol scholar of the time, has commemorated in an interesting poem. The following passage describes how Mr. Arnold,

"Wide-welcomed for a father's fame,
Entered with free, bold step that seemed to claim
Fame for himself, nor on another lean.
So full of power, yet blithe and debonair,
Rallying his friends with pleasant banter gay,
Or half a-dream, chaunting with jaunty air
Great words of Goethe, scrap of Béranger.
We see the banter sparkle in his prose,
But knew not then the undertone that flows,
So calmly sad, through all his stately lay."

I do not like "jaunty."

The Oxford of Mr. Arnold's undergraduate years was very much what Oxford has always been. The majority of undergraduates lived in it "as in a great country-house"—a place full of amusements, riding, boating, cricket, and lounging. The memories of those pleasant days live perennially in the exquisite poem of "The Scholar Gipsy." (Poems. 1853.) Mr. Arnold was not distinguished, as far as I am aware, like many of his school-fellows, for success on the river or the cricket-field. If he pulled in the Balliol eight, or played in the eleven, tradition has retained no record of his exploits. Tradition, at college, has a very short memory and is very capricious in her choice of favorites. When the writer was an undergraduate at Balliol, fifteen years ago, the rooms which Mr. Clough was said to have occupied were shown to the inquiring freshmen. They were quaint and tiny garrets, in the roof of the old quadrangle which has since been pulled down (indeed, it was then tumbling down rapidly), and has been replaced by the

present amazing structure, so much more remarkable for point than for feeling. Tradition, in the person of an exceedingly old and venerable college servant, had some recollection of Mr. Swinburne, the youngest in the trinity of Balliol poets who won general reputation. But Mr. Arnold, in my time, was already professor of poetry; and pious tradition, following the advice of Freya in the "Saga," asked no questions about what he had done "in the morning of time." As a poet

"Breathed on by the rural Pan,"

to quote his own line in "Verses written in Kensington Gardens," it may be presumed that he preferred long rides and walks in the beautiful country, at a distance from Oxford, to the routine of the place—the dusty drive to Cowley marsh and cricket, the severe pull, twice a day, up and down the racing-course, from the Barges to Iffley Lock, and the mournfully monotonous "grind" around the parks and up Headington Hill. Perhaps the majority of undergraduates see little of Oxford scenery, except as displayed in these narrow circles—unless, indeed, they are hunting-men, or take enormously long walks on Sundays. But the author of "The Scholar Gipsy" must have known the "stripling Thames" as far up as Bablockhithe, as well as at Bagley Wood (now a preserve), or near the ruined abbey of Godstow, not far from the town. To Godstow, which is now a mere shell of gray, ivy-clad walls, with a large pig-sty in the sacred ground, was borne the body of Fair Rosamond, after her murder by the jealous Queen at Woodstock. The country has a curious kind of sentiment, that lingers, like the ivy and the water-weeds, about the old brown wooden bridges and the wandering streams of the divided Isis. Much is changed in all that quiet country. Woods that were open are closed, and large placards warn trespassers that they will be prosecuted. The Scholar Gipsy, if he had wandered into Bagley Wood, would have been arrested by the game-keeper of St. John's College, and all strollers are suspected of hostile intentions to pheasants.

"In the two Hinkseys nothing keeps the same;
The village street its haunted mansion lacks,
And from the sign is gone Sibylla's name,
And from the roofs the twisted chimney-stacks."

In one of Mr. Clough's letters occur the words, "M. has gone fishing when he ought to be reading." It is a very fortunate thing for us that "M." frequently went out fishing,—

"And with the country-folk acquaintance made
By barn in threshing-time, by new-built rick.
Here, too, our shepherd-pipes we first assay'd,"

—when he ought to have been reading. And, probably, it was fortunate for Mr. Arnold that he had an abundant lightness of heart in these undergraduate years. Oxford was in one of her hot fits of theological discussion when he was a scholar of Balliol. These hot and cold fits alternate curiously. In my own time, the stir caused by the Broad Church and "Essays and Reviews" was subsiding. We floated on the swell of that stormy sea, over which a queer kind of Anglican Hegelianism poured its smoothing oils. Probably something new in heresies or philosophies has come in since then, Mr. Herbert Spencer's ideas having had time to become a little threadbare, and his star, as the Rev. Joseph Cook beautifully says, inclining "behind the Western pines." In Mr. Arnold's undergraduate years, Oxford "was stirred to its depths by the great Tractarian movement. Dr. Newman was in the fullness of his popularity, preaching at St. Mary's, and in pamphlets, reviews, and verses continually pouring forth eloquent appeals to every kind of motive that could influence men's minds." Mr. Clough took all these things much too hard for his happiness. "Before he had attained his full intellectual development, he examined, and, in some degree, drew conclusions concerning the deepest subjects that can occupy the human mind."

"His piping took a troubled sound
Of storms that rage outside our happy ground,"

says Mr. Arnold, in "Thyrsis." Probably Mr. Arnold did not take these things too hard, and very likely he "went out fishing," instead of, like Cardinal Newman, discussing the nature of apostolical succession while walking round and round Christ Church meadows, between the Cherwell and the Isis. Religious thought, religious controversy, have moved away from those old fears about lapsing into the Monophysite heresy which frightened Newman into the Church. And there was, perhaps, little reason to fear that Mr. Arnold would be driven either to Rome or into the arms of the Monophysites.

"For rigorous teachers seized my youth,
And purged its faith, and trimmed its fire,
Shewed me the high white star of Truth,
There bade me gaze, and there aspire,"

writes the poet, in "Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse." But, in trying to understand Mr. Arnold's thought, it is necessary to remember that his youth was passed in this heated air of discussion about politics, religion, and the relation of church to state. The mark of his father's influence abides in his attachment to the ancient and beautiful Estab-

lished Church. The spirit of the undergraduate who by no means allowed speculation to sober his spirit of enjoyment, survives in the wit and high spirits which make Mr. Arnold's writings on theology almost as readable as the "Provincial Letters" of Pascal. Even in these earliest years, the poet and critic was absorbing the experience, testing the ideas, which are the matter of his writings. He gained something better at Oxford than the academic distinctions which dozens of men obtain every year. Like Mr. Clough, Mr. Arnold did not obtain a first-class in the final examination. Like many men who have afterward become distinguished, as Dean Stanley and Mr. Ruskin, he obtained the English prize-poem, the "Newdigate." This is the prize which every one who can turn a line competes for, and which almost every one professes to despise. People scarcely write prize-poems in earnest, and one writer who has since made himself heard of in literature succeeded in pleasing the examiners with a poem which was of the nature of a practical joke. Yet, somehow, the prize-poem generally goes to good men. Mr. Arnold's topic was "Oliver Cromwell," and, with his ideas about Puritanism, the theme seems uncongenial. The poet was chiefly impressed with the contrast between the love of freedom in Cromwell, a native of a flat, commonplace country, and the same sentiment in men born within sound of the voices of the mountains and the sea :

"All Freedom's mystic language—storms that roar
By hill or wave, the mountains or the shore—
All these had stirred thy spirit, and thine eye
In common sights read secret sympathy;
Till all bright thoughts that hills or waves can yield
Deck'd the dull waste and the familiar field;
Or wondrous sounds from tranquil skies were borne
Far o'er the glistening sheets of windy corn:
Skies that, unbound by clasp of mountain chain,
Slope stately down, and melt into the plain;
Sound, such as erst the lone wayfaring man
Caught, as he journeyed, from the lips of Pan;
Or that mysterious cry that smites with fear,
Like sounds from other worlds, the Spartan's ear.
While, o'er the dusty plain, the murmurous throng
Of heaven's embattled myriads swept along."

Though Mr. Arnold did not obtain a first-class, he was consoled, like Mr. Newman and Clough, by an Oriël fellowship (1845). In those days, the fellowships of Oriël were the highest prizes which Oxford had to offer to junior men. The college was, I believe, the first to throw its fellowships open to all members of the University, and thus often reversed the verdict of "the schools,"—that is, of the public examiners. Men were chosen for their ability, rather than for their knowledge of minute points of detail in Aristotle, Herodo-

tus, and Thucydides. A man might be elected even if he had forgotten how the Egyptians showed their veneration for the dead—yes, even though he hastily answered that "they showed it by making their parents into mummies." From this point, where his preparation for the work of life may be said to have ended, and the period of production to have begun, we need not follow the personal career of Mr. Arnold. His profession, apart from literature, that "good staff and poor crutch," as Sir Walter Scott called it, has been Education.

As an inspector of schools he has written on education in France, Germany, and England. And when Mr. Arnold asserts that Ireland will never be happy while the English middle classes are educated in their favorite and most worthless private schools, one feels inclined to reply, "*Vous êtes orfèvre, M. Josse*,"—"You are a public-schoolman, and the prophet of public schools."

Mr. Arnold's first volume of poems ("The Strayed Reveller, and other Poems, by A.," London, Fellowes, 1849) was published in the same year as Mr. Clough's "Ambarvalia." Mr. Arnold's volume was remarkable for its rare perfection within the limits imposed on himself by the author. He was already "the surest-footed of poets." Here, one might say, is nothing not complete and accomplished, nothing tentative, nothing uncertain, nothing fantastic, and nothing imitative. The influence of Greek literature and of Wordsworth may, indeed, be traced—the former showing itself in the calmness and repose of the work, the latter in the poet's view of nature, as the companion and instructor of man. But there is already apparent in Mr. Arnold's verse a certain resignation, "a sad lucidity of soul," an acceptance of life as worth living on its own merits, without regard to the possibility of a future, to which Wordsworth's piety did not attain. This resignation is a singular feature in the work of a man so young, of a poet writing at an age when doubt, if it exists, generally begets discontent and revolt. The beautiful poem of "Resignation" is suggested by one of those long mountain walks described by Dr. Arnold in a published letter—a walk retraced in manhood, ten years after it had been enjoyed in boyhood :

"Once more we tread this self-same road,
Fausta, which ten years since we trod;
Alone we tread it, you and I,
Ghosts of that boisterous company."

The moral of the melancholy follows :

"The world in which we live and move
Outlasts aversion, outlasts love";

and in this general life the poet finds his answer to all questions, and his ceaseless consolation in

“That Life, whose dumb wish is not missed
If birth proceeds, if things subsist:
The Life of plants, and stones, and rain:
The Life he craves; if not in vain
Fate gave, what chance shall not control
His sad lucidity of soul.”

These lines seem to express the gist of Mr. Arnold's "criticism of life," as expressed in poetry, and these are the thoughts which later he put into the mouth of the world-weary philosopher, Empedocles. But one does not look in his verse, nor in that of any other poet, for the criticism of life alone, but for pictures of life, for melody of language, for shapes and sounds of beauty. And these are to be found without stint in this little volume of a hundred and thirty pages. Here appeared for the first time "Mycerinus," the story of that old Egyptian king, mentioned by Herodotus, whose virtue was rewarded by the gods with a brief span of existence, and who balked them by devoting that span to enjoyment:

“Six years—six little years—six drops of time!
Yet suns shall rise, and many moons shall wane,
And old men die, and young men pass their prime,
And languid Pleasure fade and flower again;
And the dull Gods behold, ere these are flown,
Revels more deep, joy keener than their own.”

“The Strayed Reveller” is another gem of this volume—a scene in Circe's island, where a youth has lost himself, and meets the goddess and her captive Odysseus. About these things every one can speak only for himself, but I do not know anything else in English verse so full of the spirit of Greece as “The Strayed Reveller” and some of Mr. Arnold's other poems on classic themes. His persons seem to look at life and at death with the kind of calm, the enjoyment of all mortal experience, the grave smile of resolution, which we admire in the figures on the Greek sepulchral *stela*. In these monuments death itself is treated only as an incident like another, and the man who is to die stoops to caress his hounds, or takes his wife's hand for the last time, and turns to ride the horse of Death that waits at his door, with no sadder emotions than if he were starting for a day's sport in the hills. The Greeks looked at life as the gods are said to do in “The Strayed Reveller”:

“The Gods are happy.
They turn on all sides
Their shining eyes,
And see, below them,
The earth and men.”

They see the Centaurs
In the upper glens
Of Pelion, in the streams,
Where red-berried ashes fringe
The clear-brown shallow pools,
With streaming flanks, and heads
Reared proudly, snuffing
The mountain wind.”

These unrhymed lines, in which Mr. Arnold has usually chosen to reproduce the intangible grace of the Greek choruses, seem to me to come like the last echoes of the antique world. Another poem, not less beautiful, in the earliest volume, is “The Sick King in Bokhara,” with its admirable pictures of the hot Eastern life in Central Asia—a district which, for some reason, appears to have had much interest for the poet. Another piece, “To My Friends Who Ridiculed a Tender Leave-Taking,” became the germ of the poems called “Switzerland,”—the poems of “Marguerite” in the edition of 1853,—which have their epilogue in “The Terrace at Berne,” written ten years later and first published in “New Poems” (1867). In the verses “To My Friends” is the exquisite picture:

“Paint that lilac kerchief, bound
Her soft face, her hair, around,
Tied under the archest chin
Mockery ever ambushed in.
Let the fluttering fringes streak
All her pale, sweet, rounded cheek.
Ere the parting hour go by,
Quick! thy tablets, Memory!”

This set of verses is almost the only poetry which Mr. Arnold has dedicated to the passion of love. One might wish, perhaps, that the influence of Goethe were rather less perceptible in them, and they would be more pleasant reading if “The Terrace at Berne” had never been written, after that ten years' interval in which “young men pass their prime.” The singular melancholy which life among the mountains engenders, and the charm of Senancour, the morbid French solitary, who wrote “Obermann” during the Revolution, do not appear in Mr. Arnold's first volume, but have left a deep mark on the verses in the volume of 1853. The most generally attractive poem of the first volume is, without doubt, “The Forsaken Mermaid,” which it is impertinence to praise after the gorgeous eulogy by Mr. Swinburne: “The song is a piece of the sea-wind, a stray breath of the air and bloom of the bays and hills. Its mixture of mortal sorrow with the strange, wild sense of a life that is not after mortal law, the child-like moan after lost love mingling with the pure outer note of a song not human, the look in it as of bright, bewildered eyes with tears not theirs and alien wonder

in the watch of them, the tender, marvelous, simple beauty of the poem, its charm, as of a sound or a flower of the sea—set it, and save it apart from all others in a niche of the memory.” In leaving the volume of 1849, one cannot but remark how certain lines in it hang in the memory, perhaps after a reader has forgotten their source. Such lines are this from “Resignation”—

“Where Orpheus and where Homer are”;

and this, from “Stagirius,” in which Love is spoken of as

“Hungry, and barren, and sharp as the sea.”

If no more than fragments like these were left of Mr. Arnold's poems (and as evil a fate has befallen some of the Greeks), a competent critic of the far-off future would be able to say that the author of them was, in the truest sense, a poet. They have the unmistakable *cachet* of genius for verse.

Mr. Arnold's second volume of poetry, like his first, was published anonymously as “Empedocles on Etna, and Other Poems, by A.” (London, B. Fellowes, 1852). These verses resembled their predecessors in austere tone of thought, in a simplicity and perfection of expression which only the study of Greek models can give, and can give only to a few, and in a singular felicity in the delineation of nature. The most important poem in the volume deals with the last day and night of the Sicilian poet-philosopher, Empedocles. We may with probability assign B. C. 480–470 as the period of Empedocles's activity. He came of a noble house, and his grandfather had won a victory at Olympia with a four-horse chariot—an event at least as important in Agrigentum as the success of “Iroquois” in New York. Though born of a noble house, Empedocles was a friend of the democracy, which he aided in recovering and maintaining its liberty. The throne, or rather the *tyrannis*, was offered to him; he declined, and presently the people, with accustomed gratitude, drove him out of Agrigentum. About his death various legends are current; Mr. Arnold has adopted that which makes him leap into the burning crater of Etna. Empedocles was an orator of the highest skill. He also professed magical arts, the power of raising and calming the winds, and of causing rain and drought. In a surviving fragment he boasts of the almost divine honors which were paid to him in the cities of Sicily. But we must make large allowances for the superstitious tales which a later credulity foisted into the legend of Empedocles. He lived in the age of Herodotus, while

Greece was still credulous, but when credulity was on the wane. Long afterward, after Christ, in the age of Alexandrian mystics, Greek philosophy fell back on the illusions of its childhood, and then, probably, the miracles were inserted into the legends of Empedocles and Pythagoras. As to the philosophy of Empedocles, preserved in fragments of his poetry, space does not permit us here to examine it at any length. “Empedocles, however earnestly he deploras it, finds on all sides in the present world strife and alternation, and his whole philosophy aims at the explanation of this phenomenon. His theories are confused by the presence of mythical abstractions like Love and Hate.” This is the man, majestic, accomplished, the friend of his kind, the baffled philosopher, the baffled democrat, whom Mr. Arnold chose as his hero. He thought of Empedocles as wandering

“—between two worlds, one dead,
The other powerless to be born.”

On the one side, as a prophet and a healer, Empedocles appeared to belong to the former heroic age

“Where Orpheus and where Homer are.”

As a philosopher intent on solving the riddle of the world, he belonged more to the future age of Plato and Aristotle. In the poem he is represented as deeply conscious of failure, weary and ashamed of his repute for magical art, and inclined to rest in a philosophy of resignation. But his weariness overcomes him: he reckons up the possible chances of a future which may be a repetition of the dismal past, and, at length, buoyed up by a kind of returning mysticism,—

“—it hath been granted me,
Not to die wholly, not to be all enslav'd,—

he rushes into the bosom of the elements and leaps into the crater of Etna and the “sea of fire.” The very slight dramatic interest of the poem is found in the discussions between Empedocles and Parmenides, the superstitious *Wagner* of this Sicilian *Faust*. The charm of the work will be found partly in the long monody in which Empedocles unfolds his ultimate philosophy of resignation—“too near neighbour of despair,” and in the beautiful lyric interludes of Callicles, the young harp-player, who tries, like David before Saul, to charm away the melancholy of Empedocles with his music. From the monody of Empedocles we may quote these lines on a future life—lines full rather of the resolution in face of gods and men which marked our Scandinavian fathers than of any feeling natural

to Greece. The old Northmen, when they had lost faith in Odin, and had not yet pleased their kings by worshipping "the White Christ," trusted to nothing but their own strength and courage, that had never failed them here, and in the hereafter—if there were a hereafter—would be no less trustworthy. Like them, Empedocles is contemptuous of future hope or fear:

"Fools! that so often here
Happiness mocked our prayer,
I think, might make us fear
A like event elsewhere—
Make us, not fly to dreams, but moderate desire.
* * * * *

Is it so small a thing
To have enjoyed the sun,
To have lived light in the spring,
To have loved, to have thought, to have done,
To have advanced true friends, and beat down baffling foes—
That we must feign a bliss
Of doubtful future date,
And, while we dream on this,
Lose all our present state
And relegate to worlds yet distant our repose?

"Not much, I know, you prize
What pleasures may be had,
Who look on life with eyes
Estrang'd, like mine, and sad:
And yet the village-churl feels the truth more than
you—

"Who's loath to yield his life
Which to him little yields:
His hard-task'd, sunburnt wife,
His often labour'd fields;
The boors with whom he talk'd, the country spots he
knew."

Thus the philosopher finds life worth living for the sake of its common experiences, being, at the lowest, a treasure of delight in comparison with the nothingness that was the day before we were born. It is a philosophy, I think, for a man whose "back is at the wa'," who is hardest pushed by doubt and by the misery in the world. But let us turn from the philosopher to the pastoral poet, to the boy Callicles, singing in Sicilian glades with a voice as sweet and in measures more various, with a vision as true, an instinct as divine, as the Daphnis or the Thyrsis of Theocritus. I confess to an admiration of the songs of Callicles so enthusiastic,—their melody, their sweet pictures of the beautiful life of gods and men in Sicily so charms me, carrying one happily away to a land of pure air, clear water, fragrant pine-forests,—that I do not care to try to praise them, still less to attempt to restate their beauty in lumbering prose. The two most beautiful passages appear to me to be the song of Cadmus and Harmonia, and the song of Marsyas. In both of these Mr. Arnold has done what so many of our poets have failed to do,—he has seen Greek mythology with

the eyes of a Greek. To us the naked stories of a king and queen changed into serpents, of a shepherd flayed by Apollo for failing in a musical contest, seem savage and strange. Writers like the author of "The Epic of Hades" try to screw some Christian morality into the Greek legends. Marsyas is represented as consoled for his skinning by an unselfish artistic pleasure in the triumphant melodies of his cruel conqueror. If modern writers do not thus intrude a high-flown modern moral, they try to allegorize the legends away into some fable about the Dawn, or the Night, or the wind in the reeds of the dry water-course. But to the poets of Greece their own myths were so familiar, and were seen through such a soft summer air of childish memories, that (except in the case of the most horrible legends of all) they handled them as if they had been obvious harmless incidents and subjects. As in sculpture the Amazon warriors fall and die in battle, beautiful in death, and more lovely than pitiful, so it was in poetry; pity scarcely intruded into a charmed land of repose, where neither curiosity nor morality was in place. To illustrate this Greek repose, and this wealth of beauty that comes in where only horror seemed to reign in the naked myth, I must find room for Callicles's song about Apollo and Marsyas—the story of the skinning:

"Oh, that Fate had let me see
That triumph of the sweet persuasive lyre,
That famous, final victory
When jealous Pan with Marsyas did conspire;

"When from far Parnassus' side
Young Apollo, all the pride
Of the Phrygian lutes to tame,
To the Phrygian highlands came.
Where the long green reed-beds sway
In the rippled waters grey
Of that solitary lake
Where Mæander's streams are born;
Where the ridg'd pine-wooded roots
Of Messogis westward break,
Mounting westward, high and higher,—
There was held the famous strife,—
There the Phrygian brought his flutes,
And Apollo brought his lyre.
And, when now the westering sun
Touched the hills, the strife was done,
And the attentive Muses said,
Marsyas! thou art vanquished.
Then Apollo's minister
Hanged upon a branching fir
Marsyas, that unhappy Faun,
And began to whet his knife.
But the Mænads, who were there,
Left their friend, and with robes flowing
In the wind, and loose, dark hair
O'er their polished bosoms blowing,
Each her ribbon'd tambourine
Flinging on the mountain-sod,
With a lovely, frighten'd mien,
Came about the youthful God.
But he turn'd his beautiful face

Haughtily another way,
 From the grassy, sun-warm'd place,
 Where in proud repose he lay,
 With one arm over his head,
 Watching how the whetting sped.
 But aloof, on the lake-strand,
 Did the young Olympus stand,
 Weeping at his master's end;
 For the Faun had been his friend.
 For he taught him how to sing,
 And he taught him flute-playing.
 Many a morning had they gone
 To the glimmering mountain lakes,
 And had torn up by the roots
 The tall crested water-reeds
 With long plumes, and soft, brown seeds,
 And had carved them into flutes,
 Sitting on a tabled stone,
 Where the shoreward ripple breaks."

The landscape of the last eight lines seems to me almost unapproached for felicity in English poetry. Those lines about the Mænads, with their "lovely, frightened mien," were the first of Mr. Arnold's that I ever read. They were set to be rendered into Latin elegiacs, at a Balliol scholarship examination, and, though I did not attempt the elegiacs, the beauty of the poetry haunted me till I found the whole passage in "Empedocles," where it was republished in 1866, among "New Poems." Mr. Arnold withdrew the volume of 1852, after a small number of copies had been dispersed. He conceived that the situation of "Empedocles" was "morbid," and that the description of it must be "monotonous." And, therefore, the poem was withdrawn, and mere scraps of it, with a number of its shorter companions, were republished in 1853. The poems of 1853 were introduced by a remarkable essay on the functions of poetry, one of Mr. Arnold's earliest contributions to criticism. He is, perhaps, more widely renowned as a critic than as a poet, but that is not because he is "one of the fellows who has failed" in original composition. It will already have been made plain that we consider his poems by far his most important and most permanent contribution to literature. It will, therefore, be well to examine all his verse (very little of it has seen the light for many years) before considering his criticisms of life, of religious thought, and of literature. But we may pause to remark on Mr. Clough's review of his friend's earlier poems—a review published in an American periodical. In the tribute which Mr. Arnold paid to Mr. Clough at the close of his "Lectures on Translating Homer," he said "he had not yet traduced his friends, nor flattered his enemies, nor disparaged what he admired, nor praised what he despised. Those who knew him well had the conviction that, even with time, these literary arts would never be his." Mr. Arnold might have added that Mr.

Clough had not yielded to another literary temptation—what he admired he had not overpraised. Every reviewer, especially every young reviewer, knows the temptation to speak too enthusiastically of poems that are new, and the work of contemporaries and friends. Mr. Clough spoke, as we see now, almost too diffidently about "The Strayed Reveller" and "Empedocles on Etna." He talks of "the music of the boy Callicles, to which he chants his happy mythic stories, somewhat frigidly, perhaps." In "Tristram and Iseult" he finds "the mist of more than poetic dubiousness." If "Tristram" is "dubious," what is to be said of Mr. Brown-ing's "Sordello" or "James Lee"? He found even the dubious mist better than the "pseudo-Greek inflation" of "Empedocles." Generally, Mr. Clough demanded a clearer and more consistent moral thoughtfulness, and denounced "the dismal cycle of a rehabilitated Hindoo-Greek theosophy." There was more of purpose, a better "tone and matter," he seems to have held, in the work of Alexander Smith. Such is the vanity of criticism. Who is right—Mr. Clough with his petition for more morality, or the critics of to-day who blame Mr. Arnold for asking poetry to give men "a criticism of life"? As to the poetic merits of Alexander Smith, an excellent man whose name should never be mentioned without respect, the world seems to have made up its mind. He is not likely to be well known as a poet to the next generation. Apparently, Mr. Arnold wrote his poems for the generations that were to succeed rather than for that which was exactly contemporary with himself.

The chief additions to the "Poems" of 1853 (Longman's, London) were "Sohrab and Rustum," and "The Scholar Gipsy." Perhaps, in their separate styles, these, with "Thyrsis," the sequel to "The Scholar Gipsy," are the works of Mr. Arnold which his admirers know and like best. "Sohrab and Rustum," the tale of the fatal combat which the old Persian chief and his unknown son wage against each other, approaches more nearly, I think, to the spirit and manner of Homer than does anything else in our English literature. The strong, plain, blank verse is almost a substitute for the hexameter. The story is told with Homer's pellucid simplicity, with his deep and clear-sighted sympathy with all conditions of men, with his delight in Nature as man's friend and life-long companion. The spirit of the narrative, too, is Homeric, and the fall of the young warrior, in the pride of his beauty and strength, his death assuaged by resignation to fate and by consciousness of a courageous strife, are subjects of the sort that often moved the

singer of the Iliad to his most moving strains. The similes are, in spirit, directly borrowed from Homer. The Ionian compares Nausicaa, the princess of Phæacia, to a tall palm-tree growing by Apollo's shrine. And Sohrab is compared to

"Some young cypress, tall, and dark, and straight,
Which in a queen's secluded garden throws
Its slight, dark shadow on the moonlit turf,
By midnight, to a bubbling fountain's sound."

But I must leave "Sohrab and Rustum," being already much tempted to quote the whole of the concluding passage, beginning:

"But the majestic river floated on."

The reader will appreciate these exquisite lines far better in the context, where the description of the course of Oxus, and his final rest where

"— the new-bathed stars
Emerge and shine upon the Aral Sea,"

rounds off the tragedy of Sohrab, as "our little life is rounded with a sleep." So,—the poet suggests without saying it,—so the lives of men, be they long and victorious, or broken in their first fight, end at last, like the river's course, in a repose that is not without its triumph.

"The Scholar Gipsy," a poem founded on the tradition that a lad in the University of Oxford wandered away with the gipsies, in search of their strange lore, and still haunted the fields and water-side, has, perhaps, one defect. It is a poem that cannot, or can scarcely, be enjoyed to the full by any but children of the old and beautiful university seated at the meeting-place of Cherwell and Isis. I know that I probably esteem Scott's poems too highly, because so many of them are friends that speak to me of home; of peaceful green hills, and waste places of the shepherds; of familiar ruined towers; of streams where I know every stone that shelters a trout; of moors where, in childhood, I have half-hoped to hear the fairy bridles ring, or have dreaded the sudden apparition of the Red Spirit of the solitude. No one can sit down to criticise coldly verses that are such old acquaintances, and, if Scott's poems are the intimates of one's childhood, "The Scholar Gipsy" is like a college friend. Most Oxford men who read it must be moved at remembering the days when they, too, went gipsying.

"We'll go no more a-roving,"

says the saddest of songs. Too many of his readers must say, with the poet:

"Too rare, too rare, grow now my visits here;
But once I knew each field, each flower, each stick,
And with the country folk acquaintance made,
By barn in threshing-time, by new-built rick.

"Here, too, our shepherd-pipes we first assay'd.
Ah me! this many a year
My pipe is lost, my shepherd's holiday!
Needs must I lose them, needs with heavy heart
Into the world and wave of men depart;
But Thyrsis of his own will went away."

Strangers across the Atlantic may be careless of our Oxford fields; they are like Proserpine in "Thyrsis"—

"But ah, of our poor Thames she never heard,
Her foot the Cumnor daisies never stirred."

Therefore it must suffice to say that the landscape of the Oxford poems—"The Scholar Gipsy" and "Thyrsis," the "monody to commemorate the author's friend, Arthur Hugh Clough"—is unequaled even by the Greek and Swiss and Westmoreland pictures in Mr. Arnold's other poems. All readers of poetical sensibility must feel their charm, but the sketches of deserted lashers, of the Cumnor hills, above all, of the "white and purple fritillaries," must necessarily appeal most to men who knew these places in their youth, and gathered fritillaries with some Thyrsis of their own.

The bibliography of Mr. Arnold's poems is uncommonly confusing. In the edition of 1853, many pieces from "The Strayed Reveller" and "Empedocles" were reprinted. Another "series" was given to the world in 1855 (Longmans, London). This contained more pieces from the volume in which "Empedocles" was first published, and also "Balder Dead," a poem on the most famous legend of Norse mythology. "Balder" is conceived and executed in the same style as "Sohrab and Rustum," and, perhaps in a slighter degree, has the same excellence—the same simplicity and grace and vigor. But the fate of the young man moves us more, I think, than even the fate of the young god in whom the learned Dr. Bugge sees—not, perhaps, with much reason—a myth reflected from Christianity.

In 1855, Mr. Arnold was still a young man, and much more poetry might have been expected from one who had begun so well. But it was rather ominous that he had, for some years, given the world so little that was new—that he had been breaking up and re-setting the old gems. Possibly we may attribute his long silences either to an increasing fastidiousness,—for where is his "Lucretius, an Unpublished Tragedy," which once supplied him with a quotation for a motto?—or perhaps the cares of the world, and the deceit-

fulness of criticism, and his interest in church and dissent, in education and the Irish Land Laws, may have subdued his muse, and made him "give to sermons what was meant for song." His "Merope, a Tragedy" (Longmans, London), was published in 1858. This is a tragedy in the Greek manner, on a topic which had already been handled by Euripides, Cardinal Richelieu, and Voltaire. The play of Euripides is lost; that by Richelieu may possibly be known to Mr. Saintsbury, who knows everything. As to Voltaire's serious poems, we may almost say of them, as he did of Dante's,—“their fame is likely to increase, for no one ever reads them.” Thus modern readers may probably agree that Mr. Arnold, more than was possible for Voltaire, restores to us the lost drama of Euripides. His "Merope" is, as Mr. Swinburne says, "a work of steady aim and severe success." But the success is somewhat limited. "Merope," a play on the Greek model, was attempted in the hope of satisfying that curiosity and interest about Greek art, that "nameless hope," which Mr. Arnold believed to exist even in the minds of those who have been brought up among the productions of the romantic school. But the Greek drama was, as Mr. Arnold recognizes in his admirable preface to "Merope," the child of peculiar social and theatrical conditions. We cannot, even at Harvard or Balliol, hope to bring back those conditions—that immense theater under the open air, filled with religious listeners, the whole population of a city. Now it seems improbable that any drama, not written to be acted, will ever have a strong dramatic life. Thus "Merope," like "Erechtheus" and "Atalanta," remains an interesting experiment rather than a natural English poem. The character of Polyphontes, the would-be honest tyrant, is excellently drawn. There is a beautiful chorus, too, illustrating what we have already said about Mr. Arnold's power of treating Greek mythology. The myth in question, that of Arcas and Callisto, is of the sort which prevails among red Indians and Australian black fellows. The Arcadians were a bear stock, as your Iroquois were bears, or wolves, or turtles. They believed that they were descended from a she-bear, which had once been a woman. The she-bear and her son were changed by the gods into stars (as is common in the legends of Mandans and Murri, Eskimo and Ahts), just when the hunter-son was about to shoot the animal-mother. Could any story be less Greek in spirit than this old fragment of fable, handed down by generations after generations of Arcadian priests? Mr. Arnold takes the legend as a Greek might have taken what

was too familiar to seem crude, and fills it with human feeling, till the savage legend becomes softened and beautiful. But, in spite of the merit of many passages,—the beautiful description of the drowning of the Prince of Arcady, for example,—"Merope" is never likely to be one of Mr. Arnold's more popular pieces. The preface contains, perhaps, the briefest and most lucid account ever yet given of the nature and aims of the Greek drama, and of the functions of the chorus.

Mr. Arnold's last appearance as a poet is, unhappily, an event of fourteen years ago. His "New Poems" (Macmillan and Co., London) were published in 1867. They, like most of his later volumes, are full of reprinted pieces. "Empedocles," in its entirety, heads the list. It was restored to English literature at the request of Mr. Robert Browning. The most remarkable additions are "Thyrsis," the Oxfordshire poem of which we have already spoken; "The Terrace at Berne," a somewhat sad and even cynical epilogue to the "Poems for Marguerite"; "Dover Beach," a piece equally admirable for thought, imagery, and music. In addition to these are the lines on Heine's grave, with the famous address to England as "the weary Titan." The stanzas on Obermann, the melancholy recluse who sought refuge in Switzerland from his own despair of the world and from the tempest of the French Revolution, are among Mr. Arnold's most admired and admirable poems. Not less often in our minds are the majestic and musical "Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse." In the silent, ultimate retreat of men broken in the strife with the world, the poet is awed and charmed, but charmed in vain, by the repose which the Church offers to all who will come to her, and be hers. The charm is vain; other creeds have promised to take upon them the weight of the world, and to fight man's battle with the powers of earth and heaven. They have promised and they have not fulfilled, and every temple is the scene of a broken covenant:

"Not as their friend, or child, I speak.
But as, on some far northern strand,
Thinking of his own Gods, a Greek
In pity and mournful awe might stand
Before some fallen Runic stone—
For both were faiths, and both are gone."

Is this the conclusion of the whole matter,—are we of modern times to wander forever, like the companions of Panurge in Rabelais, among the ruinous fanes and broken altars of the Isle of the Macræones? The poet has here no answer to give:

“Our fathers watered with their tears
 This sea of time whereon we sail;
 Their voices were in all men's ears
 Who pass'd within their puissant hail.
 Still the same ocean round us raves,
 But we stand mute, and watch the waves.”

After all, this is only the wonderful and musical expression of one despondent hour. This is not the conclusion of the whole matter. Mr. Arnold does not by any means stand mute, but has been communicating to the world very freely his ideas about religion, the Bible, education, society, literature, the newspapers, and the condition of Ireland. His poetry, on the whole, to use his own words about Greek tragedy, aims at producing a sentiment of sublime acquiescence in the course of fate and in the dispensations of human life. In prose he has been able to say, more definitely, what he thinks as a critic of life, literature, and society. Not long since, in a preface to Mr. Ward's "Anthology of English Poets," Mr. Arnold spoke of poetry as if it might become a substitute for religion. Now, if we allow the word religion to include authoritative speaking on the interests of man's spirit and on the conduct of his life, Mr. Arnold's own experience bears hardly upon his argument. As long as he wrote poetry alone, the great public did not much mark him. I doubt if the Lord Mayors (our official patrons of literature) ever heard of Mr. Arnold, or asked him to dine with Mr. Sala, in the days when he was only a poet. But as soon as he began to talk about religion, morality, education, and literature in prose, the great public heard him, though not very gladly. As soon as he began to criticise the middle classes and their teachers—the newspapers—the middle classes and the newspapers pricked up their ears and listened, with many interruptions and remonstrances, to what he had to tell them. He spoke to them in a new voice to which they were not accustomed. He did not merely glorify England and everything English. He looked outside our country and our literature, to France, Germany, Italy. He employed a strain of humor and sarcasm, which has an extraordinary power of irritating his victims.

I believe Mr. Arnold has done us a great deal of good. The self-sufficiency of this country, our belief in our enterprise, trade, intelligent middle classes, jealous dissent, right of free speech, and so forth, were, fifteen years ago, perfectly incredible and intolerable. Events have since taken a good deal of our conceit out of us. Sadowa, Sedan, Isandhlana, and Majuba have opened the eyes of many of us. Ireland and the East have taught us a few lessons of self-distrust. But Mr. Arnold

has kept on enforcing the lessons. He will not let us rest for an hour in the delusion that our newspapers utter the voice of unmitigated wisdom; that our free speech is necessarily true or instructed speech; that our middle classes, or lower classes, or upper classes, are educated on sound principles; that our dissenters are living and working in a pure spirit of generous and liberal and genial Christianity. All our Dagon he has blasphemed. Our popular writers, our popular theologians, our popular philosophers, our popular philanthropists, he has touched with his irreverent wit. "These be thy Gods, O Israel!" he has cried, and the idols look as decrepit as "that twice-battered god of Palestine," or the superannuated Olympians in Bruno's satirical tract. In this pious and universal crusade, I do not mean that Mr. Arnold has always had right on his side. He has said things that seemed cruel, or otherwise indefensible. He has made the dissenters writhe with impotent desire to smite, controversially, this cool and agile opponent. Many people, doubtless, have quite shut their senses against him—like the adder who, says St. Augustine, thrusts the tip of his tail into one of his ears and lays the other in the dust. But even these deaf ones know and feel that the bubbles of British optimism are being pricked. They are less comfortable than of old among their idols. They may never repent and be converted, but their children and their kinsmen are beginning to listen to Mr. Arnold, and to try to winnow the wheat from the, perhaps, too copious "chaff" which he offers the public.

Mr. Arnold's first appearance as a critic was in the field of literature. We have already spoken of his interesting prefaces to "Merope" and a volume of poems. In 1857, his University recognized his merits by giving him almost the only official position in criticism which England has to offer. He was appointed to the Chair of Poetry in Oxford. The chair has been filled by Warton and Keble, in times when the lectures were delivered in Latin. Now the lecturer addresses his audience in English: He is appointed for a period of five years, generally extended to ten. Since Mr. Arnold's day the chair has been held by Sir Francis Doyle and Principal Shairp. The position, with its chance of influencing young men, seems an enviable one. But there are so many compulsory lectures at Oxford, and attendance thereon is such a weariness, that many, even of the undergraduates who care for literature, seldom go. I never, I am ashamed to say, availed myself of the opportunity of listening to Mr. Arnold, because his lectures were delivered in the afternoon, when cricket or the river seemed

more attractive than Apollo's lute. The first fruits of his appointment were two sets of "Lectures on Translating Homer" (Longmans, 1861, 1862). These are full of just and penetrating criticism. They also have the marks of Mr. Arnold's critical manner. He takes a few points, such as the nobility, simplicity, and speed of the Homeric manner; to these he constantly returns, enforcing his text by repetition. Again, he frequently uses ridicule and irony. Professor Francis Newman had just published a translation of the Iliad, stuffed with odd criticisms, and written in the meter of "Yankee Doodle." This unlucky translation was Mr. Arnold's butt, and he kept provoking his audience to mirth as inextinguishable as that of the Homeric gods, by reference to Mr. Newman. That poet spoke of "dapper-greav'd Achæans," of "Hector of the motley helm," and his heroes were "sly of foot and nimble"; while Helen was made to call herself "a mischief-working vixen"! These served Mr. Arnold as examples of the individualism, the whimsical eccentricity, of the English literary character, nor was he ill-pleased if he found Mr. Newman calling "a fine calf" a "bragly bulkin." The natural result was that Mr. Newman thought Mr. Arnold's judgment effeminate. But, on the whole, the genius of English literature has sided with Mr. Arnold, and Mr. Newman's is not the standard translation of Homer. As to Mr. Arnold's own theories on a point which it were out of place to discuss here, I agree with his premises, but cannot accept his conclusions. He admirably characterizes the genius of Homer, and then he tells us that English hexameters are the proper meter for the English translator. But it is rarely possible to scan Mr. Arnold's own English hexameters with certainty, nor is one's opinion altered by those of Mr. Longfellow, Mr. Clough, or Mr. Stedman. Hexameters seem foreign to the genius of English verse.

A large familiarity with foreign literature and Continental criticism has enabled Mr. Arnold to widen the scope of contemporary English literature. The judgments of French and German authors are now tolerably well known to the British reviewer; there is a free trade in ideas. Many Englishmen keep us acquainted with foreign opinion, while M. Scherer, M. Taine, and others enable France to understand what is being done and said in England. When Mr. Arnold published his "Essays in Criticism" (1865) this free trade was much more restricted. French, especially, was comparatively neglected. One of the recurring periods in which the French reacts on the English intelligence was just beginning, and Mr. Arnold helped the new move-

ment. He tried to raise criticism from its low estate—described by Wordsworth as "an inglorious employment." It can hardly be denied that his efforts have been successful, and that we have now a more studious, learned, disinterested, and careful sort of reviewers than of old. Mr. Arnold tried his best to make critics feel that their duty is to see things as they are. A poet is now rarely reviled because his opinions, as a private citizen, are Radical, or Tory; because he lives at Hampstead, or in Westmoreland; because he goes to church, or stays away. A somewhat higher standard has been set, even for journeyman-work, and, as far as an English looker-on can judge, American literature, too, has benefited by this increased earnestness of purpose, and this growing desire for wider and clearer knowledge. Our affection for ridiculous whims—about the Christian theology concealed in Homer, about the Jewish origin of our race, or its Egyptian affinities—is not extinct by any means; but Mr. Arnold's ridicule has helped to diminish this national failing in literature, in politics, in religion; he has succeeded in making many converts to the belief that, after all, we are not a "chosen people," that all our prejudices are not inspirations. He had the audacity to say that our "atmosphere" tells unfavorably even on men of genius, and "may make even a man of great ability either a Mr. Carlyle or else a Lord Macaulay." This was flat blasphemy fifteen years ago; but now there are but few readers but will acknowledge that the pleasure and instruction they derive from Mr. Carlyle's and Lord Macaulay's works are marred by their want of repose, by their obtusion of eccentricities and personal peculiarities of style. Nay, we may go further, and hint that our "atmosphere" of insular eccentricity has harmed Mr. Arnold himself. "Physician, heal thyself," we might say, and regret some escapades of flippancy and, one might almost say, irreverence, which mar certain passages of Mr. Arnold's theological writings. But we are looking at the good his literary criticism has done,—at his wide appreciation of excellence, at his honest determination to state his own opinion, and not to be misled by a blind admiration even of Shakspeare, even of Burke, even of Shelley, even of Keats. After much reading, for example, of Mr. Ruskin, nothing can be more salutary than a return to Mr. Arnold's clearer and colder intellect,—not incapable of freaks, but occasionally indulging in them with an ironical knowledge of their true nature—not with a belief that they are "supremely" precious inspirations.

To any reader whose time for study is scanty, and who wishes to secure an adequate

impression of Mr. Arnold as a critic, one would especially recommend the volume of "Essays in Criticism." It contains the germs of all his later critical work, and his ideas and manner are there presented in the most engaging way. In purely literary matter there are the studies of Heine, Joubert, and the two Guérins. Mr. Arnold has never excelled these productions; in charm of style, in novelty of idea, in the attraction of a pleasant personality, they are matchless among his works and in the English literature of his time. In the papers on the Guérins, too, we have the earliest expression of his sympathy with the Celtic element in literature, with that "magical," sweet, and melancholy mood which perhaps the modern world owes to an ancient race, that has lost its lands, and almost lost its language, but never lost its rare, incommunicable gift of poetry. A fuller study of this topic is presented in Mr. Arnold's "Celtic Literature," a remarkable addition to what the world, as apart from specialists, knows about this topic. In the paper on Maurice and Eugénie de Guérin, he sufficiently indicated the nature of what we might call "the Celtic mood." It has a strange melancholy brightness and beauty, like that of a golden autumn day among the hills and lochs and birch-woods of Western Scotland.

And the Celtic mood has a singular nearness to nature. Any one can feel its charm who has listened to the pleading accents of a Gaelic song. That music is the music of a natural people—a *natur volk*. I have heard such a song, in Scotland, from a Gaelic poet; and shortly afterward have listened to another chant—a song of the wild folk of the Melanesian Islands. The two were strangely alike, and seemed to move one with the pathos of a people whose day is passed, whose glories are little more than a myth, but who have never lost their intimate sense of nature, and never been corrupted by the world. Mr. Arnold's Celtic studies, and his essays on the two French poets, brother and sister, have in their prose a touch of this old melody, and a sweetness derived from an elder day. In his essay on "Spinoza and the Bible," again, we seem to see the germ of his later and voluminous writings on religion, of his attempt to take theology and the Bible out of the range of a hard and too conjectural scientific criticism, and to bring them into the softer and more sympathetic air of literature. That attempt may not be wholly successful; something different seems to me to be needed both by the scientific and the ordinary reader. In spite of his sympathy with humanity, humanity still appears to be out of sympathy with Mr. Arnold's effort to purify its religion. Lastly, in

the preface, and in other parts of the "Essays in Criticism," we find the first of Mr. Arnold's humorous attacks on what he calls the "Philistinism" of his countrymen—or their arrogance, ignorance, and habit of mistaking mechanical means for ends. There is here a passage which one cannot help quoting—partly because it is so characteristic, partly because it is so appropriate to the flutter caused among us by a recent (June 30) murder committed on the Brighton Railway:

"My vocations led me to travel almost daily on one of the Great Eastern lines—the Woodford Branch. Every one knows that Müller perpetrated his detestable act on the North London Railway, close by. The English middle class, of which I am myself a feeble unit, travel on the Woodford Branch in large numbers. Well, the demoralization of our class,—which (the newspapers are constantly saying it, so I may repeat it without vanity) has done all the great things which have ever been done in England,—the demoralization of our class caused, I say, by the Bow tragedy, was something bewildering. Myself a transcendentalist (as the *Saturday Review* knows), I escaped the infection; and day after day I used to ply my agitated fellow-travellers with all the consolations which my transcendentalism and my turn for French would naturally suggest to me. I reminded them how Caesar refused to take precautions against assassination, because life was not worth having at the price of an ignoble solicitude for it. I reminded them what insignificant atoms we all are in the life of the world. 'Suppose the worst to happen,' I said, addressing a portly jeweller from Cheapside,—'suppose even yourself to be the victim, *il n'y a pas d'homme nécessaire*. We should miss you for a day or two upon the Woodford Branch; but the great mundane movement would still go on, the gravel walks of your villa would still be rolled, dividends would still be paid at the Bank, omnibuses would still run, there would still be the old crush at the corner of Fenchurch street.' All was of no avail. Nothing could moderate in the bosom of the great English middle class their passionate, absorbing, almost blood-thirsty clinging to life."

Was ever portly jeweler in such manner comforted? This is too constantly the attitude of Mr. Arnold toward his countrymen. He has a poet's love of England, and he sees England making herself ridiculous in the eyes of the world. He sees her policy shift with every alternation of popular sentiment, and he knows that popular sentiment, with all its good intentions, is ignorant, unsteady—now hot, now cold. These defects, and the conceit which accompanies them, make up what Mr. Arnold chooses to call Philistinism. This is how he defines Philistinism: "On the side of beauty and taste, vulgarity; on the side of morality and feeling, coarseness; on the side of mind and spirit, unintelligence." In literature, politics, religion, Mr. Arnold has made it his business to war against Philistinism, and especially against the Philistinism of these "great sophists," as Plato would have called them, the newspapers. A newspaperman myself,—a "pressman," as Mr. Swinburne would scornfully say,—I cannot but acknowl-

edge the errors of our profession, and wince beneath the birch of the son of Dr. Arnold. Let us conclude this survey of Mr. Arnold's performance by looking at one or two of his pitched battles with the armies of the Philistines who fight under the banners of the British press.

There was a literary contest even over that harmless thing, Celtic literature. A large number of our countrymen in Wales, and a smaller number in the West and North of Scotland, still speak Celtic dialects, and still preserve poetical traditions about the past of the Celtic race. In Scotland, these traditions have dwindled to tales told around the turf-fire, in the winter nights. The stories have been collected and published by Mr. Campbell, of Islay, and are most interesting to read, and most important materials for the student of human history. In Wales the Celtic language is preserved with more of pomp and dignity. Great meetings called *Eisteddfods* are held, in which poems are recited, prizes given, and the popular interest in the legendary past is thereby kept alive. As a professor of poetry Mr. Arnold was invited to attend one of those assemblies of the bards, and he expressed his friendly interest and sympathy, as surely no man of letters could fail to do. Almost all the old popular lore of song, and customs, and legend has been crushed out of our English laborers, whose lives, like Sir Tor's shield in the "Idylls of the King," are "blank enough." Mr. Arnold recognized the happier effect which their traditions of the past exercise on the Welsh. For this the "Times" fell foul of him with clumsy ferocity. "An *Eisteddfod* is one of the most mischievous and selfish pieces of sentimentalism which could possibly be perpetrated." "It is monstrous folly to encourage the Welsh in a loving fondness for their old language." Mr. Arnold was described as "a sentimentalist who talks nonsense, and whose dainty taste requires something more flimsy than the strong sense and sturdy morality of his fellow Englishmen." These are beautiful blatant expressions of the Philistinism against which Mr. Arnold did battle. That eternal bluster about "strong sense and sturdy morality" is one of the most provoking weapons of the "robustious" writer who is perpetually fingering his moral biceps in public. Well, the robust sense and sturdy morality of the "Times" has been wasted. English science has recognized the need of serious study of the Celtic literature, and professorships of Celtic have actually been founded in Oxford and Edinburgh. But, in the "Times's" Pumblechookian vein, when it blusters like the swaggering, stupid moralist of "Great Expecta-

tions," Mr. Arnold rightly recognizes one of England's difficulties in governing Ireland.

This brings us to the political warfare against Philistinism. It is impossible here to go into details about the burial of dissenters, the endowment of the Irish Church, the marriage with a deceased wife's sister, and other causes of battle. These things must be unintelligible in America; even here I do not quite understand the interest which Mr. Arnold feels in them. His general charges against his countrymen in politics are to be studied in a queer little book, "Friendship's Garland" (Smith and Elder, 1871)—the pretended memoirs of a German guide, philosopher, and friend of the author's. Arminius, the philosopher in question, does not spare us. He goes to Eton and sees young Plantagenet hit "that beast Bottles," full on the nose. He finds the spirit which delights in getting up a fight rampant in our newspapers. He finds our gentry, middle class, and populace almost equally underrated. He finds that we worship "mere liberty" as a fetish. We are so certain that free speech deserves all the praise Herodotus gave it long ago, that we think it does not matter what we say, with our famous freedom of expression. "There are many lessons," says Arminius, "to be learned from the present war: I will tell you what is for *you* the great lesson to be learned from it—*obedience*. That, instead of every man airing his self-consequence, thinking it bliss to talk at random about things, and to put his finger in every pie, you should seriously understand there is a *right* way of doing things, and that the bliss is, without thinking of one's self-consequence, to do them in that way, or to forward their being done. This is the great lesson your British public, as you call it, has to learn, and may learn, in some degree, from the Germans in this war." Well, we have not learned the lesson. As I write, the "Standard" and the "Times," and other prints, are gravely lecturing all Europe: lecturing France for her "madness" in imitating in Africa our seizure of Cyprus; lecturing the Prince of Bulgaria; lecturing every one, insulting many, putting "a finger in every pie,"—and all this though we can no more back our words by deeds than we can move mountains. Pretty words, like "lie" and "liar," are being exchanged by the French and English press; and what resolute purpose have we at the back of all this show of words? Arminius said, ten years ago: "Lord Granville has behind him, when he speaks to Europe, your Philistines, or middle class, and how should the world know, or much care, what your middle class mean, for they do not know it themselves?" In 1879, they were, or

seemed to be, all for Lord Beaconsfield and advance. In 1880, they were all for Mr. Gladstone and retreat. A melancholy impression do the words of Arminius make upon Englishmen who love their famous ancient land, and can only hope that, when the evil day comes, England may at last read clearly in her own mind, and not lack her old force in action. Mr. Arnold's business is to insist on the paramount necessity of knowledge—of what he calls *culture*. Unfortunately, while his matter is so sound, a public accustomed to the pulpit and the press is repelled by the daintiness of his manner. One who jests is supposed to be incapable of speaking truth. And the stumbling-block of his manner trips up the public most when Mr. Arnold is writing about religion.

I do not propose to examine minutely Mr. Arnold's religious teaching. The subject cannot here be properly handled. His design is to retain the morality of the Old and New Testament, without retaining what he thinks superstitious excrescences—the miracles, the promises of a physical life after death, and the like. In his view, it was in righteousness, in "conduct," that the prophets and our Lord placed the kingdom of heaven. He, too, holds that happiness depends on morality, and that the Bible is the great teacher and inspirer of morality. On the Continent, it is being rejected because of its want of conformity to physical science. In England and America, where religion is still so strong, Mr. Arnold hopes to anticipate and weaken the crude skepticism which rejects what is true and divine, because it is mixed up with what is human and erroneous. One can scarcely expect very wide and satisfactory results from Mr. Arnold's efforts. He deprives his disciples of precisely those hopes (superstitions, in his view) which have always been offered by every successful religion. It is natural to fear that, if Christianity be robbed of her heaven, the unhappy people who find this world so hard will demand a new heaven from some fantastic new revelation—like that of spiritualism, for example. Again, Mr. Arnold's own hypothesis of the development of religion seems inconsistent with facts—a topic on which one could, with personal satisfaction, write a volume. Lastly, a trace of flippancy and scorn in his manner repels, and is likely to repel, many devout readers who are, at heart, in agreement with him on the essential topic of righteousness. Mr. Arnold, in his "Last Essays on Church and Religion," closes this chapter of his life's work. What he wished to say has been said. He has tried to import into popular religion the flexibility of mind and balance of judgment

which are (or, rather, which ought to be) the fruits of literary training. But let us take the case of a hard-working and convinced dissenter, or ardent ritualist, who lives in a parish where life, for the people, is either unbroken toil or semi-starvation; where the summer nights are a sweltering misery; where winter means cold, hunger, and death. How is he to comfort his people with Mr. Arnold's doctrine? In this grievous battle of life, he will think of the author of "Literature and Dogma" as Hotspur, at Holmedon fight, thought of "a certain lord, neat and trimly dressed * * * and still he smiled and talk'd." That judgment would be unjust, but it would not be unnatural, and as long as it is general, Mr. Arnold's religious writings will prove of but little avail. It is pleasant to think that he has returned to his own province—to literature, though he still hankers after politics, and still finds that we govern Ireland ill, because men like Dickens's "Mr. Creakle" educate our middle classes. Let us hope that Mr. Arnold will return, not only to literature but to verse, and add to that scanty golden store, that "eternal possession," his poetry. For whether Mr. Arnold is revealing to us our national faults, or criticising our earthly conception of religion, we hear a voice murmur his own lines addressed to the spirit of Heine:

"Ah, to help us forget
Such barren knowledge awhile,
God gave the poet his song."

We gladly acknowledge his clear sight, his cheerful patience, his skilled satire, and the "educated insolence" of the wit with which he plagues a whole Dunciad of "dissenters," journalists, bishops, and Parliament men. But he was born for other and better things. Sense and noble satire, though rare, are still not so rare as poetry. It is poetry that is scarce, and it is poetry that works on men's minds like a spell. "Sohrab and Rustum," or "The Sick King in Bokhara," does more for "culture" than a world of essays and reviews, and disquisitions on the "hideous" middle class. Some one has sent me from America the cheap and certainly not lovely reprint of Mr. Arnold's "Selected Poems." That pamphlet, bought at a railway station, perhaps, by some man who purchases at adventure, may do more to cultivate the love of beauty and the love of nature, to educate and console, than many great volumes of theology.

I have not tried to "place" Mr. Arnold—to give him his rank among modern English poets. Class-lists of that sort are impertinences. Mr. Arnold has not Mr. Tennyson's quantity of poetic force, nor his unsurpassed music of

diction, nor his variety of topic. Neither does he possess the fluency and sonorous emphasis of Mr. Swinburne. But to some readers his poems come more closely home than those of his contemporaries. His calm, his reserve, his stately numbers, sustain, and charm, and comfort. So we close with a dozen Greek words,—may they act as a

spell,—the words with which the shepherd, in Theocritus, urges Thyrsis to sing :

πόταγ', ὦ ἴγαθέ· τὰν γὰρ αἰοῖδαν
 Οὔτι πα εἰς Ἄϊδαν γε τὸν ἐκλελάθοντα
 φυλαξῆεις.

“Sing on, for surely thou wilt not take thy song with thee to Hades, that puts music out of memory.”

AT ROME.

FAREWELL TO BIANCA.

OUR feet so lightly brush the path, box-walled and needle-sown,
 Our timorous lizard takes no heed that dwells in the crannied stone
 He counts his hoard, his pointed snout is deep in the statue old :
 See—fright had almost made him blab where lies the hidden gold.

Though from the blue the generous lark scatters a wealth of glee,
 And in their shades pomegranates throb with richer minstrelsy,
 Bianca, the dry-leaf butterflies drift through the long dead grass ;
 There is our toad in the ilex-tree, croaking an evening mass.

Their souls the aromatic herbs exhale beneath our feet,
 The fragrant moon of Italy with balsam breath to meet
 Leagues of a ruinous aqueduct bathe in a rosy mere.
 You weep; and a magpie on our left mocks with an impish leer.

Alas, these sights and sounds are yours—odors and paths of ease ;
 Yours are the languors perilous that sigh within the breeze,
 Yours the old dream, the passiveness ; they form of me no part.
 Love's in the saddle. Love stays not for one so faint of heart.

In circles strange the evening wind below the terraced grove
 Stirs the loose twigs. Ay, here's the spot first sacred to our love,
 Ere we ourselves knew where we were, or dreamed the other cared—
 Lie still, O leaves that shuddery gusts whirl under branches bared!

I am the new land, you the old. We love, but not for long.
 Your looks are backward, forward mine ; a monkish chant your song.
 Be free I must ; but you, O slave, to lay me snares are fain,
 As the slave elephant is taught her wild mate to enchain.

You talk of duty and of sin! Your duty lies with me.
 Your sin is that you let me go alone beyond the sea.
 No father's curse, no brother's gibe, no lady's courtly sneer,
 Fill those who love among my race with such un noble fear.

Before you spur the jade of love ; before our hearts have learned
 To beat unmoved, and hands to part in haste, ye lips that yearned
 Toward the odd Western heretic : utter the word of dole—
 Farewell—

Then go confess you, and shrive your wavering soul.



Matthew Arnold.